

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Get Out & Vote!

It's Your Civic Duty

Pages 8-9

Upcoming Energy Projects

Pages 12-13

'PLANTING' FOR THE FUTURE

Crews remove poles after a portion of overhead line was replaced with underground line south of Stickney.



Investing in System Reliability and Growth



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

The first day of spring arrived on March 20, 2026, yet as I write this on the final day of March, snow is once again in the forecast. It has certainly been an unusual winter.

By the time you receive this newsletter, Easter will have come and gone, and hopefully so will the last snowfall of the season. Our farming communities are already preparing for the months ahead—applying fertilizer,

watching soil conditions and patiently waiting for the opportunity to begin planting. As always, much depends on the weather, and there is a shared hope for a strong, healthy crop.

In many ways, your electric cooperative is also entering a season of planting. Between now and the first hard frost this fall, we plan to install approximately 50 miles of underground electric cable. Much of this work will replace overhead lines that were originally constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. While we have made steady progress over the years, about 1,600 miles of these older lines still remain. Replacing them is a priority, as it will increase system capacity and improve overall reliability for our members.

Alongside these upgrades, we are planning for a busy construction season. Our crews expect to build approximately 50 new electric services—of which we have already received 20 requests—and upgrade around 100 existing services. This level of activity is higher than we typically see this early in the year, and it reflects continued growth across our service area.

We are also investing in modern technology within our substations and distribution system. These

improvements will allow for remote monitoring of voltage levels and power quality, helping us respond more quickly and efficiently to issues. In addition, we will test approximately 5,000 poles for structural integrity and replace around 200 poles that did not pass inspection in 2025.

While supply chain conditions have improved, some materials—such as underground cable and high-voltage switches—can still take up to a year to arrive. Fortunately, we have secured enough cable for our known 2026 projects. If you are planning a project that requires new or upgraded electric service, we strongly encourage you to contact us early to help avoid delays.

Spring also marks the first opportunity of the year to apply for Operation Round-Up grants. These grants are funded by members who voluntarily round up their monthly electric bill, contributing an average of about \$6 per year. Those small contributions add up to make a meaningful impact in our communities. The application deadlines are May 1 and November 1.

We will also be hosting our district meetings in June. Dates and locations are included in this newsletter. You can expect to receive a postcard with official details as the meetings approach. I encourage you to attend—and to bring a neighbor along. It's always a great opportunity to connect, share a meal and spend time together as a cooperative community.

Both farming and the business of delivering electricity have evolved significantly over the years, shaped by innovation and new technologies. Yet at their core, they still rely on something timeless: faith. Faith that the work we do today, like the seed planted in the soil, will grow into something that benefits our families, our neighbors and our communities.

Until next month, stay safe!

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

- Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President
- Brule County - Bradee Pazour, Treasurer
- Buffalo County - Donita Loudner
- Davison County - Jeff Gustafson, Vice President
- Hanson County - Mark Hofer, Secretary
- Jerauld County - Mark Reindl
- Miner County - Robert Banks
- Sanborn County - Jeremy White
- Director-At-Large - Merl Bechen



CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Central Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.centralelec.coop.

Subscription information: Central Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents of each monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301 Telephone: (605)996-7516; Fax: (605) 996-0869; e-mail: cec@centralelec.coop; website: www.centralelec.coop.

Contact Us

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 Phone: 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516
 Website: www.centralelec.coop

Our Mission

Provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction.

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met February 16, 2026, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

Board Report

General Manager Schlimgen reported on the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Rural Electric Economic Development Fund activities, Basin Electric activities, construction of the new Howard Service Center, office security, and other management activities.

The minutes of the January 2026 safety meeting were reviewed.

Manager of Operations Bultje reviewed 2026 non-site-specific labor-only contracts with the board of directors. Discussion followed.

Director Banks reported on the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives activities.

Director Wolbrink updated the board on the East River Electric board meeting and activities.

