

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Katie Grott, field station manager at SDSU's Cottonwood research facility near Philip, stays busy overseeing several ongoing projects designed to deliver practical and profitable solutions for producers.

Blazing new trails

Ag research abounds at Cottonwood
Pages 8-9

Line work courses through their veins
Pages 12-13

Recognizing people behind the power



Ken Schlingen
General Manager

Many of you know your electric cooperative employees. It is very likely that you see them at community events, attending church or shopping in local stores. Your cooperative has 43 employees that cover a variety of skill sets.

We have employees that manage our inventory, complete accounting tasks, provide communications, manage IT, and employees who service your electrical wiring, HVAC equipment and appliances. My guess is that the most well-known position at your cooperative is that of a lineworker. Lineworkers are so well-known that we celebrate them during Lineworker Appreciation Day, which is April 11. There is no doubt that a lineworker's job can be tough. It's an essential job that must be done, at times, in challenging conditions.

The work can be physically challenging. Lineworkers must be committed to their career, because it's not just a job, it's a lifestyle. The long hours and ever-present danger can truly take a toll. Lineworkers are always on call, they often work non-traditional hours and they work outdoors in all kinds of weather. While the job does not require a four-year college degree, it does require dedication, advanced technical skills and years of hands-on training in the field.

Did you know that becoming a journeyman lineworker takes more than 7,000 hours of training, or about four years? That's because working with high-voltage equipment requires specialized skills, experience and an ongoing mental toughness. Shortcuts are not an option, and there is no room for error in this line of work.

Despite the many challenges, lineworkers are committed to powering our cooperative. During severe weather events that bring major power outages, lineworkers are among the first ones called. They must be ready to leave the comfort of their home and families unexpectedly. That's why the lineworker's family is also an important part of our cooperative family. They understand the importance of the job to the community.

Nationwide, there are approximately 120,000 electric lineworkers. Central Electric has 19 lineworkers and a great support staff that are responsible for keeping power flowing 24/7, 365 days a year. To do this, they maintain 4,476 miles of power lines across 4,500 square miles in eight counties. In addition to the highly visible tasks lineworkers perform, their job today goes far beyond climbing utility poles to repair a wire. Today's lineworkers are information experts who can pinpoint power outages from miles away. Line crews now use laptops, tablets and other technologies to map outages, survey damage, track inventory, keep records and troubleshoot problems.

Being a lineworker may not seem like a glamorous job, but it is absolutely essential to the life of our community. Without the exceptional dedication and commitment of these hardworking men and women, and the employees who support them, we simply would not have the reliable electricity that we need for everyday life.

So, the next time you see one of your cooperative employees, please thank them for the work they do to keep power flowing, regardless of the time of day or weather conditions. After all, they are the power behind your power.

Until next month, be safe!

To contact your cooperative with questions, you may call 1-800-477-2892 or email cec@centralec.coop.

Please see page 15 to enter the lineworker appreciation trivia prize drawing!

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

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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 Jan. 17, 2022, at Central Electric Cooperative's Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting. They reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

BOARD REPORT

- General Manager Ken Schlimgen updated the board on the following:
- East River manager group
- Rural Electric Economic Development meeting
- Basin Electric updates
- Covid-19 protocols

East River Director Wolbrink gave the highlights from the East River board meeting. Discussion followed.

Directors Wolbrink, Loudner and Gustafson discussed topics covered at the SDREA annual meeting. SDREA board member Loudner reviewed the SDREA board meeting. Discussion followed.

BOARD ACTION

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to appoint Director Hofer as delegate for NISC and NRTC Annual meetings. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to appoint Director Bechen as voting delegate at the NRECA annual meeting. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to appoint Director Wolbrink as voting alternate at the NRECA annual meeting. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to donate \$2,000 to the Sanborn County 4-H Club building addition and apply for matching funds from Basin Electric and CoBank if available. Motion carried.
A motion was made and seconded to authorize management to complete the purchase of Howard property. Motion carried.

The next board meeting was scheduled for Feb. 21. Please contact the cooperative office if you have questions about the board meeting.

Table with 3 columns: FINANCIAL REPORT, YEAR TO DATE JAN 2022, YEAR TO DATE JAN 2021. Rows include Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales, Electric Revenues, Total Cost of Service, and Operating Margins.

10 helpful tips for spring energy savings

Every season of the year provides many unique energy-saving opportunities for you and your family.

Here are some ideas particularly well suited for you to apply this spring.

- 1. Clear the air:** Open windows to allow fresh air to circulate throughout your home.
- 2. Cook outside:** Enjoy the sunshine by using your grill or smoker to add festive flavors to meals.
- 3. Search and seal:** Cracks and spaces let conditioned air slip outdoors. Caulk and weatherstrip to seal leaks.
- 4. Natural light:** Open blinds and curtains and turn off the lights to save energy and money.
- 5. Be fan friendly:** Use ceiling fans to circulate air and keep cool.
- 6. Atmospheric adjustment:** Remember to adjust your thermostat settings for the warmer months ahead.
- 7. Tune up:** Schedule an appointment with a qualified heating, ventilating and air conditioning technician to identify any potential problems with your system.
- 8. Peak savings:** Plan household chores that require electricity during off-peak hours (when energy demand is low).
- 9. Take charge:** Consider disconnecting electrical devices you don't use regularly until you need them. Plugged-in devices use energy even when not in use.
- 10. Move outdoors:** Time spent outdoors offers opportunities to turn off lights, TVs, computers and appliances. You'll be more active, have more fun and save more money.



