

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pick of the Patch

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WHY COOPERATIVES STILL MATTER



Ryan Mueller
General Manager

Thank you to everyone who came to Central Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting. It was great to see so many members gather for a meal, to visit and to learn about your cooperative's activities over the last year. Annual Meetings are a good reminder that Central Electric is not just another power company. This cooperative belongs to the people it serves.

October is also National Cooperative Month, which makes this a good time to talk about why cooperatives still matter.

We hear the word "cooperative" so often that it can start to feel like just another name. But it's more than a name. It's a way of doing business, and it is built around people working together.

That is what makes a cooperative different.

A cooperative starts with a simple idea. People working together to meet a need. For electric cooperatives, that need was bringing power to rural homes, farms, schools, and small towns. Years ago, many rural areas were told it didn't make sense to build power lines out into the country. The houses were too far apart, the miles were too long, and there was not enough money to be made.

Thankfully, rural people didn't wait around for someone else to fix the problem.

They organized, talked to their neighbors, signed up members and held meetings around kitchen tables, in community halls and anywhere people would gather. Step by step, they found a way to bring electricity to places that had been left behind.

That same kind of determination helped create the Rural Electrification Act, which celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. The REA helped change rural America, but it still took local people to make it happen. It took people willing to step up, serve on boards, sign papers, build lines, set poles and believe that rural families deserved the same chance as everyone else.

It's hard to imagine what rural America would look like today without the REA. I know my own life would have been different. Without rural electricity, I probably would not have had the farm and rural upbringing that I loved. Like a lot of families, we may have ended up living in town instead. That is something worth thinking about. The REA didn't just bring lights to the countryside, it helped make rural life possible for

generations of families.

That is still the heart of what we do.

Central Electric is owned by you, our members. We are not owned by outside investors. We do not exist to make money for shareholders somewhere else. We are here to provide safe, reliable electricity to the people at the end of our lines.

When the cooperative has margins, those dollars are eventually returned to members through capital credits. When decisions are made, they are made by a local board of directors elected by the membership. Those directors are members, too. They live here. They work here. They know the roads, the towns, the farms, the businesses and the people we serve.

Electricity is not just another bill. It keeps the water running, the bins working, the house warm, the shop lights on, the livestock cared for and the business moving. It powers churches, schools, main streets and homes across our service territory. When you live and work in rural areas, reliable electricity is not a luxury. It is part of everyday life.

Cooperative principles may sound formal, but they really come down to common sense. Members have a voice, people are treated fairly, communities matter and cooperatives help each other.

This year also gives us a good reason to look back and think about where we came from. America is celebrating its 250th anniversary, and the Rural Electrification Act is celebrating its 90th. Those are big milestones, and they are good reminders of what can happen when people work together for something bigger than themselves.

A lot has changed since the first electric lines were built across rural America. The equipment is different, the grid is more complicated, costs are going up and technology keeps moving faster. But the reason cooperatives exist has not changed. We are still here to serve our members.

Central Electric has a strong history, but our job is not just to talk about the past. Our job is to take those same values and use them to meet the challenges in front of us. The energy industry will keep changing. If we stay focused on our members, our employees and our communities, we will keep moving in the right direction.

A cooperative is local, member-owned and built on service. At its best, it is neighbors working together to take care of the places we call home. That's why a cooperative matters as much today as it ever has.

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

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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
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Contact Us

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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.

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Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met July 20, 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 Mueller reported on the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Basin Electric activities, Public Utilities Commission activities, Crow Lake wind tower refurbishing project and other management activities.

General Manager Mueller requested an amendment to the 2026 capital budget for meter testing equipment.

The board discussed the recent district meetings.

General Manager Mueller shared a request from the Mitchell Area Development Corporation to support its Forward Mitchell initiative.

The board discussed financial support of NRECA International.

Director Hofer reported on the CFC Conference.

Director Gustafson reported on the SDREA board meeting.

Director Wolbrink reported on East River Electric activities.

Director Banks reported on the SDAC Conference.

The Audit Committee reviewed the second quarter legal fees, attorney expenses, general manager expenses and director expenses.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve an additional \$45,000 in the capital budget for meter testing equipment. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to donate \$2,500 to the Mitchell Area Development Corporation in support of the Forward Mitchell initiative. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve bill credit prizes at the annual meeting, including twenty bill credits worth \$25 and two bill credits worth \$100 each. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to donate \$1,000 to NRECA International. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to accept manager and director expenses for the 2nd quarter of 2026. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve 2nd quarter 2026 legal and attorney invoices for payment. The motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for Aug. 17, 2026.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE JULY 2026	YEAR TO DATE JULY 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	224,613,573 kWh	196,329,452 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 27,602,556	\$ 23,032,098
Total Cost of Service	\$ 26,381,980	\$ 22,466,278
Operating Margins	\$ 1,220,576	\$ 565,820

SAFETY IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Fall hunting is a core memory treasured by many in South Dakota. It's a family and friend tradition that should be kept safe. This is your caring reminder to stay safe and enjoy a great hunt this season.