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- The board approved non-site-specific labor-only contracts.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for March 16, 2026.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE FEB. 2026	YEAR TO DATE FEB. 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	70,802,578 kWh	71,421,546 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 8,453,664	\$ 7,892,598
Total Cost of Service	\$ 8,016,660	\$ 7,472,618
Operating Margins	\$ 437,004	\$ 419,981

ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH: TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY

At your local cooperative, Electrical Safety Month is recognized every May, but the importance of practicing safety year-round is always emphasized. From co-op crews to the consumer-members served, everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers daily life, but it can also be dangerous — something your local cooperative understands firsthand from working with it 365 days a year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase. Cooperative leadership recognizes the responsibility to keep employees safe while also helping protect members and the broader community. That's why your local cooperative hosts safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, highlighting the dangers of electricity. These demonstrations often include emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, along with discussions about the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the widespread use of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

Watch for frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged from age, heavy use or excessive current flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them to avoid shock hazards.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Running too many devices on one circuit can lead to overheating and potential fire risk.

Label circuit breakers. Understanding your home's electrical system can help prevent overloads. If your home is more than 40 years old and you plan to install large appliances, contact a qualified electrician.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug one extension cord into another. "Daisy chaining" can cause overheating and fire hazards. Do not exceed the cord's wattage, and avoid using extension cords as permanent solutions. If additional outlets are needed, consult a licensed electrician.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk with children

about playing it safe and smart around electricity, including staying aware of overhead power lines near outdoor play areas.

Providing a reliable energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year is a top priority. Equally important is keeping the community safe around electricity.

Contact your local cooperative for additional electrical safety tips or to request a safety demonstration at a school or upcoming community event.



"Do not fly kites by power lines!"

Casen Yuker

Casen cautions readers not to fly kites around power lines. Thank you for sharing your picture, Casen! Casen's parents are Lance and Tarah Yuker from Aberdeen S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Delicious DESSERTS

RHUBARB CAKE DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 cup sugar
4 cups rhubarb, diced
2 cups half and half

Method

Prepare cake mix as directed on package and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Mix sugar and rhubarb together. Spoon evenly over cake batter. Pour half and half over top of rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes. This is like an upside-down cake with custard on the bottom of the cake.

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

FUZZY NAVEL CAKE

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 instant vanilla pudding
(large, 5.1 oz. size)
3/4 cup peach schnapps
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup orange juice
4 eggs

Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar
4 tbsps. orange juice
2 tbsps. peach schnapps

Method

Spray a 12-cup fluted baking pan with cooking spray, dust with flour. Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended, spread evenly in pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool cake for 20 minutes. Run a long, sharp knife around the edges to loosen, and invert onto platter. Whisk glaze ingredients together until smooth. With wooden skewer, poke holes on top and around sides of cake. Spoon glaze over the warm cake, allowing to seep in holes, and drizzle down the sides and center. Cool completely before slicing.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
Pinch salt
1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple,
undrained (in natural juice, not
heavy syrup)

Frosting

1/2 cup butter, softened
1 8 oz. cream cheese softened
1 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

Method

Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended. Bake in greased 9x13 pan at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Combine cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar. Spread frosting on cake while still warm. Garnish with some toasted coconut if desired.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Attend Your District Meeting

June 3, 2026
Brule County (District 2)
 Ag Building, Pukwana
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Election Registration Closes at 6:30

June 4, 2026
Aurora County (District 1)
 Ag Building, Plankinton
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Election Registration Closes at 6:30

June 10, 2026
Buffalo County (District 3)
 Tribal Gym, Fort Thompson
 Doors Open 11:45 / Meal 12:00-12:30
 Election Registration Closes at 12:30

June 11, 2026
Hanson County (District 5)
 A1 Al's Pheasant Ranch, Emery
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 15, 2026
Davison County (District 4)
 Fairgrounds, Mitchell
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 16, 2026
Jerauld County (District 6)
 Springs Inn Cafe, Wessington Springs
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 22, 2026
Miner County (District 7)
 4-H Building, Howard
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

June 23, 2026
Sanborn County (District 8)
 4-H Building, Forestburg
 Doors Open 5:45 / Meal 6:00-6:30
 Q&A session

**District Meeting dates and locations may be subject to change. Official notice postcards are mailed 10-25 days before each meeting per co-op bylaws.*



Tokata Youth Center Named 'Who Powers You' Contest Finalist

Tokata Youth Center in Fort Thompson was named a finalist in the annual "Who Powers You" contest hosted by Central Electric Cooperative and the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

Aaron Vaughn, Tokata Youth Center Director, was recently featured on Keloland Living for this honor. The youth center provides many vital services for families in the area, including evening meals,

youth empowerment, community engagement, cultural preservation, educational support, mental health support and recreational activities.