DON'T TOY WITH PERSONAL SAFETY



When playing outdoors, keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other equipment your electric co-op uses to send electricity to your home.

Flying remote-controlled toys and drones is a great way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other electrical equipment can be dangerous and, in some cases, even deadly.

- Never fly kites or drones near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.



Fire Prevention

Jonie Smith

Jonie Smith sends out an important safety message for campers to extinguish fires before leaving the area. Jonie is the daughter of Myles and Amber Smith of Castlewood. They are members of H-D 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.

LIP-SMACKING BEVERAGES

BLUEBERRY BANANA SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:
 1 cup spinach
 1/2 cup water
 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
 1 tbsp. almond butter
 1/2 cup bananas, frozen
 1/2 cup blueberries, frozen
 1 tbsp. chia seeds
 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
 1/4 tsp. minced ginger
 1/2 cup berry yogurt
 fresh blueberries, for garnish (optional)
 Ground black pepper to taste

METHOD

In blender, blend spinach, water, apple cider vinegar, almond butter, frozen bananas, frozen blueberries, chia seeds, cinnamon, ginger and yogurt until smooth. Pour into two glasses and garnish with fresh blueberries, if desired.

culinary.net

FRENCH ICED COFFEE

Ingredients:
 3 cups strong coffee
 2 cups sugar
 1 pint cream or half & half
 1 qt. milk or almond milk
 2 tsp. (vanilla) flavoring (other flavorings also work)

METHOD

Dissolve sugar in hot coffee. Cool. Add other ingredients. Pour into containers (I use the tall 2 c. Tupperware for individual drinks, but also use quarts.) Freeze. Take out and let thaw.

Ruth Schilberg, Viborg

SWAMP WATER

Ingredients:
 1 small package lime gelatin
 1 cup hot water
 1 (12-oz.) can frozen unsweetened pineapple juice concentrate
 2 liters carbonated water

METHOD

Mix lime gelatin with hot water to dissolve. Add frozen concentrate and carbonated water. Chill. Makes 10 servings.

Lily Gums, Clear Lake

FRUIT SLUSH

Ingredients:
 4 cups sugar (granulated)
 6 cups water
 1 46 oz. can pineapple juice
 2 12 oz. cans frozen orange juice
 1 12 oz. can frozen lemonade (pink or yellow)
 2 small bananas, mashed very fine (or other fruit)

METHOD

Mix and bring to a boil the sugar and water. When mixture is cool, add juices and fruit. Put in 5-quart pail and freeze. When frozen, use 2-3 scoops in a glass with 7-Up or ginger ale. Great drink for spring or summer.

Alana Neville, Milesville

STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:
 2 cup fresh strawberries, stemmed & halved
 1 cup plain yogurt
 1/2 cup ice cubes or chips
 1/2 tsp. ground cardamom
 1/4 tsp. ginger

METHOD

In a blender, combine all ingredients. Blend on high speed until smoothie texture. Makes 2-12 oz. glasses.

Jane Ham, Rapid City

Please send your favorite casserole 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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Q: I'm planning to buy a new home this year, and I want to know how efficient it is. What questions should I ask my home inspector?

A: Many factors go into buying a home. For most people, energy efficiency does not top the list, and unfortunately, houses don't typically come with energy efficiency ratings.

It can be difficult for a buyer to know how efficient a home is when viewing the listing online or taking a tour. But your home inspector can help you identify potential energy costs and energy-efficiency upgrades.

Some homes may already be efficient, while other homes may need improvements. There's nothing wrong with buying an inefficient home, but you will want to know what you're getting into and that you can afford the energy costs once you get the keys.

Here are five questions to ask your home inspector:

1. What is the condition of the electrical panel and wiring throughout the home?

A panel upgrade or rewiring can be a costly endeavor. An older panel and wiring aren't inefficient, but it can delay or make some energy-efficiency projects more expensive. In several homes I have worked on, older wiring had to be replaced before insulation could be added.

Make sure the panel can accommodate any new appliances you might want to add, such as air conditioning or an electric vehicle charger.

2. How old is the HVAC system, and how efficient is it? Has it been maintained?

The typical lifespan of an HVAC system is 15-25 years. As the largest energy user and often the most expensive equipment in the home, you will want to know the energy, maintenance and replacement costs. If the HVAC system is old, consider the cost for a replacement.

3. How old is the water heater?

The lifespan of a storage water heater is about 10 years. The cost to replace a water heater ranges from \$400 to \$3,600, depending on the unit type and installation costs. If an older water heater is in a finished space or on a second floor, replace it before it fails and potentially causes water damage.

4. What are the levels and conditions of insulation in the attic, walls and floor?

Insulation is one of the easiest and most beneficial energy-efficiency upgrades you can make. It isn't as pretty as new countertops, but it can make a home more comfortable, waste less energy and reduce outdoor noise.

