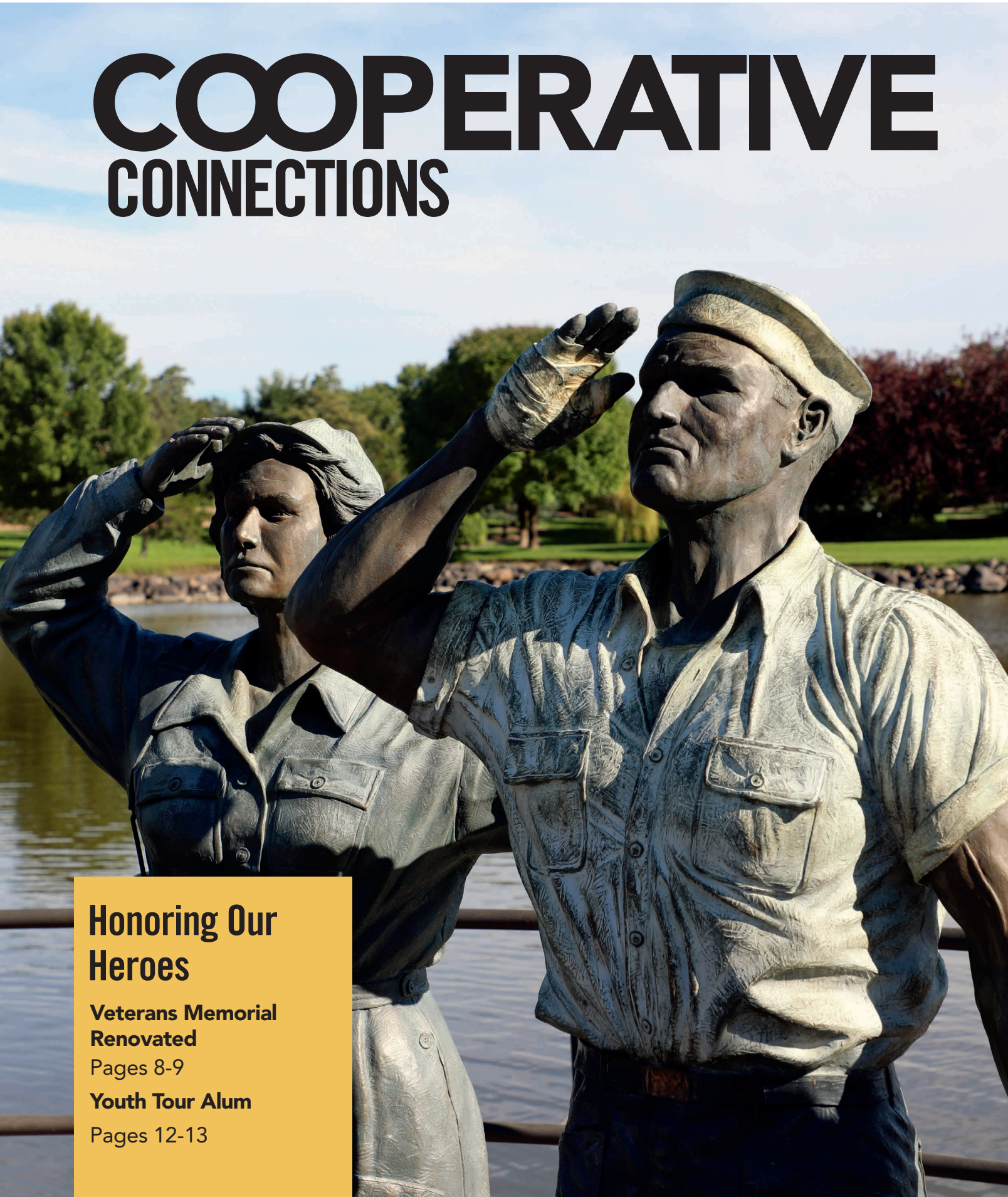
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

CENTRAL ELECTRIC
NOVEMBER 2026 VOL. 28 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Honoring Our Heroes

Veterans Memorial Renovated
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Youth Tour Alum
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What Does a Good Deal Look Like?



Ryan Mueller
General Manager

I had one of those parenting moments recently where I opened my mouth and suddenly heard my parents come out.

I was at the store with my 10-year-old son when he spotted a pack of baseball cards that he just had to have and proclaimed very confidently, "Dad, that's such a good deal!"

I looked at the price and said, "Of course it is. Everything is a good deal when it's not your money."