Congratulations to Tokata Youth Center for this recognition! A recap of the broadcast and all finalist interviews can be accessed online by visiting WhopowersYouContest.com. Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on their community.



to learn more about power line safety visit YourCoopPower.com



Building A Bright Future

Central Electric Cooperative is working to build a bright future through youth educational initiatives. Your cooperative participates in a variety of programs, including Ag in the Classroom and Co-ops in the Classroom, engaging the next generation in electrical education and safety principles.

Ag in the Classroom is a youth education program offered in Mitchell and Pukwana each year. It is an opportunity for fourth graders from surrounding schools to learn about farm animals such as cows, horses, sheep, dogs and pigs. They also learn about soil, crops and the importance of safety around farm machinery and electrical equipment.

Co-ops in the Classroom is a hands-on educational program offered to area schools on a rotating basis every other year by Central Electric and its wholesale power provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative. Protons, neutrons, electrons, insulators and conductors are major topics of discussion as elementary school students learn about electrical safety in town and on the farm.



Electric Co-ops Recognized by Mitchell Technical College Foundation

Central Electric Cooperative and all of the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives were recently recognized as the Mitchell Technical College (MTC) Foundation's Industry of the Year.

The Industry of the Year award is presented to an industry that has collectively demonstrated exceptional support for a MTC program through financial contributions, equipment and supply donations, training opportunities, internships or employment of MTC graduates.

This recognition highlights the collective impact of South Dakota's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, which have pledged support for the construction of the new Energy Underground Lab. The new facility will provide students with a training environment where they can practice underground construction without weather-related delays or the added costs associated with traditional outdoor lab work.

Central Electric Cooperative is committed to the ongoing success of MTC and currently employs 32 MTC graduates.



ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Chuck Sloan • Piedmont, S.D.
Board Treasurer, West River Electric Association

U.S. Air Force 1983-2003

Chuck Sloan has spent much of his life serving his nation.

Sloan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1983 and served 21 years on active duty before retiring as a master sergeant in 2004. In that time, he was stationed at bases all around the world, including Oman, South Korea, Turkey, and the Pacific. Since 2004, Sloan has worked as a civilian at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where today he is Chief of Operations Compliance.

Serving in the military, Sloan observed firsthand how seriously service members took absentee voting and civic participation, despite being thousands of miles from American soil. Their passion helped ignite Sloan's own admiration for America's democratic system of government.

"If I found somebody a little *laissez-faire* about voting, saying, 'my vote probably won't count,' I would give them a spiel," Sloan explained. "Yes, your vote does count, and you'll want to be able to say that you made that vote."

He continued, "If you don't choose to exercise that responsibility, then later on if you're displeased, you really can't

complain about it because you didn't make a choice – If anything, vote and give yourself the opportunity to legitimately complain!"

Sloan said people should never underestimate the importance of showing up and making their voices heard, because in close races, one vote can tip the scale.

"There are many instances when one vote may have been a determining factor," Sloan said. "It may not be a general election, but how about in a state or local election where one vote can be the deciding factor? That happens more often than one would think. Your vote matters, no matter what you do."

Sloan brought that civic-mindedness along with him to West River Electric Association, where he serves on the Board of Directors and helps make decisions in the interest of his neighbors and communities he represents.

Sloan said it all just comes back to civic responsibility and staying involved.

"From the time I turned 18, I've never missed a vote," Sloan said. "It's second nature. It's too important to not do."