Simple Safety Rules for All Hunters

- Watch for posted warning signs and stay clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land you hunt.
- Be careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be easy to see.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles; energized lines can shock or kill you.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment; they can block lines and create hazards for crews.

Pheasant hunting often takes place in open fields with hedgerows and grassy strips, while dove hunting centers on fast, aerial crossings across agricultural landscapes. In both scenarios, lines may be hidden by trees or tall grass, especially near field edges and canal banks. Staying alert in these transition zones reduces the risk of an accidental encounter with electrical infrastructure.

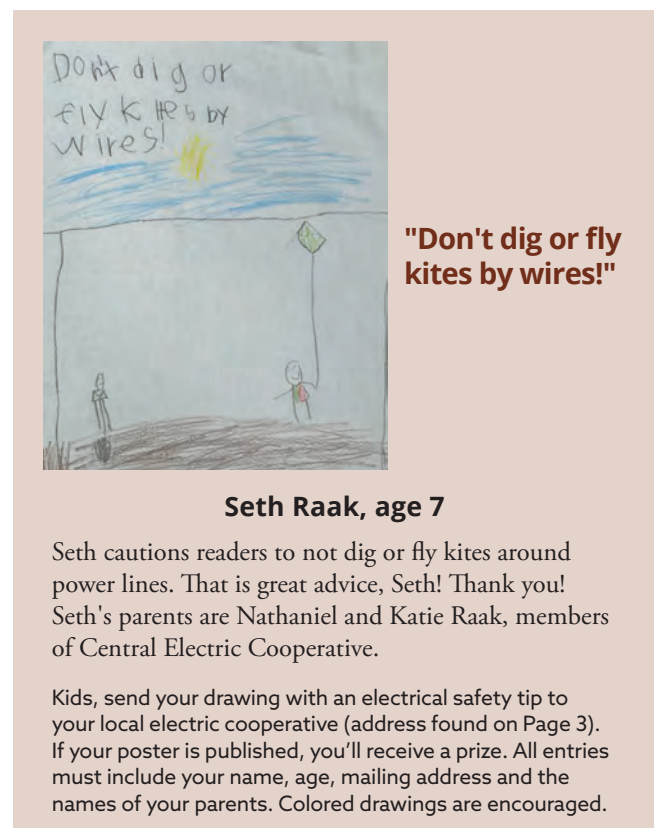
Practical Rules for Pheasant and Dove Hunts

- Plan ahead: Check maps or ask landowners where lines and equipment are located.
- Keep a safe distance: Stay away from overhead and buried lines near fields and edges.
- Hunt with a partner: A second person can help spot hazards.
- Speak up about hazards: If you see lines or equipment, treat it as a hazard and avoid the area.
- Follow rules: Respect any posted electrical safety warnings or access restrictions.
- Share safety: Tell fellow hunters and guests about these tips.

Why These Safety Tips Matter

Power lines conduct large amounts of electricity and contact with lines or equipment can cause serious injury or death. Maintaining distance, avoiding contact with poles or lines, and not placing gear on equipment are effective practices that protect you, your hunting partners, and the line workers who keep power on.

Your electric cooperative remains committed to safe hunting. We encourage members to stay informed about local electrical safety rules and to know line locations on the lands they hunt. If you encounter hazards, report them right away so they can be addressed. Sharing these safety practices help create a culture of safety that benefits everyone.



Seth Raak, age 7

Seth cautions readers to not dig or fly kites around power lines. That is great advice, Seth! Thank you! Seth's parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central Electric Cooperative.

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.

Let's Eat CAKE

SWEDISH PANCAKES

Ingredients:

1.5 cups flour, sifted
3 tbsps. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs
2 cups milk
2 tbsps. butter, melted

Method

Sift together flour, sugar and salt. Beat in 3 eggs until thick and piled softly. Beat in milk and butter until blended. Lightly grease griddle with butter. For each pancake, spoon about 1 tbsp. of batter on skillet. Cook over medium heat until lightly brown on each side.

Lois J. Larson
Clay-Union Electric

CREAM CHEESE CUPCAKES

Ingredients:

1 box chocolate cake mix, prepared
1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1/3 cup sugar
1 egg
Dash of salt
1 (6 oz.) package chocolate chips
1 can cream cheese frosting

Method

Mix cake mix according to package directions. Fill cupcake liners 1/2 full. mix the cream cheese with the sugar. Beat in egg and salt, then add chocolate chips. Drop a teaspoonful of cream cheese mixture into each cupcake. Bake as directed on package. Frost with cream cheese frosting when cool.