To cut down on drafts and make insulation more effective, air seal before insulating. Seal cracks, gaps or holes in the walls, floors, ceiling and framing between heated and unheated spaces.

If your new home needs insulation and air sealing, make this your efficiency priority. The sooner you do it, the more energy you will save over time. Recommended insulation levels vary by location. You can find information about insulation and air sealing at www.energy.gov.

5. Are there any extras in this home that will increase my utility bills?

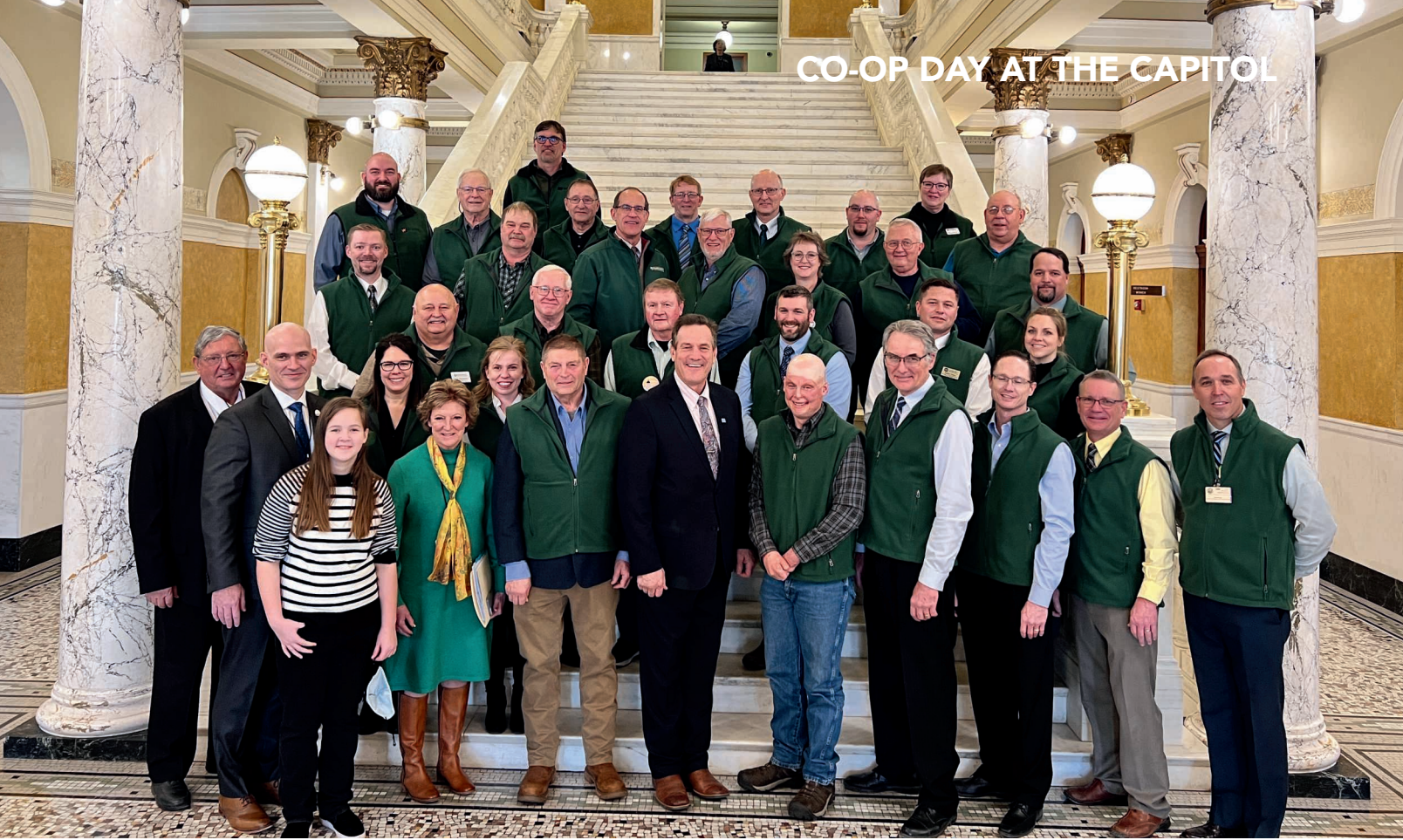
Any motors in the home or on the property should be assessed, including pumps for wells and septic systems. When it comes to extras, remember life's luxuries aren't free. You will want to be able to afford the cost of operating amenities, such as pools, hot tubs and saunas.

Additional considerations - You can request the home's utility bills for the previous two years from the seller or realtor. Your bill will not be the same due to your personal energy habits, but this information will give you an estimate of the home's energy costs.

When buying a home that checks all your boxes, ask your home inspector the right efficiency questions. Understanding the condition of appliances, features and building materials can save you from hidden surprises in your home and on your first utility bills.



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group



Electric cooperative leaders and employees from across the state traveled to the Capitol in Pierre to discuss industry-related issues with lawmakers. The group is shown above with Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden (front/center). *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Electric Cooperative Day at the Capitol

Billy Gibson

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In-depth discussions about electric vehicles, vaccinations, taxation and other hot topics were in abundance during the 2022 Electric Cooperative Day at the Capitol. Held in February just before the legislative session's "crossover day," more than 30 electric cooperative leaders traveled to Pierre in wintry weather to engage in face-to-face conversations with elected officials.