Then, just to really prove I am getting older, I added, "When I was your age, baseball cards cost about half that much."

The second I said it, I realized I had officially become my dad.

That little conversation stuck with me, because everything really comes down to value. We all notice when things cost more, especially when we start comparing today's prices to what they were 10 or 20 years ago. But the bigger question is whether you are still getting something worthwhile for what you are paying, and that is something we think about a lot at Central Electric as we look ahead to rate increases in 2027.



If you joined us at our Annual Meeting, you heard that we expect rates will likely need to increase again in 2027. We do not know yet what those rates will look like because we have not received finalized numbers from our wholesale power suppliers. We believe in being upfront with you as early as we can. Central Electric is owned and governed by you, our members. Every board member is also a member and pays the same rates as the rest of our membership.

That is also why the comment I made to my son about everything being a good deal when it is not your money stuck with me. At Central Electric, it is our members' money. Every decision we make about rates, equipment, projects, or investments ultimately affects the people who own this cooperative, and we do not take that lightly.

That means watching the costs we can control, finding efficiencies, and making smart decisions about where and when we invest in the system.

Some of the numbers behind those rising costs are hard to ignore. Information recently shared at an NRECA regional meeting showed that electric utility equipment costs have increased about 101% since 2019. Transformers are up roughly 93%, overhead conductor is up about 72%, underground conductor is up about 74%, and some categories have increased even more.

You do not have to be in the electric business to understand what that means. It simply costs a lot more today to build and maintain our electric system than it did a few years ago.

At the same time, demand for electricity continues to grow. We need to make sure the system can keep up with that growth so electricity is there when you need it. Whether you are heating your home, drying grain, running a shop, watering livestock, or just making supper, you expect the power to be available.

One change we have already made is the new demand charge implemented in 2026. Using a lot of electricity at one time creates higher costs for the cooperative. The demand charge helps match those costs more closely with the members creating them instead of spreading them across everyone. It also gives members more control because spreading out larger electric loads can help lower peak demand and, over time, help us manage costs for the entire cooperative.

Members also have other ways to help manage their bills. Taking part in load management programs, watching when larger electric loads are running and making use of energy-efficiency programs can all help.

We will keep working to get the most out of the equipment and infrastructure our members have already paid for. But we still must replace poles, transformers, wire, trucks, and other equipment, maintain our system, and make sure enough electricity is available when our members need it.

I still think those baseball cards were overpriced, and my son still thinks they were a bargain. It's a good reminder that everybody looks at cost and value a little differently. At Central, we keep that in mind as we make decisions to keep costs as fair and reasonable as we can, and make sure the reliability and service behind your electric bill continue to be something you can count on.

As for the baseball cards, next time I think I will just buy the pack and keep quiet before I accidentally turn into my parents again.

CENTRAL ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

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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 on Aug. 17, 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, Rural Electric Economic Development Fund activities, Public Utilities Commission activities and other management initiatives.

Customer Service Representatives Lindsey Wilson and Heather Wieczorek provided a SmartHub demonstration. Discussion followed.

General Manager Mueller shared information on a territory exception request by an individual building a house on the northern edge of Jerauld County.

CFC Regional Vice President Kristin Dolan presented the 2025 Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA). Discussion followed.

Director Wolbrink reported on East River Electric activities.

Director Banks reported on the SDAC board meeting.

The board reviewed the Basin Electric annual meeting.

The board reviewed resolutions for the NRECA regional meeting and the East River Electric annual meeting. Discussion followed.

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve a territory exception request for a Jerauld County location for up to a 50 KVA transformer service. The motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for Sept. 28, 2026.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE AUGUST 2026	YEAR TO DATE AUGUST 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	258,062,164 kWh	223,051,355 kWh
Electric Revenues	$ 31,693,704	$ 26,235,188
Total Cost of Service	$ 30,093,989	$ 25,594,103
Operating Margins	$ 1,599,715	$ 641,085

KEEP SAFETY AT THE HEART OF YOUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The holiday season, stretching from late November through mid-January, is widely considered the most joyous time of the year. Families gather, festive parties fill our calendars, and a spirit of generosity warms our homes. However, alongside the cheer comes a significant spike in travel, home decorating, and large-scale cooking. Consequently, preventable accidents and injuries dramatically increase during these months. To ensure your family and friends remain safe and injury-free throughout the festivities, keeping safety top of mind is crucial. Below is a comprehensive guide of tried-and-true advice to help you navigate the season securely.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared and Alert

For millions of people, the holidays mean hitting the road to visit loved ones. Unfortunately, car travel during this busy period carries the highest fatality rate of any major transportation form. Hundreds tragically lose their lives in crashes on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day alone. Alarmingly, alcohol impairment contributes to approximately one-third of these fatal incidents.