Elaine Rieck
Southeastern Electric

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tsps. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. espresso powder (optional)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
4 large eggs, room temperature
1/3 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt, room temperature
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups shredded zucchini (about 3 medium)
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Method

Preheat oven to 350 °F. Grease two 9x2 inch cake pans (make sure they're at least 2 inches high or one bundt pan). Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, espresso powder (if using) and salt together in a large bowl. In another large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer, beat the oil, granulated sugar, brown sugar, eggs, sour cream, vanilla and zucchini together until combined. Pour dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and beat on medium speed until completely combined. Beat in chocolate chips. Batter will be thick. Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake for around 25-32 minutes for round pans; 45 minutes for bundt pans or 9x13 pan; 18-22 minutes for cupcakes (24-30 cupcakes). To test doneness, insert a toothpick into the center of cake. If it comes out clean, it is done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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.

RECIPE CORRECTION THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsps. flour

Topping (makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups brown sugar
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder
3 cups oatmeal

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

Employee Years of Service



Ryan Mueller
General Manager
11 years on Sept. 1



Jonathan [redacted]
Plankinton Area
Foreman
16 years on Sept. 1



Dave [redacted]
Metering & Utility
Electrician
8 years on Sept. 10



Andrew [redacted]
Materials & Plant
Supervisor
10 years on Sept. 12



Lincoln [redacted]
Sales & Project
Manager
25 years on Sept. 17



Heather [redacted]
Customer Service
Representative
10 years on Oct. 11

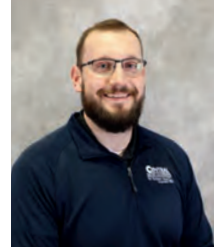


Jesse [redacted]
Kimball Area
Foreman
24 years on Oct. 21

Thanks
for your
dedication!

Kidwiler Named IT Systems Manager

Former Systems Coordinator Kelly Kidwiler has been promoted to Information Technology (IT) Systems Manager. Kidwiler began his career with Central Electric in 2021 as an IT intern and joined the cooperative full time in 2022 after earning a degree in Information Systems from Mitchell Technical College. He also holds degrees in Exercise Science and Business Administration from Dakota Wesleyan University.



Kelly Kidwiler

During his five years with Central Electric, Kidwiler has played an important role in advancing the cooperative's technology systems, including helping lead the way on metering and load management projects. In his new position, he will oversee Central Electric's IT systems and continue supporting all technology that helps the cooperative serve its members safely and efficiently.

New Employees in Plankinton, Wessington Springs

Please help us welcome Sam Comp and Skylar Zomer to Central Electric. Sam reports to the Plankinton location, and Skylar reports to Wessington Springs.

Sam is an apprentice lineman and has worked for Highline Construction since 2020. He graduated from Mitchell Technical College in 2017 and has worked for contractors since that time. Sam is originally from Ethan and now lives in Stickney. He also volunteers on the Stickney Fire Department.

Skylar is a journeyman lineman and joins us from Kingsbury Electric, where he has worked since 2024. Before that, he worked for West Central Electric and East River Electric. He graduated from Mitchell Technical College in 2021. He is originally from Wolsey and now lives outside of Wessington Springs.

We are excited to have Sam and Skylar join the crew!



Sam Comp



Skylar Zomer



BASIN ELECTRIC BUS TOUR & YOUTH EXCURSION

The Basin Electric Bus Tour is an educational experience that teaches members how their cooperative power is generated. In July, the group pictured above traveled to North Dakota to learn the story behind the switch.

The annual bus tour brought members to the Oahe Dam, Great Plains Synfuels Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station power generation plant.

Central Electric also sent one student on the Basin Electric Youth Excursion in July. Shiloh Senska of Woonsocket High School, the son of Scott and Sarah Senska, joined 15 other South Dakota students on the youth trip to Bismarck.

If you want to see your power in action, mark your calendars for the next Basin Electric Bus Tour taking place July 13-15, 2027. The Youth Excursion date has not been set. Members and students who are interested in attending either trip can contact the Central Electric office by calling 605-996-7516.



Shiloh Senska went on the Youth Excursion trip to Basin Electric in July.



On the Basin Electric Bus Tour in July, members toured the Oahe Dam north of Pierre to see how hydropower is generated.



Members toured the Antelope Valley Station power generation plant.