The co-op representatives also served a hot meal to more than 300 individuals including legislators, government employees, lobbyists, senior government officials and others as the centerpiece of the day's activities.

The meal, prepared by former co-op employee Roger Crom and former co-op board member Ken Gillaspie, stood as a gesture of appreciation to lawmakers and their staffs for their often arduous work

going through the process of crafting legislation.

The cooperative directors, managers and employees from organizations around the state represented the collective interests of more than 300,000 cooperative member-owners.

Topics of interest included renewable power and electric vehicles (EVs) as lawmakers considered rules pertaining to EVs such as creating a network of charging stations in the state, licensing rules and fees for public road use.

The cooperative visitors observed conversations and deliberations among lawmakers taking place during committee meetings and hearings including appropriations, education, transportation, energy and others. Afterwards, they took the opportunity to meet with their representatives, ask questions and dig deeper into the issues that could have a direct impact on electric cooperative consumers.

After the meal was served, co-op leaders gathered for an update from lobbyists representing electric cooperatives and their members.

Don Heeren, president of the board at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, said he looks forward to the annual Electric Cooperative Day at the Capitol because it allows him and other co-op leaders to engage in close, productive conversations with lawmakers.

"Over the past couple of years we've been forced to conduct our legislative business largely over the internet, and that's been very restrictive," Heeren said. "There's just no substitute for having personal conversations when you're charged with the responsibility of making sure the collective voice of the members you represent is heard."

Heeren added: "To be able to sit down together and have our discussions over a hot meal makes it even better."



ROBO RANCHING

Cottonwood Field Station Manager Katie Grott and student Lily McFadden take a break from their work. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Cottonwood Field Research Station is abuzz with studies designed to increase producer profitability

Billy Gibson

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There are robo-cops, robo-codes and robo-calls. But robo-cattle ranching?

That futuristic phrase is part of the nomenclature surrounding a beef production movement called “precision ranching,” an offshoot of the “precision agriculture” approach that promotes the use of advanced technology to improve yields and profitability.

This new wave of ag research evokes postmodern images of bovines grazing through the fields wearing high tech gadgets. Turns out, it’s a description not too far off the mark, according to Dr. Jamie Brennan, an assistant professor of research and extension specialist at South Dakota State University.

Based out of the West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City, Brennan is using SDSU’s Cottonwood Field Station near Philip to study the viability of using high-tech GPS tracking collars to deliver real-time information on steer activity and behavior.

“By monitoring animal movement we can identify changes in behavior that might indicate sickness, for example, which can be sent as an alert to producers,” Brennan said.

He’s deploying the type of advanced accelerator technology commonly associated with Fitbit watches, vehicle trackers, smartphone map apps and other monitoring devices.

“We’re working to develop the capability for producers to easily identify not only where animals are on the landscape but also where they are selecting for grazing and resting locations,” Brennan said. “The work we are doing at the station is designed to determine the potential benefits - and possible shortcomings - of precision ranching technology and to predict the return on investment for the producer.”

Brennan’s project is just one of several intriguing studies currently in play at the Cottonwood Field Station. One of six field research centers in the SDSU Agriculture Experiment Station network, Cottonwood is among the

oldest facilities of its kind in the country. Covering more than 2,600 acres, Cottonwood was established in 1907 and has received regional and national acclaim with impactful results such as developing a new method of determining stocking rates for western regions and devising the Universal Soil Loss Equation now known as RUSLE2.

These scientific forays into precision ranching include virtual fencing (Vence™), Smart Feeder™ systems, mobile app-based mineral consumption monitors, methane emissions measuring devices and soil moisture monitoring.

The exploration into virtual fencing holds plenty of promise in helping producers manage their livestock and landscape more efficiently and effectively, according to Cottonwood Field Station manager Katie Grott.

While it may be hard for an old-school rancher to envision a world without barbed wire, fence posts and cattle guards, moving this technology to market could result in substantial savings for farm families.

Grott explained the technology is a much more sophisticated version of the kind of residential-grade invisible fence



A cow at the Cottonwood Field Research Station waits patiently for a Smart Feeder to be loaded with hay.

designed to keep pets from wandering around the neighborhood streets. Virtual fencing is already being used to contain goat herds and other smaller animals with measurable success.

The latest research testing involves combining an electrical pulse administered through a GPS-enabled collar, combined with an auditory stimulus to keep cattle confined within certain boundaries. A software program allows the rancher to define those boundaries as needed for successful grazing rotation and land management.

“We’re looking at how virtual fencing affects animal behavior, performance and natural resources,” Grott said.

Dr. Krista Ehlert, assistant professor and extension specialist, is also involved in the project and adds, “Virtual fencing turns physical labor into cognitive labor for producers, helping to reduce labor and potentially improve work-life balance for producers.”

Other projects at Cottonwood include work being led by assistant professor Dr. Hector Menendez. The research uses technology developed by the Rapid City firm, C-Lock. C-Lock has a scale that collects daily weight records on animals every time they drink. The data provide

valuable information on stocking rates, forage quality and weather conditions on individual animal performance.