To stay safe on the roads, follow these essential guidelines:

- Winterize your vehicle: Prepare for harsh weather and keep a well-stocked emergency kit in your trunk.
- Rest up: Get plenty of sleep before departing to avoid the severe dangers of drowsy driving.
- Plan ahead: Leave early and anticipate heavy traffic to eliminate the dangerous temptation to speed.
- Buckle up: Ensure every passenger is properly restrained, regardless of the trip's length.
- Eliminate distractions: Put your cell phone away; it remains the primary driving distraction today.
- Designate a driver: Always use a completely sober driver. Alcohol and medications cause severe impairment.

Decorate with Caution and Care

Decking the halls instantly puts families in a holiday mood, but hospital emergency departments treat thousands of decorating-related injuries annually. Remember these safety tips:

- Keep poisonous seasonal plants, like mistletoe and holly berries, strictly out of the reach of children.
- If utilizing an artificial tree, verify it is clearly labeled as "fire resistant."
- For live trees, cut two inches off the trunk for better water absorption. Water daily and remove it when dry.
- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- Discard and replace light sets featuring broken sockets, frayed wires, or loose electrical connections.
- Turn off all holiday lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

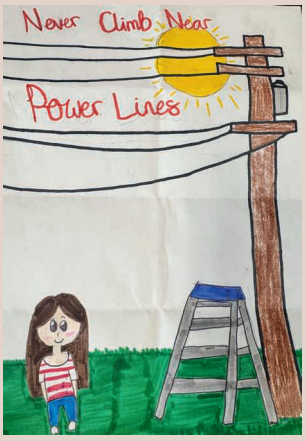
Watch Out for Holiday Fire-Starters

The glow of candles and fireplaces is a holiday staple, but combined with combustible decorations, house fire risks skyrocket. The National Fire Protection Association notes candles cause 46% of December home fires.

- Place candles in sturdy holders away from curtains and curious children.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked, high cabinet.
- Consider battery-operated flameless candles as a very safe alternative.
- Never burn pine branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces; they can cause flash fires.
- Use a protective screen for burning fires and never leave lit candles unattended.

Be highly alert to the extreme dangers of turkey fryers. Hundreds of fires and severe burns are linked to these devices. Consider using oil-less fryers or purchasing fried turkeys from professionals. If you must fry your own, strictly follow all U.S. Fire Administration guidelines.

By taking these simple, proactive steps, you can protect loved ones and ensure your holidays remain merry, bright, and safe.



"Never climb near power lines."

Penelope Poppen

Penelope warns readers to never climb near power lines. Thank you for sharing, Penelope! Penelope's parents are Brett and Megan Poppen, members of Black Hills 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.



THE FAMILY TABLE

ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

1 lb. hamburger
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 can (10 oz.) enchilada sauce
6 tortilla shells
1 cup shredded cheese
1 can pinto beans

Method

In a glass baking dish, put the browned hamburger, onion, pepper, beans and sauce in shells and roll up. Layer with shredded cheese on top. Bake 20 minutes in oven.
Optional: Use 1 cup of sliced black olives on top of cheese

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside.
Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing, and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted.
Makes a 9x13-inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

BEEF TERIYAKI

Ingredients:

1lb. boneless beef sirloin steak
2 tbsp. cornstarch
14 oz. beef broth
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp. brown sugar
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
3 cups broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups rice
1 2/3 cups water

Method

Cook the rice in water according to the directions on the bag.
Slice beef in very thin strips. In a large skillet, saute the beef strips until browned and the juices evaporate.
In a mixing bowl, combine cornstarch, beef broth, soy sauce, brown sugar and garlic powder. Mix thoroughly.
Add the liquid mixture and broccoli florets to the beef. Cook until mixture boils & thickens to a desired consistency, stirring frequently.
Serve over the cooked rice.

Karen Soulek
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.

Picture from Shutterstock.



Annual Meeting Highlights Year in Review

Central Electric Cooperative hosted its 26th Annual Meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 15, at the Corn Palace in Mitchell. A crowd of roughly 700 people, including 363 registered members and guests, attended the event.

Board President Duane Wolbrink and General Manager Ryan Mueller reviewed 2025 financial performance and recent accomplishments.