PICK OF THE PATCH

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

South Dakota Pumpkin Patches Offer Plenty of Reasons to Get Outside this Fall

Cooler air, changing leaves and the search for the perfect pumpkin all mark the arrival of the autumn season. Across South Dakota, fall weekends bring families to farms and orchards for corn mazes, apple picking and hayrides.

But putting together a few weeks of fall fun takes months of work behind the scenes.

Pumpkin patches and orchards are preparing to welcome visitors for another season of pumpkins, games and family traditions.

Country Apple Orchard – Harrisburg, S.D.

By the time visitors arrive at Country Apple Orchard near Harrisburg, owner Greg Jones and his crew have already brought in three semi loads of straw bales and about 6,000 bushels of corn.

It's all part of preparing for a fall season

that lasts just a couple of months but requires work throughout the year.

"The property is kind of a full-time, year-round job," Jones said.

The orchard has been around for more than 30 years, and Jones is six years into owning the operation. Since taking over, he has expanded the pumpkin patches and added many of the attractions that now make up the orchard's fall festival.

The season opens Sept. 4 and runs through October, beginning with apple picking in September before pumpkins take center stage in October. Weekend festivities include zip lines, apple cannons, hay bale mazes, corn mazes, corn pits and, new this year, fresh-cut flowers.

Country Apple Orchard is also a member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, which helps power the operation through the busy fall season. Keeping everything running takes about

Lucas Hartshorn, owner of Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch, and his family opening the patch for last year's fall season.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

60 seasonal employees. Once the crowds disappear, that workforce drops to Jones and one other worker.

The effort appears to keep families coming back.

"They love coming out and they come out multiple times," Jones said, adding that some families with season passes



Pumpkins grow in the field at Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch near Rapid City.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

return nearly every weekend throughout the season.

Mazing Acres – Yankton, S.D.

What started as a small family project has grown into roughly 35 acres of fall festivities outside Yankton.

Scott and Molly Nedved opened Mazing Acres with their family in 2020. At the time, the idea was to create a small hobby farm that could teach their children the value of hard work while giving the community something new to enjoy.

“It’s grown more than we thought it would,” Molly laughed.

Today, Mazing Acres, a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, includes six acres of pumpkins, a five-acre corn maze, a flower patch and several attractions. Visitors can take a hayrack ride, watch pig races, play in the corn pit or try the apple cannons.

The corn maze, sponsored by First Dakota National Bank, changes design each year. For 2026, the design celebrates the nation’s 250th anniversary.

Although the festival lasts only several weekends, planning starts almost as soon as the previous season ends. The family reviews what worked, attends industry



A family poses for a photo in the giant pumpkin chair at Mazing Acres.

Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

conferences and selects the next year’s pumpkin varieties in late fall. By August, Scott said preparing the farm becomes “an all-day affair every day until we open.”

Visitors will notice a few changes this year. Saturday hours are being extended until 8 p.m., allowing families to experience the farm after dark, and a new tiny-town area will feature themed playhouses for younger children.

Mazing Acres opens Sept. 19 and runs through Halloween.

“We want to be something for every age,” Molly said. “Not just for the kids.”

Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch – Rapid City, S.D.

At Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch south of Rapid City, the Hartshorn family’s fall tradition started in 2013 with pumpkins planted by hand.

Since then, owner Lucas Hartshorn said the patch has grown to about 11 acres.

Hartshorn started the pumpkin patch with his parents, Lyle and Donna, after his father retired. The family wanted a way to keep farming while creating an event they could enjoy with their children.

“We were looking for something to do with the kids in the fall,” Hartshorn said.

At the time, pumpkin patches were harder to find around Rapid City. After

visiting one themselves, the family decided they could create a similar experience on their own farm.

Each year brought something new. Planting pumpkins by hand eventually gave way to a planter, while the patch grew to include a petting zoo, bounce houses, wagon rides, a sandbox and other activities.

Lil’ Harvester’s, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, also opens during the week for school field trips, where students get a closer look at agriculture. Hartshorn said demonstrations may focus on pumpkins or the differences between sweet corn, field corn and popcorn, including how each is grown. For Hartshorn, that mix of farming, education and family time remains at the heart of the patch.

“They get to come out to the farm and learn something,” Hartshorn said.

Across South Dakota, there are several more pumpkin patches and fall festivities similar to those put on by Country Apple Orchard, Mazing Acres and Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch. Whether it’s a small hobby farm or a dedicated agritourism operation, each one offers its own take on fall traditions that continue to draw families back year after year.



Visitors of all ages can find something to enjoy at Mazing Acres near Yankton, including the farm’s giant slides.

Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

Grants Available for Community Projects



Grant applications for Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up® program are due Oct. 30, 2026. Through Operation Round-Up, funds are awarded to organizations that benefit area communities. Eligible projects should have a positive impact in Central Electric's service area.