“It’s an exciting time in the area of agricultural research,” Menendez said. “We have secured funds to proceed with a project on interdisciplinary engagement in animal systems and precision livestock water monitoring. And we’re excited about holding producer-oriented workshops, training classes and field days to educate producers on how these advancements can improve their profitability.”

One rancher who keeps a close eye on the latest research results is Eric Jennings, president of the South Dakota Cattleman’s Association.

“There are some interesting new concepts being explored through this facility and others,” Jennings said. “We’re watching to see which of these systems prove to become both practical and affordable for producers to implement in their daily operations. For instance, the idea of virtual fencing has been around for a while, but the research and application of new technology has emerged as a viable option.”

Brennan, Ehlert, Menendez and others who work daily to blaze new pathways

Amount of acres
researchers have
2,640
at their disposal at the
Cottonwood
Field Station

for cattle producers take gratification from knowing their labor and application of scientific methods could result in a farm family turning the corner toward profitability and sustaining a generational way of life. Plus, they enjoy drawing students into the process and inspiring the next generation of farmers.

“They receive training in animal science, rangeland ecology, precision technology, modeling, computer programming and boots-on-the-ground ranching,” Menendez said. “One of our aims is to encourage the next generation of professionals that can merge precision technology to maximize rangeland livestock production while maintaining ranching culture.”

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Grace Cheeseman
Chamberlain High School
\$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholar



Levi Nightingale
White Lake High School
\$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholar



Miranda Hanson
Hanson High School
\$1,000 Basin Electric Scholar

Central Electric Cooperative is awarding three \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors. The scholarships are funded by Central Electric Cooperative, the family of the late Jay Headley of White Lake, and power supplier Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

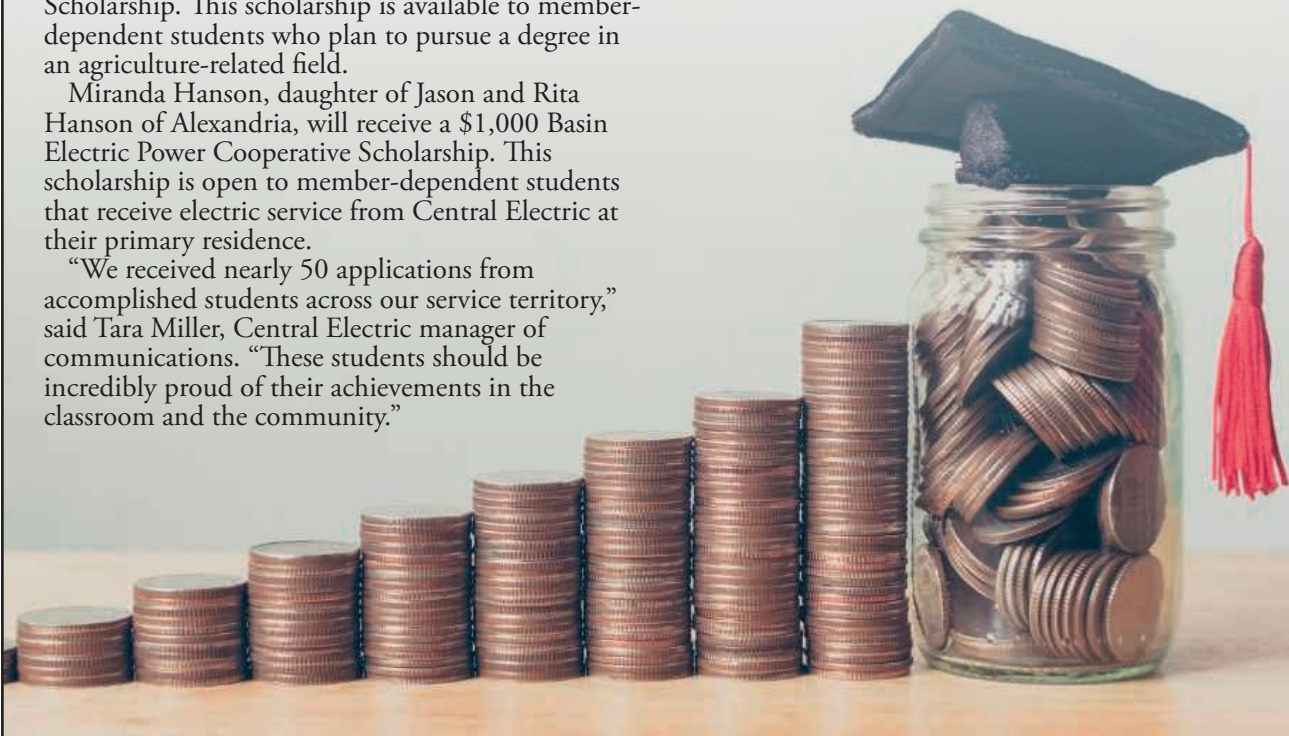
Grace Cheeseman, daughter of Neal and Nichole Cheeseman of Chamberlain, and Levi Nightingale, son of Craig and Sandra Nightingale of White Lake, will each receive a \$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship is available to member-dependent students who plan to pursue a degree in an agriculture-related field.