VOTING STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES



Evan Buckmiller • De Smet, S.D.
General Manager, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative

De Smet School District Board

For Kingsbury Electric Cooperative General Manager Evan Buckmiller, his call to public service came after a mid-term resignation on the De Smet School District

Board left a vacancy that needed to be filled.

"The board had to appoint someone to fill the seat," Buckmiller said. "Initially when I was asked, I didn't know if I wanted to do it, but I also knew that my wife and I have two young kids in the school system, so I agreed to fill the spot until the next election."

Buckmiller wasn't expecting to develop a passion for civic-service, but six years and two election cycles later, he's still representing the De Smet community on the school board.

"It's for my kids, to make sure they have the best education opportunities possible to prepare them for their future," Buckmiller added.

He said that while serving on the school board has been a

rewarding endeavor, there are also moments that are discouraging; some people will sit out elections, but are also vocal about board decisions they disagree with.

"I receive phone calls about how we are doing everything wrong, but they don't want to step up to be a part of change," Buckmiller explained.

His advice is simple: show up.

"Public participation at the monthly school board meetings is always encouraged," Buckmiller said. "When a community is engaged, there is more diverse input and you get to see the needs of everyone. The needs for one person might not be the same as another, and when you are sitting on a board you want to hear the needs of everyone so you can make the best decision possible for everyone."

Buckmiller said when more people get involved and exercise their civic duties, the communities like his are better for it.

"Being active in the community makes the community stronger and allows different opinions to be heard," Buckmiller said.

"When you show up to meetings and vote, you are giving the board direction so they can make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone."

STICK UP FOR YOURSELF & VOTE



Don Schurdevin • Elk Point, S.D.
Board President, Union County Electric Cooperative
U.S. Navy 1962-1968

Serving on the Union County Electric Cooperative board for more than 25 years, Don Schurdevin has built a reputation for steady leadership and a strong commitment

to the cooperative and its members. But before serving his neighbors and community on the co-op board, Schurdevin first served in a different way. He served not just his Union County neighbors, but his entire country in the U.S. Navy. Schurdevin enrolled during his junior year of high school in 1962, serving active duty in Vietnam from 1963 to 1965, some of that time aboard the USS Midway. The experience helped shape his views on patriotism, civic duty and personal responsibility.

“In the navy, you learn to get along with people, but you learn to also stick up for yourself, because nobody else – is so you better take care of your own business,” he said.

That’s the attitude that Schurdevin brings to his civic participation. He said serving in the military gave him a deeper appreciation for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including voting.

Schurdevin believes participating in elections is one of the most important ways citizens can stay involved in their communities and help shape the future of their community, state and country.

“I think I voted in every election since I could,” Schurdevin recalled. “School board election, county, state – if I was able to vote I was voting.”

That sense of duty carried into his years of cooperative service. As a director, Schurdevin remains focused on serving members and ensuring the co-op continues to meet local needs. Schurdevin encourages others to “stick up for yourself” by staying informed and voting for a better future.



LEADERS DEPEND ON YOU SPEAKING UP



Chris Rahn • Mission, S.D.
Member Services Manager, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative
Todd County School District Board, Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Chris Rahn was not always interested in his local government. In fact, up until just several years ago, he sat many elections out.

But through his work at Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative and the commitment to community that came with it, Rahn gained a new perspective on civic participation, realizing that change only happens when peoples’ voices are heard.

“I believe everybody who has an opinion should come out and vote,” Rahn said. “One vote matters. One vote can change an entire election.”

Rahn’s indifference to voting began to change as he was asked to take on more responsibilities with the co-op. Cherry-Todd Electric General Manager Tim Grablander nominated Rahn to the Rushmore Electric Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, where Rahn now serves as president.

Shortly after, he was encouraged by local community leaders to apply for a board seat with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The tribal

council voted to seat Rahn on the judiciary committee, leading to his first real experience with public service. Like flipping a switch, Rahn’s enthusiasm led to his appointment to other tribal boards, including the Tribal Utilities Commission, Tribal Tax Commission, and the Rosebud Energy Services Company.