Grants are awarded twice a year by a volunteer board of trustees. Clarissa Glaus of Chamberlain represents Brule County, Yvette Isburg of Fort Thompson represents Buffalo County, Steven Weisz of Mitchell represents Davison County, LeAnn Moe of Alexandria represents Hanson County, Amber Kolousek of Wessington Springs represents Jerauld County, Tami Moore of Howard represents Miner County, Dawna Van Overschelde of Letcher represents Sanborn County and Merl Bechen of Mitchell represents the board of directors. Julie Dykstra of Stickney represents Aurora County, and a new trustee will be appointed when her term expires this month following seven years of volunteer service.

Operation Round-Up is a voluntary program in which members round their electric bill up to the next whole dollar each month, and the extra cents are used to fund grants. A number of cooperative employees and board members also contribute to the fund. Since 2015, Central Electric members, employees and board members have invested more than \$250,000 to support local projects.

Interested parties can reach Tara Miller with questions at 605-996-7516. Grant guidelines and more information can be found online at centralec.coop under Member Programs. Special thanks to participating members for supporting community projects!



Aurora County: White Lake High School's FFA Program was awarded \$1,000 to assist with annual program expenses.



Brule County: The Brule County Historical Society was awarded \$1,100 to help with building improvements.



Buffalo County: The Crow Creek Sioux Tribe was awarded \$1,500 for the 150th Little Bighorn Battlefield commemoration event.



Davison County: Sunset Memorial Park Cemetery Association was awarded \$800 for cemetery fence improvements.



Hanson County: Bridgewater-Emery School was awarded \$1,000 for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) supplies.



Jerauld County: Spartan Trap League was awarded \$700 to help purchase training equipment.



Miner County: Fedora Fire Department was awarded \$1,500 for building improvements.



Sanborn County: The Letcher Youth Program was awarded \$1,000 for ballpark improvements.

HARVEST SAFETY REMINDERS



Patrick Soukup
Manager of Member
Services and Marketing

Farmers are preparing for one of the most crucial times of the year: fall harvest. At Central Electric Cooperative, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our farming community. Here are essential tips for ensuring a safe and efficient harvest this fall.

Safety Tips for Harvesting:

- **Pre-Harvest Equipment Check:** Before the harvest begins, conduct a thorough inspection of all machinery. Check for any wear and tear, ensure safety guards are in place, and verify that all equipment is functioning properly.
- **Train Operators:** Ensure that all operators are trained and familiar with the equipment they will be using. Regular training sessions can help reinforce safe practices and emergency procedures.
- **Maintain Clear Communication:** Use two-way radios or hand signals to maintain communication between team members, especially in noisy environments. This helps coordinate movements and ensures everyone is aware of their surroundings.
- **Stay Aware of Power Lines:** Always be cautious of overhead power lines when operating tall machinery. Maintain a safe distance and be aware of your surroundings to prevent accidents.
- **Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Equip all workers with appropriate PPE, including gloves, safety glasses, and hearing protection. This is essential for preventing injuries.
- **Monitor Weather Conditions:** Keep an eye on the weather forecast. Rain can lead to slippery conditions, while storms can pose additional hazards. Have a plan in place for adverse weather.
- **Practice Safe Grain Handling:** When working with grain bins, always use a buddy system. Never enter a bin alone, and ensure that all safety protocols are followed to prevent engulfment and other hazards.
- **Stay Hydrated and Take Breaks:** Harvesting can be physically demanding. Encourage workers to stay hydrated and take regular breaks to avoid fatigue.

Electrical Safety Reminders:

As you harvest your crops, remember that electrical safety is paramount. Here are some key reminders:

- **Know the Location of Power Lines:** Be aware of where power lines are located on your property and plan your equipment movements accordingly.
- **Use Caution with Farm Equipment:** When using augers, sprayers or other farm equipment, maintain a safe distance from power lines and ensure that the equipment is lowered when not in use.
- **Report Downed Lines Immediately:** If you see a downed power line or damaged equipment, stay away and report it to your electric cooperative immediately. Never attempt to handle downed lines yourself.
- **Install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs):** Use GFCIs in areas where water and electricity may come into contact, such as near irrigation systems or during wet weather.

The fall harvest is a time of hard work and dedication for farmers. By prioritizing safety and being proactive about potential hazards, you can help ensure a successful and accident-free harvest season.

Central Electric is here to support you, providing resources and information to keep our farming community safe. Remember, safety is not just a priority; it's a way of life on the farm. Happy harvesting!

Be Aware of Surroundings

Survey the area to identify hazards such as poles, power lines and electrical boxes that could cause serious injury.