Miranda Hanson, daughter of Jason and Rita Hanson of Alexandria, will receive a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. This scholarship is open to member-dependent students that receive electric service from Central Electric at their primary residence.

“We received nearly 50 applications from accomplished students across our service territory,” said Tara Miller, Central Electric manager of communications. “These students should be incredibly proud of their achievements in the classroom and the community.”

Scholarship recipients will be formally recognized at Central Electric Cooperative’s annual meeting on the evening of Monday, Sept. 26, at the Corn Palace in Mitchell.

Central Electric Cooperative has awarded scholarships to area students since 2001.



Enlightening students through Co-ops in the Classroom

What do light bulbs, socks and bicycles have in common? All these materials are being used to teach local students about electricity.

Co-ops in the Classroom is a program offered by Central Electric and our wholesale

power provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative. The interactive presentation is delivered primarily to area fourth and fifth graders in

Central Electric Cooperative's service territory on a rotating basis every other year.

Jennifer Gross, Education and Outreach Coordinator for East River Electric, teaches children about electrical safety, generation, conservation and economics.

During the presentation, Gross takes students on the journey of electricity from the atomic level all the way to the hundreds of miles it travels from the power plant to our homes and schools.

A variety of hands-on demonstrations are used to engage the students. A Van de Graaff generator demonstrates the movement of electrons with some hair-raising results.

"That one is always a crowd-pleaser," said Gross. "Not only does it provide a visible and audible example of how electricity moves, but students also get a kick out of seeing their hair stand up and shocking their friends."

Another device that invokes a lot of excitement is the pedal power bicycle generator. Students are asked

to become power plants as they provide the energy that produces electricity for lights and small household devices.

"Pedal power turns the concept of electricity from something abstract

"Pedal power turns the concept of electricity from something abstract into something tangible."

– Jennifer Gross, East River Electric Power Cooperative

into something tangible. By providing the energy needed to make a light bulb turn on, the students are able to quantify just how much more energy an incandescent light bulb requires compared to a CFL or LED," Gross said.

Another presentation offered to schools is called Power Town, and it teaches children about the dangers of electricity in town and on the farm.



Orion Farley of White Lake Elementary demonstrates his ability to produce electricity with a pedal bike generator.

Safety is a key component of the educational outreach efforts.

Classroom sessions are booked for 2022. If you would like to inquire about getting on the schedule for 2023, please contact Central Electric Cooperative manager of communications Tara Miller at 1-800-477-2892.



Mount Vernon fourth grader Laura Nemeč gets hair-raising results when she demonstrates a Van de Graaff generator.

VOLTAGE IN THEIR VEINS

The Miller and Wingen men share a total of 177 years of experience in the electric utility industry. Pictured above are Joel Miller, Rollie Miller, Travis Miller, Corey Miller, Wes Wingen and Dustin Wingen.

Miller, Wingen utility workers represent a combined 177 years of faithful service

Tara Miller

taram@centralec.coop

Take a moment to imagine life without electricity. No household appliances, no electric heat, no air conditioning, no internet and no phone. In 1925, only half of homes in the U.S. had electricity. Fast forward to 2022, and electricity is a basic necessity.

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month – a time to celebrate and honor the brave men and women who often work in hazardous conditions to power our world.

The Miller family, originally from Canova, has 177 years of electric industry experience, and most of them started their careers as lineworkers.

WHERE IT ALL STARTED

Before attending school to become a lineworker, Joel Miller, better known as “Joe” or “Smokey” to some, graduated from Canova High School and began working at Overhead Door Company

in Sioux Falls. While he didn’t mind the work, he knew it wasn’t what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Joe then heard about an opportunity to attend school and become a lineworker.

“I knew Ron Callies. He was an instructor,” Joe said. “He told us to look at the program, so Robert Zens and I checked it out and thought we would give it a try.”

Joe graduated from what is now known as Mitchell Technical College (MTC) in 1978 and began the family’s legacy of life on the line when he joined East River Electric in Madison. He started on the construction crew and later worked in maintenance. His friend Robert Zens also worked at East River Electric, but passed away in a motorcycle accident in 1980.

Joe worked at East River Electric for nearly 20 years before he moved to Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) in Pierre. WAPA is a federal organization that markets and delivers hydroelectric power and related services

across the 15-state region. Joe retired from his position of line foreman at WAPA in 2020 after 43 years.

FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Rollie was next in the Miller family line-up, a year younger than Joe. His mom talked him into going to Pipestone, MN, to work at Bayliner Boats with his older brother Ed. Rollie then worked at Feterl’s Manufacturing in Salem where he welded augers until he decided to enroll in line school at MTC at the age of 20.

“The biggest reason I went to line school was because Joe had just done it, and I was friends with Robert Zens. I saw how they just did it, and I thought I could do it, too,” Rollie explained.

Rollie now manages Vigilante Electric Cooperative in Dillon, MT. Before running the show, he worked for an electrical contractor and for West River Electric.

He then attended SDSU and worked for Bob’s Electric in Flandreau with Reggie Gassman, who is manager of customer electrical services at Sioux

Valley Energy. They both grew up in the Canova area.

Rollie earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, allowing him to become a licensed professional engineer.

"My education has greatly benefited me throughout my career," Rollie said.