During the meeting, Manager of Operations Brian Bultje was honored for achieving 40 years of service. The family of lineman Chandler Bakley was also in attendance as we honored his memory. Bakley passed away in a car accident in January.

The youth area gave kids the opportunity to gear up like lineworkers and get their pictures taken. Youth drawings were held for an assortment of prizes. At the end of the meeting, drawings were held for energy bill credits.

Central Electric's board of directors and staff would like to thank the members who took time out of their busy schedules to attend the 2026 annual meeting. Your input in imperative to ensure a bright future.



Manager of Operations Brian Bultje was honored for achieving 40 years of service at Tri-County Electric and Central Electric. Pictured from left to right: Board President Duane Wolbrink, Brian Bultje, Michelle Bultje and General Manager Ryan Mueller.



Several kids enjoyed the photo booth in the youth area.



Youth prize drawings were held at the start of the meeting.



Lineman Chandler Bakley's family and fellow crew members gathered to honor his memory during the annual meeting. Bakley passed away in car accident in January. The Mitchell crew was presented with a memorial wooden flag to carry his legacy forward.

CLASSROOM TO KOREA

Mitchell-Area Educator Recalls Year at War

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Warren Thomas was three weeks into his second year of teaching in 1951 when he got a letter in the mail. The sixth grade teacher from Mitchell, S.D., had just married his wife, Luella, that June. Now, he was being drafted to war in Korea.

"I was not happy," Thomas, 97, said. "When you've been married three months, well, you just expect to be able to settle down and get on with your career."

When the draft notice came, the Mitchell superintendent asked the draft board in Woonsocket to at least allow Thomas to finish the semester. The request was denied; Thomas wasn't a farmer, rancher or other worker eligible for an occupational deferment.

"I was just a teacher," he recalled. "And they said anybody could be a teacher."

Less than a month later, he said his goodbye to Luella. The 22 year old was taken to Fort Sill, Okla., for eight weeks of basic training. After passing that, the men boarded the troop ship and awaited their next stop in Korea.

In April of 1952, Thomas was brought to an army base near the town Kumwha, in present day north-central South Korea near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Being the only college-educated soldier in the75th Field Artillery, Thomas was assigned the duties of battery clerk, which included administrative and clerical work for the unit. He described the work as routine.

"I don't claim to be a hero because I had a desk job due to my education experience," he said. "At the time I arrived in Korea, the front lines had been pretty well established."

One of Thomas' many duties included fire direction, requiring him to help direct the firing of his unit's artillery.

"We were firing our big guns on the Chinese and the North Koreans, but we couldn't get them dug out so we were in that one position," he recalled. "We fired against them and they fired against us … [They used] slave communist labor, and they dug back in the caves in the mountains, and we could see them – We were only about three miles apart in our rather static positions."

Soldiers earned points toward returning home based on their assignments, Thomas explained. Front-line infantrymen earned four points a month, reaching the required 36 points in nine months. Thomas earned three points a month in his position farther behind the lines, keeping him in Korea for a year.

Due to the stalemate, Thomas would remain in that one location. He bunked in a dugout he and a fellow soldier excavated from a hillside, counting the days before he could return home. During this period, Thomas relied on two things: his Chrsitian faith and letters from Luella.

"We wrote every day," he recalled. "I had a lot of college friends, some teaching friends and some relatives too, which a lot of the guys didn't have. During the 366 days I was on Korean soil, I received just about 500 letters by airmail."

After his military service, the couple taught school in Seattle before returning to South Dakota in 1954 to help his father on the farm. They moved into a farmhouse without running water or indoor plumbing, but Thomas was familiar with life without modern conveniences. Growing up, his family didn't get electricity until 1948 when Intercounty Electric Cooperative electrified rural Sanborn County.



Warren Thomas worked more than three decades in education.
Photo submitted by Kevin Thomas

Today, at age 97, Thomas lives on land north of Forestburg close to where he grew up decades ago without electricity.

The couple raised two sons, Kevin and Lyndon. Warren continued his career in education, becoming principal at Alpena High School and earning a master's degree in education from South Dakota State University. He retired in 1993 as principal of the Mt. Vernon Elementary School after more than 30 years in the profession.

He and Luella shared nearly 68 years of marriage before her passing in 2019.

Today, Thomas still takes opportunities to get out and learn. He has joined four Central Electric Cooperative tours of member-owned power generation facilities in North Dakota.

His memories span a childhood without electricity, a career in classrooms and a year of military service far from home. But the subject of Korea isn't one he brings up often.