LOST BENEATH OAHE

The Rise, Fall and Disappearance of a South Dakota Ghost Town

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Beneath the waves of Lake Oahe lies more than dead trees and walleye. Just below the surface near Akaska sit the remnants of LeBeau, an early 1900s railroad town once filled with immense promise and prosperity, whose story is worthy of its own Wild West feature film.

For years, Caroline Thorsen has collected the history of her great-grandfather, Antoine Le Beau, and the town that bore his name. Through Thorsen's collection and research by railroad historian Don Hofsommer in "A Promise Broken: LeBeau and the Railroad," we can dive beneath the waters of Lake Oahe and dredge up the story of LeBeau's dramatic rise and fall.

A French Fur Trader

The story of the ghost town of LeBeau begins with Antoine Le Beau Sr., a French fur trader whose journey in the mid-1800s took him from France to Quebec, Canada, then to St. Louis, Missouri and eventually up the Missouri River to what is now South Dakota.

"As I unfortunately did not know [Antoine], I hope he is remembered as being a brave gentleman who crossed the ocean from France to come to America and eventually become friends with the Native Americans, married in Native Tradition," said Thorsen, Le Beau's great-granddaughter.

The woman Antoine married was Mary Little Thunder, a member of the Two Kettle Band of Sioux. Antoine himself was later one of several Frenchmen adopted

into the Sioux Tribe at a Great Sioux Council, where he was given the name "Ogless," or "Red Shirt."

Le Beau worked with the American Fur Company before establishing a trading post along the Missouri River near present-day Akaska. The post became the foundation of a small town that would eventually bear his name and become a brief, yet bright, gateway to the West.

The Railroad

By the time the railroad arrived, Antoine Le Beau Sr. was gone, but the town was quickly gaining the reputation of a small metropolis. In 1907, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL) reached LeBeau, connecting the small Missouri River settlement to Watertown and markets farther east.

"As LeBeau prospered, so did the M&StL's westernmost extension; as LeBeau withered, so did its railroad," Hofsommer writes.

Cattle companies from Texas had taken notice of both LeBeau and the grasslands west of the Missouri. Once they learned cattle thrived west of the river, they began moving large herds into the region. Through its railroad, LeBeau offered those ranchers a new route to market.

The next trick was getting the cattle across the river. On the west side of the Missouri, large holding pens could accommodate as many as 3,500 animals. From there, cattle crossed the river aboard the Scotty Philip, a steam-powered ferry. Once across, they could be loaded directly onto eastbound rail cars.

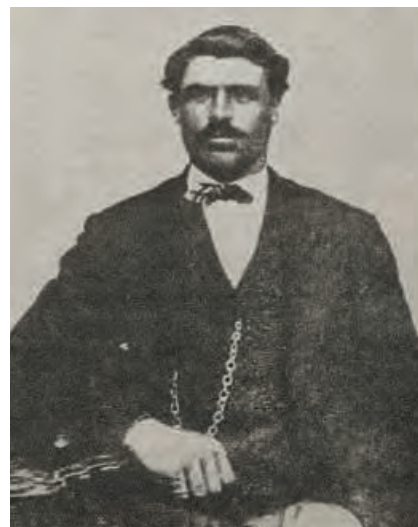
The mouth of Swan Creek on Lake Oahe where the ghost town of LeBeau resides under the waves. *Photo by Frank Turner*

In 1908, roughly 24,000 cattle passed through LeBeau on their way to and from the West River ranges, representing about \$1 million in livestock at the time. The feat helped cement the town's place as a major cattle-shipping point on the Missouri.

A Bustling Town

By the end of the season, LeBeau featured two banks, a newspaper, a drugstore, a general store and a local saloon. The growing town also boasted two lumberyards, a grain elevator and a livery, along with prominent businesses like the Idle Hour billiard and pool parlor, the Hotel LeBeau and Arcade Hotel. For entertainment, residents could even catch a show at Zimmer's Opera House.

As the town grew, M&StL officials planned to continue the rail line west of the



French fur trapper Antoine Le Beau Sr.
Photo submitted by Caroline Thorsen

Missouri by building a bridge across the Missouri, hinting at a long expansion all the way to the West Coast. The excitement only reinforced the idea that LeBeau was destined to become the gate to the west.

The buzz captured the attention of Murdo MacKenzie, general manager of the Matador Land and Cattle Company, and his wealthy son, Dode. Described as a likable and fine young man – while sober – Dode moved to LeBeau in his early 20s to oversee Matador's South Dakota operations.

A Questionable Killing

At the end of the 1909 shipping season, Dode MacKenzie began frequenting LeBeau's saloons. On Dec. 11, he was shot and killed by Bud Stephens, who was tending the bar that morning at Phil DuFran's saloon.