Rollie's boys are also following the family tradition. Cody Miller attended SDSU to become an electrical engineer and consults for electric utilities, and Logan "L.J." Miller is enrolled in the power line construction and maintenance program at MTC.



Cody Miller



L.J. Miller

"It's not a cake walk. I told them you really have to study and work hard," he said.

After Rollie, Corey was the next Miller brother to attend MTC.

"The reason I went into it is because I had two older brothers who were

linemen. I knew when I was a freshman in high school that I was going to be a lineman," Corey said.

After graduating from MTC in 1987, Corey became an apprentice lineworker at Public Service of New Hampshire. He worked there for three years, then took a position at Missouri Public Service.

Like his brothers, Corey worked his way up the ranks. He was hired as a lineworker and promoted to foreman, then supervisor, and now works in management. He is also on the board of directors for the International Lineman Rodeo Association, helping host the annual lineman rodeo event which promotes lineworker safety.

Corey's 15-year-old son Zach plans to become a lineworker after high school. Corey shares this advice for anybody

- **Joel Miller**, Retired Line Foreman at Western Area Power Administration (Pierre, SD)
43 Years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Rollie Miller**, General Manager at Vigilante Electric Cooperative (Dillon, MT)
42 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Corey Miller**, Director of Regional Operations at Evergy (Lexington, MO)
35 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Travis Miller**, Foreman at Southeastern Electric (Salem, SD)
30 years of industry experience
- **Wes Wingen**, Manager of Meter Services at Black Hills Power (Rapid City, SD)
15 years, 10 months of industry experience
- **Cody Miller**, Electrical Engineer (Dillon, MT)
8 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Dustin Wingen**, Former Lineworker at Alaska Village Electric Co-op (Anchorage, AK)
2 years of industry experience
- **Logan (L.J.) Miller**, Student in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College

considering a career in the field:

"We need linemen. It is an awesome profession to get into. Linemen live to restore power – that's their lifeblood. And, quite honestly, you will make a very good wage while doing that."

Travis was the last of the Miller brothers to attend line school. He decided milking cows wasn't his calling, so in 1991 at age 26, Travis followed the path started by his big brother Joe.

"I figured they all did it, so I could probably do it better," Travis joked. He is now the foreman at Southeastern Electric in Salem.

Wes and Dustin Wingen are the sons of Stacy (Miller) and Bob Wingen. They are nephews to the Miller brothers and have also been involved in the electric utility industry. Dustin was a lineworker in Anchorage, AK, before coming back home to farm. Wes is an engineer and manager of meter services at Black Hills Power in Rapid City.

IT'S A MILLER THING

The Miller family had nine children: Sandy, Duane, Ed, Joe, Rollie, Stacy, Derrin, Travis and Corey. Marcella, mother of the youngest eight children,

passed away in 2011, and Duane "Stub" Miller, the family patriarch, currently resides in Howard. Stub shared, "People don't know it today, but having electricity is something we shouldn't take for granted."

The four Miller brothers share a combined 151 years of electric industry experience. When you add it all up, the Miller and Wingen men boast an impressive 177 years of electric industry experience.

They couldn't have worked in this profession without the support of their families, which are too large to list. All the storm jobs, dangerous assignments and family moves were worth it when they think about the people they serve. They all agree, "It's a Miller thing" and working with voltage is in their veins.

THANK A LINEMAN

Please take time to thank lineworkers for all they do to brighten our lives. We thank the Miller family for their many years of service in the industry.

Editor's note: Writer Tara Miller is Travis Miller's wife and works for Central Electric Cooperative near Mitchell.

DEADLINE APPROACHING FOR GRANT APPLICATIONS



Grant applications for Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up® program are due May 2, 2022. Through Operation Round-Up, funds are awarded to organizations that benefit area communities. Applicants do not need to be members of Central Electric Cooperative, but eligible projects should have a positive impact in Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn Counties.

Past projects supported through Operation Round-Up include fire department equipment upgrades, 4-H projects, youth programs, daycare improvements, public beautification efforts, community building upgrades and various non-profit projects.

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 \$140,000 to support projects.

Local residents from the cooperative's eight-county territory serve on the board of trustees that awards grant funds. Julie Dykstra of Stickney represents Aurora County, Jill Ekstrum of Kimball represents Brule County, Ellen Speck of Gann Valley represents Buffalo County, David Jorgenson of Mitchell represents Davison County, LeAnn Moe of Alexandria represents Hanson County, Scott Kolousek of Wessington Springs represents Jerauld County, Connie Hattervig of Carthage represents Miner County, Carla Amick of Letcher represents Sanborn County and Merl Bechen of Mitchell represents all eight counties as the cooperative's director-at-large.

Complete funding guidelines and a fillable application can be found online at centralec.coop/operation-round-up or by contacting Tara Miller at 1-800-477-2892.



The Plankinton Ambulance Association was awarded \$1,500 from Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up program to help purchase a training mannequin and radios. Pictured from left: Tara Miller, Ken Schlimgen, Sklyer Kehn, Jason Schurz, Merl Bechen, Colin Spinar, Diana Spinar, Rodney Weber, Jeff Briggs, Amy Bultsma, Duane Wolbrink, Brian Grambihler, Susie Bickley, Derek Koch, Terry Bush and Melissa Davis. Hidden from view is Steven Nessbaum.