"War is not good," Thomas said. "I didn't have any idea whether I'd be coming back or not because a lot of GIs were being killed in Korea. But I did survive, obviously."



HONORING OUR HEROES

Veterans Memorial Undergoing Revamp

The WWII memorial on Capitol Lake shows soldiers saluting the American flag after battle. Later, after the Korean and Vietnam soldier statues and walls were added beneath the flag, the WWII veterans appear to salute them too. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Jacob Boyko
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Lee Leuning's father was about 80 when he sat in his son's sculpting studio to become the sailor at South Dakota's World War II memorial.

For three days, Leuning studied his face and shaped his features. His father slowly began talking about the war. After 50 years, the experience still weighed heavy.

Today, more than 25 years later, Leuning's father stands immortalized in bronze on the shore of Capitol Lake in Pierre, representing sailors like himself who served in World War II.

He stands among five other slightly larger-than-life statues representing members of the U.S. armed forces. The display, called "Why We Fought," depicts the service members in tattered uniforms saluting toward the American flag.

"It's soldiers in each individual moment stepping out of battle and recognizing the flag and what they fought for," Leuning said.

A member of Northern Electric Cooperative, Leuning created the figures with fellow sculptor Sherri Treeby. Visitors to Pierre will find their work throughout the city, including statues along the Trail of Governors and a relief plaque commemorating the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge. At Capitol Lake, their sculptures honor veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Several of the World War II figures have family connections. Leuning used his mother's likeness for the army corps mechanic – she served as a plane mechanic in WWII – and his sons as models for the pilot and Marine. Treeby's father, an Army veteran, provided the face of the Coast Guardsman.

The WWII memorial was the first memorial unveiled, dedicated by Gov. Bill Janklow just four days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Leuning recalls being amazed by the turnout – thousands of visitors were at the Capitol for the dedication.

He remembers one Navy veteran watching the dedication parade from a hospital bed with an attendant.

"Every time a flag came by with an honor guard … that guy would have his aide get him out of the bed, and he'd snap to attention," Leuning said. "That, to me, showed this really means something to them."



Recent renovation improved water drainage. Previously, water under the granite tiles caused loosening. The tiles have since been replaced with sod grass. The stream bed was also replaced. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Subsequent dedications for the Korean and Vietnam memorials during Gov. Mike Rounds' administration attracted even more visitors. The state estimated 32,000 people attended the two-day Vietnam dedication in 2006. Some veterans watched the ceremony from pontoon bridges on Capitol Lake.

Unfortunately, years of exposure have taken a toll on the site. Trapped water beneath the granite tiles caused some to loosen and crumble, explained Leah Haugan, Special Projects Coordinator for the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration.

"Try as we might to keep it in great shape, you can't keep up with deteriorating stone," Haugan said.

Over the summer, the state began work on a renovation project for the memorials, which will bring some changes to the site.

Sections of granite have been replaced with grass. The military seals embedded in the walkway were lifted out and placed on pedestals. The stream from the Artesian well remains, but it's now bordered by a concrete curb. The granite tiles around the fountain were upgraded from ¾ inch thick tiles to 2 inch thick tiles, and the fountain enclosure was remade with concrete and granite tiles around the top.

Restoring the site is part of the state's commitment to honoring veterans and their service, Haugan said.

"Words are words, but when you build something like that that memorializes their efforts and their sacrifice, I think that shows them there's proof positive that we recognize and honor them," Haugan said.

The renovation does not bring back the Flaming Fountain's flame. Methane rising from the artesian well that feeds Capitol Lake kept the flame burning for decades, but it went out around 2015 when the flow could no longer sustain it. Haugan said a more ambitious fountain project is among the ideas for the site, depending on funding.

A separate proposal would honor Native American code talkers who served in World Wars I and II using their native languages to transmit messages that enemy forces were not able to translate. Funding for that memorial also remains unresolved.

Visiting the memorials, Leuning has seen what that recognition can mean to a family. The day after the Vietnam memorial dedication, he returned to take photos and was approached by a woman asking him to take her picture. He obliged, and the lady went up to the bronze statue and hugged it.

"She said, 'That's my Davy. It looks just like my Davy.'"

Then she pointed to her husband's name on the wall.