Rahn said serving in tribal government opened his mind to the impact he can have on his community. That realization inspired Rahn to run for his first publicly-elected position as a school board member for the Todd County School District.

“I wanted to be more involved in my daughter’s education and just listen to the community’s input,” Rahn said, restating the importance of community members actively engaging with elected officials and sharing feedback.

He continued: “I feel like I’ve been able to bridge the gap between the people I represent and the administration and other public leaders.”

As Rahn looks ahead to years of future public service to work for a better community, he encourages others to step up as well — and all it takes is a vote.

“If you speak up, your voice is heard,” he continued. “When everyone’s voice is heard, we can make better decisions for the community as a whole.”

Photos by Shutterstock

CONGRATULATIONS 2026 SCHOLARS

Additional Details Online: www.centralec.coop/scholarships



\$2,500 Basin Electric Power Co-op Scholar
Hope Baysinger
(Woonsocket, SD)
Mitchell High School



\$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholar
Bryce Larson
(Letcher, SD)
S.D. State University



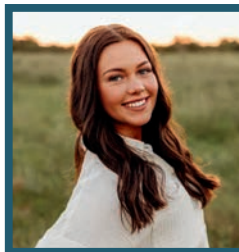
\$500 Mitchell Technical College Scholar
Alyssa Johnson
(Plankinton, SD)
Mitchell Technical College



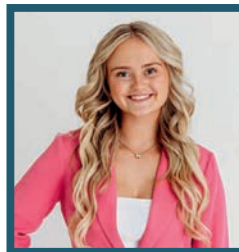
\$500 Mitchell Technical College Scholar
Carson Hinker
(Fedora, SD)
Mitchell Technical College



\$500 District Scholar
Landon Berg
(Emery, SD)
Bridgewater-Emery High School



\$500 District Scholar
Madelyn Childs
(Mitchell, SD)
Mitchell High School



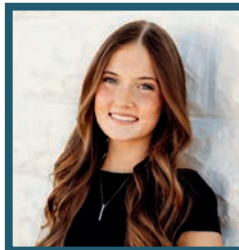
\$500 District Scholar
Jalyn Grassel
(Woonsocket, SD)
Woonsocket High School



\$500 District Scholar
Cadence Konechne
(Kimball, SD)
Kimball High School



\$500 District Scholar
Luke Larson
(Woonsocket, SD)
Wessington Springs High School



\$500 District Scholar
Olivia Prunty
(Mitchell, SD)
Mitchell High School



\$500 District Scholar
Corey Roberts
(Woonsocket, SD)
Woonsocket High School



\$500 District Scholar
Hailey Rogers
(Alpena, SD)
Huron High School



\$500 District Scholar
Remie Roduner
(Miller, SD)
Wessington Springs High School



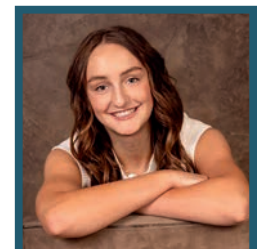
\$500 District Scholar
Caden Schwader
(Howard, SD)
Howard High School



\$500 District Scholar
Kayleigh Schwader
(Howard, SD)
Howard High School



\$500 District Scholar
Sydney Stahl
(Kimball, SD)
Kimball High School



\$500 District Scholar
Marissa Storm
(Ethan, SD)
Ethan High School

H.S. Juniors Attending National Rural Electric Youth Tour

Central Electric Cooperative is sending four high school juniors on the National Rural Electric Youth Tour this June. The annual educational trip to Washington, D.C., is hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The 2026 Youth Tour delegates are Howard High School junior Ann Connor, daughter of Michal and Rebecca Connor; White Lake High School junior Alexis Moore, daughter of Clint and Rebecca Moore; Kimball High School junior Delilah Rasmussen, daughter of Tony and Rebecca Rasmussen; and Wessington Springs High School junior Alexis Roesler, daughter of Aaron and Alicia Roesler.

The educational journey takes place June 14-20, 2026. Students from across the country will tour Washington, D.C., as they learn about history, the federal government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification.