The Buffalo County Rural Fire Protection District used a \$2,500 grant from Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up program toward the purchase of jaws of life equipment. Pictured from left: Allen Fagen, Andrew Zastrow, Wade Klein, Ken Schlimgen, Derek Zastrow and Jake Richardson.

MEMBER PRIZE DRAWING

National Lineworker Appreciation Day is April 11, and we want to celebrate with a member prize drawing! Complete this trivia for your chance to win **ELECTRIFYING** prizes from Central Electric Cooperative. Even if you answer incorrectly, you will still be entered in the prize drawing as long as your completed trivia form is received before the April 11 drawing.



1. How many volts run through Central Electric's single-phase overhead powerlines?

- A. 2,650 volts
- B. 7,200 volts
- C. 10,000 volts

2. How deep should high-voltage underground electrical wires be buried?

- A. 32" to 40"
- B. 40" to 48"
- C. 48" to 54"

3. How deep should secondary low-voltage (120-240 volts) consumer underground electrical wires be buried?

- A. 18" to 24"
- B. 24" to 30"
- C. 30" to 36"

4. What three-digit number should you call before digging on your property?

- A. 511
- B. 811
- C. 911

5. What should you do if you are inside a motor vehicle or farm equipment that comes in contact with a powerline?

- A. Jump out immediately and run away.
- B. Turn up the radio.
- C. Stay in the vehicle and call 911. If you must exit due to fire, shuffle or hop with your feet together until you are at least 40 feet away to avoid electrocution.

6. Which of these energy sources is renewable?

- A. Solar
- B. Natural Gas
- C. Coal

7. Which of these energy sources is non-renewable?

- A. Wind
- B. Coal
- C. Solar

8. Which of these allows electricity to easily flow through?

- A. Conductor
- B. Insulator
- C. Wooden Electrical Pole

9. Who owns your electric cooperative?

- A. The federal government
- B. Out-of-state investors
- C. You! Local member owners

Bonus: For an extra entry in the prize drawing, tell us why you appreciate Central Electric Cooperative lineworkers:

Answers will be published next month. For an electronic copy visit: www.tinyurl.com/CEctrivia

Member, Spouse or

Dependent Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____

Age: _____

(All ages are eligible, as long as the individual is a member, immediate family or dependent living in the same household as the cooperative member.)

Entries can be emailed to cec@centralec.coop or sent by mail to:

Central Electric Cooperative

Attn: Trivia Prize Drawing

PO Box 850

Mitchell, SD 57301



APRIL 16
Easter Egg Hunt at
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

MARCH 25-26

Schmeckfest
748 S Main Street, Freeman, SD, 605-925-4237

MARCH 26

Annual Ag Day
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 30

Elton John Tribute Concert
Performing Arts Center, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-7813

APRIL 2

Watertown Coin and Currency Show
Elks Lodge, Watertown, SD, 605-882-4663

APRIL 2-3

Youth & Family Services' 25th Annual Kids Fair
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, youthandfamilyservices.org/kids-fair/

APRIL 8-9

Forks, Corks & Kegs Festival
Various Locations, Deadwood, SD, deadwood.com/event/forks-corks-kegs

APRIL 8-9

Jackrabbit Stampede Rodeo
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, swiftelcenter.com

APRIL 8-10

CAHF Spring Fling Eggstravaganza Series
Carroll Acres Hobby Farm, Rapid City, SD, carrollacreshobbyfarm.com

APRIL 8-16

The Passion and the Cross
Orpheum Theater Center, Sioux Falls, SD, siouxfallsorpheum.com

APRIL 9

Keystone Spring Fling Vendor Fair
1101 Madill Street, Keystone, SD, 605-786-3035

APRIL 9-10

DGTCA Gun Show
Rushmore Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-270-0764

APRIL 16

Easter Egg Hunt
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-2867

APRIL 22

River Rat ½ Marathon, 10K, and 5K
Gavins Point Area, Yankton, SD, allsportscentral.com

APRIL 22-23

Junkin' Market Days
W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-941-4958

APRIL 23

Lakota All Star Basketball Games
The Monument Summit Arena, Rapid City, SD, 605-342-41985

APRIL 23

Martina McBride
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, swiftelcenter.com

APRIL 23

Winefest Renaissance
1121 1st Avenue SE, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-8714

APRIL 23-24

46th Mobridge Area Art Show
Scherr-Howe Arena, Mobridge, SD, 605-845-2060

APRIL 23-24

Brookings Quilt Guild Show
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-690-3246

APRIL 27-30

45th Annual Kingswood Rummage Sales
Southwest Sioux Falls, SD, kingswoodrummage.com

APRIL 28-30

26th Annual Black Hills Dance Festival
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, blackhillsdancefestival.com

APRIL 29-MAY 1, 5-7

Ordinary Days
Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, pierreplayers.com

APRIL 30

SDSO Centennial Finale
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, sdsymphony.org

APRIL 30-MAY 8

Country Crafts: Rustic Designs and More
41450 264th Street, Ethan, SD, 605-770-2411

MAY 7

Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
131 E Falls Park Drive, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-274-3735

Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.