Leuning's Vietnam War memorial.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



Sculptor Lee Leuning with his dad, Donald Leuning, at the World War II Veterans Memorial dedication Sept. 15, 2001, in Pierre.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



An estimated 32,000 people attended the Vietnam War Memorial dedication in 2006.
U.S. Airforce Photo by 1st Lt. Carrie L. Kessler

Training, Equipment Testing Key to Safety in the Field



Brian Bultje
Manager of Operations

Before a crew member raises a bucket near a power line, they need to trust the truck's insulation. They also need to know their coworkers are prepared if something goes wrong.

That's why equipment testing and training continue year after year at Central Electric. Recently, our operations crews and electricians worked with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) to complete annual dielectric testing on our trucks.

The tests check whether each truck's insulated parts still provide the protection they're designed to provide to help ensure our safety. Over time, wear and tear along with exposure to the elements can affect that insulation. Testing helps us find problems before a crew relies on a truck in the field.

Our line crews also practiced pole top rescue. If someone is injured or can't get down from a pole, coworkers need to be ready to help. Practicing each year helps keep those skills sharp.

Most members won't see this part of the job, but it matters every time our crews head out. Thanks to SDREA for helping us look out for one another and stay ready to serve our members.









Mitchell Regional Habitat for Humanity accepts a low-interest loan for the ReStore. Pictured from left to right: Habitat Board Member Skyler Mickelson, ReStore Manager Victoria Kostopolous, Mitchell Regional Habitat for Humanity Director Rachel Hagenbaugh, Central Electric General Manager Ryan Mueller and Habitat Board Member Jade Miller.

REED Fund Supports Habitat ReStore

Central Electric Cooperative recently assisted Mitchell Regional Habitat for Humanity in acquiring a low-interest loan from the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund for the new Habitat ReStore in Mitchell.

The organization has leased a 6,592-square-foot space where the ReStore will offer affordable building materials, appliances, furniture and home goods. The store is intended to serve Mitchell and surrounding rural communities.

Mitchell Regional Habitat for Humanity works with volunteers, contractors, churches, businesses and schools on home construction, repairs, accessibility projects and neighborhood revitalization. The Habitat ReStore offers another resource to support that work and help strengthen housing in the region.

The REED Fund was established in 1996 by electric cooperatives to help finance projects that strengthen local economies and improve quality of life. Central Electric was one of the electric cooperatives that helped create the fund. As borrowers repay their loans, the money becomes available for future projects.

Organizations interested in opportunities with the REED Fund can call General Manager Ryan Mueller at 605-996-7516 or visit ReedFund.coop.

RURAL ELECTRIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INC.
REED FUND

It's Time to Apply for Youth Tour!

Each year, Central Electric offers high school juniors a chance to apply for the Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C. The educational journey, hosted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), takes place June 17-23, 2027.

On the trip, students will learn about government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification in our nation's capital. Tour highlights include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol and Arlington National Cemetery. Students will also take a river boat cruise across the Potomac River.

Applicants must be high school juniors during the 2026-2027 school year who permanently reside in Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn County of South Dakota. Juniors selected as Youth Tour delegates must obtain signed parental consent. Each application should include a letter of recommendation from a teacher, coach, 4-H advisor or an adult that is not a family member.

Visit www.centralec.coop/youth-tour or call 1-800-477-2892 to learn more. Applications will be accepted through Dec. 10, 2026.





How a Youth Tour Friendship Changed Marty Larsen's Life

The 1969 South Dakota Youth Tour group. Marty Larsen is pictured in the top row, seventh from the right. John Nordlie is pictured in the top row, fifth from the left. *Photo courtesy from the SDREA Archives*

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When Marty Larsen earned a spot on the 1969 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., through Turner-Hutchinson Electric Cooperative, he had every reason to believe dairy farming would remain at the center of his life. Turner-Hutchinson, a predecessor of today's Southeastern Electric Cooperative, served the area around his family's dairy farm seven miles west of Hurley.

Youth Tour gives high school students sponsored by their local electric cooperatives the chance to spend a week in Washington, D.C., visiting historic sites, learning about government and electric cooperatives and meeting students from across the country. South Dakota began sending students on the trip in 1963. Larsen went just six years later.

Back then, Turner-Hutchinson Electric selected its Youth Tour delegates through 4-H, rewarding young people for their accomplishments. In 1969,

Larsen placed eighth at the national 4-H dairy judging competition in Ohio. The accomplishment earned him the cooperative's Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

But before Larsen could make the trip, an Army recruiter threw a wrench in his plans, warning him that he was likely to be called for service soon. Rather than wait to be drafted, Larsen chose to enlist, expecting to head to basic training and then Vietnam.