Local accounts of what happened that day – and of Dode MacKenzie's character – differ greatly. One local official described MacKenzie as a stand-up individual, while another local woman said he was known to shoot behind the heels of women in the town when "spirits took him."

Exactly what happened on Dec. 11 will never be known, but according to the version later presented by Stephens' defense at trial, MacKenzie became furious when Stephens failed to hear him order a drink. Rebuffed, MacKenzie crossed the street to purchase what he believed were



The paddle-wheeler Scotty Philip loads cattle at LeBeau, S.D., to be fattened on grasslands west of the Missouri River. For about three years, LeBeau was one of the Northwest's most important cattle-shipping towns.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society

.45-caliber shells, loaded his gun, walked back, pointed it at Stephens and pulled the trigger twice. As the story goes, MacKenzie had accidentally purchased .38-caliber shells, which failed to fire and instead plopped onto the floor. It was then that Stephens reached for his gun and began firing, killing the young MacKenzie.

A Dying Town

The trial resulted in Stephens' acquittal, drawing the ire of Dode MacKenzie's father and the Matador Cattle Company. The company effectively boycotted LeBeau, and no Matador cattle ever entered the town again.

Within months of the trial, a suspicious fire made matters worse. Although fires weren't uncommon in the Wild West, townsfolk discovered that the fire hose, telephone and telegraph lines had all been cut prior to the fire. No arsonist was ever caught.

The bad luck didn't stop there. A competing rail line to the north completed a bridge across the Missouri at Mobridge, undercutting LeBeau's stream of West River cattle. By 1924, M&StL abandoned the town, tearing out its segment of rail line. Within a year, the post office closed.

Beneath Lake Oahe

LeBeau had been a ghost town for decades when Lake Oahe came for what was left.

Construction of Oahe Dam near Pierre began in 1948 as part of a massive federal effort to control flooding and generate hydroelectric power along the Missouri River. In August 1958, the river was closed at the dam and the newly created reservoir began to fill.

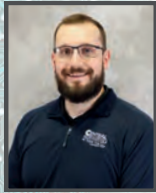
As the water rose, it eventually covered the old LeBeau townsite near the mouth of Swan Creek. The empty foundations, cellar holes and remnants of the once-bustling railroad town disappeared beneath Lake Oahe. Unlike most ghost towns in South Dakota that faded away with time, LeBeau vanished beneath the Missouri.



A crowd gathers around a band near the railroad in LeBeau, S.D., with the depot and Missouri River visible in the distance. About a year after this photo was taken, the town installed 10-foot-wide concrete sidewalks along Main Street.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society.

NATIONAL IT PROFESSIONALS DAY



Kelly
IT Systems Manager

SEPT. 15, 2026



Honoring IT Professionals, Electricians

From computers and iPads to hard hats and pliers, it takes all kinds of equipment and expertise to power the cooperative. In September, we celebrate two groups of professionals who play very different roles, yet share the same dedication to keeping the cooperative running smoothly: information technology (IT) professionals and electricians.

Sept. 15 is IT Professionals Day, when we recognize IT Systems Manager Kelly Kidwiler, who keeps our computer systems secure, reliable and efficient. From safeguarding member data to supporting the technology that powers our daily operations, he works diligently behind the scenes to help ensure internal systems function as intended. His efforts often go unnoticed until a computer program or system has an issue, and then we are quickly reminded of how vital his expertise truly is to the cooperative.

Sept. 18 is National Tradesmen Day. For this occasion, we recognize the electricians in our service department, and other employees who are licensed electricians, for their contributions as tradesmen. They work hard in the field, wiring houses, shops and grain bins and burying overhead lines. These projects often demand long hours and a deep knowledge of electricity. Thanks to their skill and dedication, our customers can count on safe, reliable power when it matters most.

Both groups embody the cooperative spirit of service, problem-solving and teamwork. While one keeps the digital lights on and the other keeps the yard light glowing, together they make our cooperative stronger. Each September, we proudly salute IT professionals and electricians for the important roles they play in powering Central Electric forward.

NATIONAL TRADESMEN DAY



Brandon
Appliance
Repair Tech,
Electrician



Ryan
Electrician



Kyle
Electrician



Dave
Metering &
Utility Electrician



Kevin
Electrician



Tim
Lineworker,
Electrician



Patrick
Manager of
Member Services,
Electrician



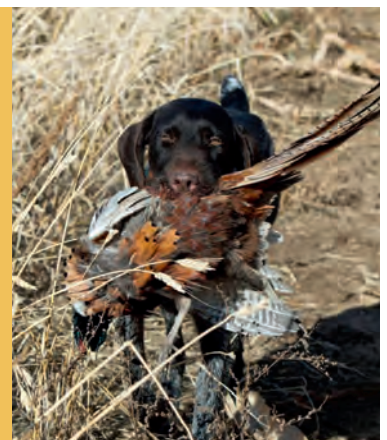
Rodney
Electrician

SEPT. 18, 2026



Ready for Hunters?