Central Electric and its founding cooperatives, Intercounty Electric and Tri-County Electric, have participated in NRECA's Youth Tour since the 1960s.

To learn more about the cooperative's youth outreach and leadership initiatives, visit www.centralec.coop and click on member programs.



YOUTH TOUR TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

			
Ann Connor Howard High School	Alexis Moore White Lake High School	Delilah Rasmussen Kimball High School	Alexis Roesler Wessington Springs High School

Applications Open for Youth Excursion



Attention high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors! If you live in Central Electric's footprint, you are eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience. Attendees will take a bus trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other: Youth Excursion.

From July 20-22, participants will stay at Bismarck State College. During this time, students will have the opportunity to gain leadership skills while they make friends and gain a new understanding of electricity.

Students will tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota's power is generated.

Use the QR code below to apply for the Basin Electric Youth Excursion. Your application must include a written recommendation from a teacher, 4-H advisor or FFA advisor explaining why you are a good candidate for the trip. The deadline to apply is June 1.

Need More Information?
Visit centralec.coop/youth-excursion or use this QR code to apply:



BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Basin Electric's Pioneer Generation Station, located near Williston, N.D.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Basin Electric Expands Generation Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Although the flick of a switch can seem close at hand, the electricity that powers our world is often generated many miles away.

For rural cooperative members, electricity often comes from North Dakota, where Basin Electric Power Cooperative operates a fleet of power plants to serve rural communities across nine states. As demand continues to build across that system, the infrastructure behind it is growing right alongside it.

This steady growth has shaped the work now underway across Basin Electric's service territory. In response, the cooperative has kept up with demand by expanding existing generation facilities, building a new power plant and supporting the system with additional transmission projects in just a few short years.

"We're seeing load growth across our system, and it's coming from a combination of residential, agricultural, commercial and energy development," said Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric's senior vice president and chief operating officer. "When you step back and look at it as a whole, it becomes clear that we need to continue building to keep pace with that growth."



New transmission lines in western North Dakota support Basin Electric's newest generation assets.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Pioneer Generation Station

To maintain reliability and keep the lights on for their members, Basin Electric recently expanded its generation capacity through new development to Pioneer Generation Station near Williston, N.D.

Originally developed in the early 2010s, the facility grew in phases over time. Those additions turned Pioneer Generation Station into one of Basin Electric's most important generation assets, but within a decade, the pace of that growth had begun to change.

"Coming out of COVID, not just us but everybody

was seeing rapid increases in loads,” McCollam said. “At that point, we were asking what we could do the quickest to add capacity.”

To meet the need, Basin Electric moved forward with Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. The cooperative completed the project in 2025, adding about 580 megawatts of generation and bringing the site’s total capacity to 822 megawatts, enough to power roughly 400,000 homes.

The expansion moved quickly in part because Basin Electric built on what it already had.

“We had the site and the people that worked there, so we could add onto it a lot quicker than we could analyze and research new sites,” McCollam said.

Bison Generation Station

Still, Basin Electric continued building for traditional member load growth, beyond Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV, turning to a new project: Bison Generation Station.

Located near Epping, N.D., the natural gas-fueled generation project is being built from the ground up as a large-scale, natural gas facility designed to meet future demand. Once completed, the combined-cycle power plant will produce approximately 1,490

megawatts of electricity, making it the largest power plant solely owned by Basin Electric – almost double the capacity of Pioneer Generation Station. The plant is expected to come online in two phases, with the first unit operating in 2029 and the second in 2030.

Unlike Pioneer Generation Station, which expanded over time, Bison Generation Station is being built as a single, large project.

“We had a history of building small units, piecemealing them in as quickly as we could. That worked for a long time, but eventually we reached a point where we needed to think about building differently,” McCollam said. “There was a point where we recognized that continuing to add smaller pieces wasn’t going to be the most effective approach. We needed to build something at a scale that would allow us to stay ahead of that growth.”

Serendipitously, the transition from Pioneer Generation Station to Bison Generation Station happened on the same day. Basin Electric finished construction at Pioneer and turned the facility over to operations, then received the permits to begin construction on Bison.