Not long after, Larsen received an induction notice, but first he had to complete a military physical. Larsen, who is hard of hearing, failed the hearing test and was disqualified from service. Had he passed, he said he would have left for basic training about a week before the 1969 Youth Tour departed.

"Somebody upstairs was looking out for me," he said.

With the Army no longer standing in the way, Larsen was going on the trip. To prepare, his mother bought him new clothes and a new pair of shoes. Even still, he returned home with the soles nearly worn through. At the Washington Monument, he and a small group of students climbed 897 steps rather than wait in the long elevator line, then rode the elevator back down.

Near the end of the trip, the group ate at a seafood restaurant along the Potomac River. Larsen persuaded the chaperones that the students ought to try lobster, something many of them had never eaten before. When the waitress brought lobster bibs to the table, Larsen passed his around and asked everyone to sign it.

His mother later saved the bib in the scrapbook she kept of his childhood, alongside years of 4-H ribbons, judging cards and other keepsakes. Larsen still has the scrapbook today.

The students took an evening cruise on a multilevel paddlewheel-style boat on the Potomac, complete with live music. South Dakota Youth Tour students continue the tradition of a river cruise today aboard the Cherry Blossom.

For Larsen, though, the most important part of Youth Tour was the people he met. One of them was John Nordlie of Sioux Falls, a young photographer who worked with the Argus Leader and later attended Augustana College.

The two became friends during the trip and stayed in contact after returning home.

"We stayed friends after we got back," he said. "I was in his wedding party when he got married. He was in my wedding party when I got married."

For the next several years, Larsen stayed close to the life he knew, working in dairy and welding. Nordlie, meanwhile, developed an interest in pipe organs. In 1983, he called Larsen and asked if he wanted to come work for him building organs for cathedrals and music halls.

Larsen agreed, bringing his experience as a welder, machinist and mechanical problem-solver into a trade he had never expected to enter. He spent the next 20 years working with Nordlie and became deeply involved in the mechanics of organ construction.

His work eventually went far beyond basic fabrication. Larsen built components, developed specialty tools and designed machinery for organ builders. One machine he created transformed a wire-bending process that had taken workers several minutes per piece, allowing them to produce several pieces per minute. Other tools he built ended up with organ companies elsewhere in the United States and overseas.

The work also took Larsen far beyond southeastern South Dakota. Over the years, he traveled throughout the country and to Japan, worked on historic instruments and helped construct and restore pipe organs in churches, museums and other settings. More than four decades after entering the trade, he is still involved in restoration work.

Looking back, Larsen can draw a direct line from the Youth Tour trip to the career that followed. Without the trip, he may never have met Nordlie. Without that friendship, the call inviting him into organ building may never have come.

"It meant a lot to me to be able to go on that trip," Larsen said. "It changed me from a dairy farmer to a pipe organ builder."

More than 50 years later, Larsen still has the scrapbook his mother kept from the trip, along with the signed lobster bib awnd other reminders of that week in Washington. But the most lasting thing he brought home was the friendship that, years later, opened the door to a life he never could have planned.



Marty Larsen and his wife, Barbara.
Photo by Frank Turner

Interested in attending Youth Tour?
Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about the application process.

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Hunting Safety

Photo by ©Chimperil59 via Canva.com



Patrick Soukup
Manager of Member Services and Marketing

As autumn arrives across South Dakota, hunters are preparing for another memorable season in the field. For electric cooperatives, fall hunting season provides an opportunity to remind members that safety extends beyond the fields and into the areas where electrical infrastructure and outdoor recreation intersect.

Whether you are pursuing pheasants, waterfowl, deer or other game, the most important goal is ensuring everyone returns home safely.

Know Your Equipment, Surroundings

Before heading into the field, inspect firearms, ammunition, bows and other hunting equipment. Treat every firearm as if it is loaded, keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

Hunters should become familiar with their surroundings, including electrical poles, overhead power lines, substations and other utility equipment. Never use utility poles, guy wires or electrical structures as shooting rests or targets.

Be Certain of Your Target

South Dakota's fields, shelterbelts and wetlands can become busy during hunting season. Always positively identify your target and know what lies beyond it before pulling the trigger.

Shooting toward electrical equipment can damage infrastructure, interrupt service and create serious hazards for hunters, utility employees and the communities we serve.

Respect Private Property, Utility Easements

Many electric cooperative facilities are located on or near privately owned farm land. Always obtain permission before hunting on private property, respect posted restrictions and avoid entering fenced utility facilities or restricted areas.