Call 605-996-7516
before hunters arrive
for a check-up on
heating equipment and
appliances.



Schlimgen Inducted into South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame

General Manager Ken Schlimgen retired in July after 41 years of dedicated service to Intercounty Electric and Central Electric. In August, he was inducted into the South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame in recognition of his leadership and numerous contributions to the cooperative community.

Schlimgen began his cooperative career in 1985 as a member services advisor. He went on to serve as the manager of member services before becoming general manager in 2015, a position he held until he officially retired in 2026.

Throughout his career, Schlimgen helped guide the cooperative through significant changes in equipment, technology and regulations. Under his leadership, Central Electric invested in infrastructure upgrades and line replacement projects to strengthen the electric system and provide safe, reliable service for members.

While the industry changed



Retired General Manager Ken Schlimgen, stands with his family after the Hall of Fame Banquet in Sioux Falls. Pictured from left to right is Neil Schlimgen (son), Ken Schlimgen, JoAnn Schlimgen (wife) and Kelli Boersma (daughter).

considerably during his four decades of service, his commitment to putting people first remained constant. Schlimgen's leadership strengthened the cooperative and helped build programs that will benefit members and local communities for years to come.

The South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame recognizes individuals whose

dedication and accomplishments have made a lasting impact on cooperatives and the people they serve. Schlimgen's induction is a fitting tribute to a career defined by service, leadership and commitment to the cooperative principles.



Attention H.S. Juniors: Apply for Youth Tour 2027

- **What is Youth Tour?** Launched in 1963, Youth Tour is a yearly trip to Washington, D.C., that provides students with a deeper understanding of history, civic engagement and the role of electric cooperatives in their communities.
- **When is it Held?** The trip takes place from June 17-23, 2027.
- **Who is Eligible?** Current high school juniors that live in Central Electric's eight-county service area are eligible to apply. That includes Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner and Sanborn Counties.
- **How do I Apply?** Students must complete an online application and attach a letter of recommendation from a teacher, coach, 4-H advisor or an adult that is not a family member.
- **Need More Information?** Visit Central Electric's website at centralec.coop/youth-tour. You may also call the office with questions at 605-996-7516.



OCT. 31
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
 Yankton, SD
www.harvesthalloween.com

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.

OCT. 2-3
Public Ghost Investigation
 Fort Sisseton State Park
 Langford, SD
 605-910-4465

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
 Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

OCT. 3
Kiwanis Kids Fun Run
 5 p.m.
 Corn Palace Plaza
 Mitchell, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
 Sioux Falls, SD

OCT. 4
Palace City Kiwanis Half Marathon/10k/5k
 7:30 a.m.
 Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 Facebook: Palace City Kiwanis Half Marathon

OCT. 4
St. Anthony's Fall Bazaar
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Swiss Steak 12-1:30 p.m.
 Hoven, SD

OCT. 4
Grace Lutheran Church & Little Brown Church Fundraiser
 Meal: 12-1:30 p.m. CDT
 Auction: 2 p.m. CDT
 Grace Lutheran Church
 Hayes, SD
 605-567-3559

OCT. 9-11
S.D. Showdown Truck Show
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Viborg, SD
 605-940-0087

OCT. 14
Soup & Pie Day & Country Store
 4 p.m.-7 p.m.
 First Baptist Church
 105 N. State St.
 Viborg, SD

OCT. 17
Buffalo County Fall Ball
Fire Dept. Fundraiser
 6 p.m.
 Fire Hall
 Gann Valley, SD

OCT. 17
Fabricadabra
 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Dakota Prairie Quilt Guild
 NFAA Easton Yankton
 Archery Center
 Yankton, SD
 605-660-1612

OCT. 23
A Night of Laughter & Music
 6 p.m.
 American Legion Post 15
 Sioux Falls, SD
 Tickets & Info: 605-336-3470

OCT. 24
Women of Today Craft Fair
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 West Central Becker Center
 Hartford, SD
 605-359-2049

OCT. 24
United Church of Christ's Annual Soup & Sweets Dinner
 4-7 p.m.
 105 N 2nd St.
 Hermosa, SD
 605-503-0843

OCT. 31
Treat Street
 Main Street
 Milbank, SD

NOV. 7
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD

NOV. 8
32nd Annual Lutefisk, Meatball & Lefse Supper
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

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.