“I’m kind of a nerd,” McCollam

said, laughing. “I’m nerdy enough to think this wasn’t a coincidence, and the power plant gods were smiling on us.”

Once complete, it will become a central part of Basin Electric’s generation portfolio.

“It’s going to be the flagship of our gas fleet,” McCollam said. “It’s being designed with the understanding that the system we’re serving today is going to continue to grow.”

Looking Ahead

According to McCollam, these new generation assets are a response to the organic growth Basin Electric is seeing across its traditional membership, including residential demand, agriculture, commercial activity and energy production.

“We support that growth where it happens, and we make sure the system can deliver power where it’s needed,” he said.

For Basin Electric, the work underway now is part of a longer process to ensure reliability in a time of growing energy demand.

“The entire purpose of Basin Electric is to provide reliable service to our membership,” McCollam said. “As that system grows, we have to continue building to keep up with it.”



This architectural rendering depicts Bison Generation Station, a natural gas-fueled plant project slated to begin operations in 2030.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

FROM FIELD TO FUEL

A new multi-seed crush processing facility, served by Central Electric Cooperative, is now operational after two years of construction near Mitchell. Photo submitted by High Plains Processing

New High Plains Processing Seed-Crush Facility Opens Near Mitchell, S.D.

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

A new multi-seed crush processing facility is now operational after nearly two years of construction, and its impact is taking shape across the region.

Located two miles south of Mitchell, the High Plains Processing plant is a large-scale seed crush and refining facility, powered by Central Electric Cooperative in the heart of South Dakota's soybean country.

The facility is backed by South Dakota Soybean Processors, the majority owner and operator, which also operates soybean crush facilities in Volga and Miller, along with a large group of local investors.

"There's a lot of local influence in this plant," said Pat Gathman, general manager of the facility. "Many of the investors originally invested in South Dakota Soybean Processors in Volga, and others invested directly into this project here in Mitchell."

That local investment shows up not

just in ownership, but in how the facility fits into the broader agricultural system. For local producers, it means more of what they grow can be processed closer to the farm.

"Instead of having the soybeans go to an elevator to be processed someplace else, they're being processed right here in Mitchell," Gathman said. "It gives farmers a better opportunity from a market standpoint."

For Central Electric Cooperative members, the plant represents one of three industrial loads being served by the cooperative. In addition to strengthening the local economy, large industrial loads like the multi-seed crush facility provide a consistent demand for electricity and help justify new investments in local infrastructure.

"The soybean plant brings new revenues to Central Electric Cooperative, which helps minimize rates for the entire cooperative membership," said Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen.

As part of the proposal process and selection as the electric provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative built a new substation and made additional system upgrades to serve the facility. Central Electric Cooperative also completed system improvements to support the load.

"The work was completed over a two-year window," Schlimgen said. "The project was on time and under budget during the worst of the supply chain delays."

Inside the facility, energy from the electric cooperative is used to turn familiar crops into multiple usable products, with the primary goal of separating oil from soybeans, sunflowers and camelina and preparing it for a range of markets. Currently, the plant is only accepting soybeans.

"We go through the preparation area where we crack the beans, heat them up, separate the hulls from the soybean itself, flake it, and then send it over to the extraction area," Gathman said.

The process separates oil from the soybean. The oil is refined and prepared for a range of uses, including renewable

fuels and food products, while the remaining material becomes soybean meal, a high-protein livestock feed.

“We bring it into our oil refinery where we refine it, bleach it, deodorize it and send it to storage,” Gathman said. “From there, it can go out by truck or rail to be turned into renewable fuels.”

The Mitchell location was selected in part because it brings together several key pieces of infrastructure needed to support a facility of this scale. Rail access, utilities and proximity to soybean production all played a role in the decision.

“We’ve looked at Mitchell for many, many years,” said Tom Kersting, CEO of South Dakota Soybean Processors. “You’re on a mainline railroad, it’s good soybean ground, and there’s a strong production history in that area. As we look at other seeds like sunflowers or camelina, you don’t have to go very far west of Mitchell before that becomes even more suitable.”