If you discover damaged poles, downed power lines or other electrical hazards while hunting, stay away and notify the electric cooperative immediately. Never approach or touch a downed power line, as it may still be energized.

A Commitment to Safety

Central Electric is committed to providing safe, reliable electricity while supporting our rural communities. Hunters can help protect that reliability by exercising good judgment, respecting electrical infrastructure and reporting potential hazards.

This fall, hunt responsibly, respect the land and remember that safety is a shared responsibility. The best hunting season is one where everyone returns home safely.

Surplus Equipment For Sale

The items pictured below were declared surplus and will be sold to the highest bidder at Central Electric's Betts Road office on Tuesday, Nov. 10. Bidding is open to the public.

- **When:** Tuesday, Nov. 10. On-site viewing at 9:00 a.m. Sale begins at 9:30 a.m.
- **Where:** Central Electric Cooperative, 25487 403rd Avenue, Mitchell S.D.
- **How to Bid:** Interested parties must be present or have a bidder representative present to act on their behalf and sign the paperwork.

Cash or check payment is required in full the day of the sale. For more information about the surplus equipment, contact Brian Bultje, Andrew Baier or Lincoln Feistner at 605-996-7516.




2006 All Terrain Genie Lift Model GS-2668RT
Hours: 1,210
Opening Bid: $3,000
Call Lincoln with questions



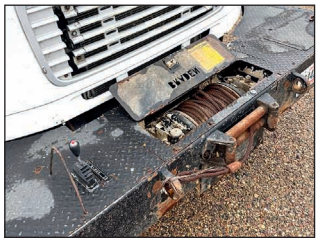

1984 Komatsu Forklift Model FG25-8
Hours: 2,550
Opening Bid: $3,500
Call Andrew with questions




2012 Advance Floor Scrubber Model Condor 4030
Cylindrical Brushes with 2 Front Brooms
40" Scrub Path / 49" Squeegee
Hours: 350
Opening Bid: $2,500
Call Andrew with questions




2007 GMC Sierra 3500 4x4 Dually Flatbed Pickup
6.6 Liter Duramax Diesel Engine
Allison 6-Speed Auto Transmission / 2026 DOT Inspected / Tires in Excellent Condition
Miles: 191,850
Opening Bid: $9,500
Call Brian with questions

2013 M2-106 Freightliner 2-Wheel Drive Truck
6 Cylinder Cummins Diesel Engine
Allison 6-Speed Auto Transmission / Air Brakes / Front Winch / PTO Pump Included / Tires in Excellent Condition / In-Frame Overhaul at 171,400 miles
Miles: 232,000
Opening Bid: $7,750
Call Brian with questions




1993 Wells Cargo 7x12 Enclosed Trailer
Opening Bid: $1,500
Call Brian with questions



NOV. 7
Wine, Cheese & Chocolate Stroll
Deadwood, SD
www.deadwood.com/events/

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. 31
4-H Trunk or Treat
12-3 p.m.
Davison County Fairgrounds
Mitchell, SD

NOV. 6-8
Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend
Hill City, SD

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

NOV. 7
Black Hills Meat Fest
Free Admission
Central States Fairgrounds
Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
Rapid City, SD
Facebook.com/BlackHillsMeatFest

NOV. 7-15
Rustic Designs & More Christmas Country Show
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

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

NOV. 14
Kick-Off to Christmas & Santa Shop
10 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
7 p.m. Parade
Eureka, SD
605-230-1777

NOV. 14
Lake Campbell Lutheran Church Lutefisk Supper
Seatings: 4:30, 5:45, 7 p.m.
Volga, SD
Reservations: 605-690-4868

NOV. 14
Club 14 Craft & Vendor Fair
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hendricks Public School
Hendricks, MN
605-690-5586

NOV. 14-15
Zonta Holiday Craft & Vendor Show
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Ramkota Hotel
Pierre, SD

NOV. 21
Lille Norge Fest
8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Canyon Lake Activity Center
2900 Canyon Lake Dr.
Rapid City, SD
borgundlodge.org

NOV. 27
Parade of Lights
7-8 p.m.
Main Street
Chamberlain, SD
ChamberlainSD.com/events

NOV. 27-28
Sip, Shop & Stroll
Viborg, SD

NOV. 28
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 4-5
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Civic Center
Hot Springs, SD
951-591-2335

DEC. 5
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
4 p.m.
Yankton, SD
605-665-5234
CityofYankton.com

DEC. 6
Hometown Christmas
Downtown
Plankinton, SD

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.