He added that finding a location with the right infrastructure is becoming increasingly difficult.

“There’s just not a lot of good sites left if you want to be on rail, next to a natural gas line, have a good electrical source and access to wastewater,” Kersting said. “There are a lot of infrastructure needs for a large facility like this, and it’s tough to find all of that in one place.”

That infrastructure includes electric service, which was a key part of the project from the beginning.

“Central Electric has been great to work with,” Kersting said. “They built a large substation not just for this plant, but to expand service throughout the area. It’s been a great partnership, and they’ve been very accommodating and easy to work with.”

Since becoming operational, the plant has already made an impact on the local community. The facility employs about 80 people, with the majority coming from the surrounding area.

“We’ve got some outstanding employees here that are really a part of things,” Gathman added.

For Gathman, the experience of moving to Mitchell has stood out just as

much as the work itself.

“The community has been outstanding,” he said. “Not just from the neighbors that we live around, but the community as a whole. It’s been very welcoming and very inviting.”

After moving multiple times throughout his career, including time spent outside the country, the difference was noticeable.

“My wife and I have moved 12 times, mostly around the U.S., and we did a stint in Brazil,” Gathman said. “I grew up in Fargo, and I love Fargo, but it was nothing compared to the reception we got when we came here.”


That sense of connection is something he hopes to carry forward.

“I can’t say enough about it,” he said. “I really want to help pay that back in the long term.”

As High Plains Processing continues to ramp up, its presence is expected to grow alongside it. The facility adds new demand for infrastructure, new options for producers and a new step in how agricultural products move through the region.



High Plains Processing celebrates the groundbreaking of its seed-crush facility in 2023.
Photo submitted by High Plains Processing



MAY 18
Voter Registration
Deadline for Primary
Election
5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 1
Last Day to Request
Absentee Ballot.
5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 2
Primary Election
7 a.m.-7 p.m.
(South Dakota)

Photo by Shutterstock

MAY 2-10
Rustic Designs & More Spring
Show, Flea Market
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

MAY 2
Consignment Auction
7 a.m. Gates Open
10 a.m. Auction
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 3
Prairie Village Opening Day
2 p.m. Train Ride
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 6-7
Energize! Exploring Innovative
Rural Communities Conference
Hosted by SDSU Extension
Community Vitality
Community Center
Wall, SD
extension.sdstate.edu/energize

MAY 9
1880 Train Opens
Hill City, SD

MAY 15-17
Open House Weekend
Free Entrance
Custer State Park
Custer, SD

MAY 16
2nd Annual Bird Bash
8 a.m.-1 p.m.
Bear Butte State Park
Sturgis, SD
605-390-2901

MAY 23
Free Christian Men's Event
8 a.m.-2 p.m.
The Barn at Aspen Acres
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MAY 30
Familyfest Fun Cruise
& SDSC Safety Fair
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Bucket Trucks, Safety & More
Sioux Falls, SD
thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/

MAY 30
Miss Prairie Village/Miss
Prairie Princess Pageant
6:30 p.m.
Lawrence Welk Opera House
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JUNE 3-23
Central Electric Cooperative
District Meetings
See Schedule on Page 6

JUNE 4-6
Black Hills Quilt Show
Thurs. 5-8 p.m.
Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Rushmore Hall
at the Monument
Rapid City, SD

JUNE 13
Journey Into Historic Picktown
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Ft. Randall Town & Museum
Picktown, SD
605-487-7299

JUNE 13
Luce Pioneer Day
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Rope & Candle Making, Butter
Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking
Lake Herman State Park
Madison, SD
605-880-5077

JUNE 19-20
77th Annual Czech Days
Tabor, SD
www.taborczechdays.com

JUNE 20
Alexandria Car Show
Registration: 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Car Show: 12-4 p.m.
Alexandria, SD
605-770-4717

JUNE 24-27
Crystal Springs Rodeo
Clear Lake, SD
605-874-2996

JUNE 26-27
Buckhorn Rodeo
Britton, SD
605-880-5077

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.