

Cooperative Connections



The Annual Buffalo Round Up at Custer State Park is one of many activities of interest for visitors to South Dakota

**SD Tourism
continues
steady pace**

Page 8-9

**Anglers in hot
pursuit of cold
fish**

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The Right Thing



Ken Schlimgen

General Manager

The board has approved giving a refund to our members on the upcoming December bills.

On my desk, I have two quotes that I read almost every day. The first is a quote from Mark Twain stating, “You’re never wrong to do the right thing.” To me this describes the core of how decisions are made at your cooperative.

Over the years, I have shared with you how your cooperative has a tradition of caring for our members and our communities. This is what separates cooperatives from other types of utilities and businesses. We’ve always taken this mission and responsibility to heart. It’s who we are as a co-op.

Over the past year, like so many of you, we’ve risen to meet new challenges. Because of the pandemic, we have strived to do the right thing and have made numerous adjustments to maintain business and to help our members.

Unfortunately, this past month we had to close our offices to the general public due to low employee numbers. Our employee group has been hit hard by the virus. Despite the number of employees being sent home, we have worked hard to maintain service to you.

The pandemic has changed how we have operated this past year, but it has not slowed us down. The operations department installed 78 miles of new underground line which replaced 90 miles of vintage overhead line. The crews also installed about 6 miles of underground line to new services along with all the normal maintenance activities. This was a significant increase in their work load, and they delivered for you.

Financially, your cooperative looks different than we projected for 2021. Our revenues are down but so are the expenses. The end result is our margins are much better than we have budgeted. So much better that the board has approved giving a refund to our members on the upcoming December bills. The amount of the refund is yet to be determined, but it will be approved by the board at the December meeting. It is the right thing to do.

In this newsletter, you will read about your Operation Round-Up program. This program allows you to do the right thing and “round up” the amount due on your electric bill to help improve our communities. We also do many other things from youth programs to economic development activities. All in an effort to improve our quality of life.

We have a strong commitment to safety—not just for our employees, but for our community as well. Due to the pandemic, we are finding new ways to teach children to stay safe around electricity. We educate first responders on electric safety and hold safety demonstrations at community meetings and other gatherings.

You’ll see your employees serving on local boards, coaching youth sports, and volunteering at charitable events. Because when you work at a co-op, you understand how important a strong community is—after all, without you, the co-op wouldn’t exist.

We know our core job is to keep the lights on; but our passion is for safety and our community. We live and work here too, and we want to make it a better place for all.

The second quote I read every day is by Robert Frost. “Don’t ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.” This reminds me of the importance of long relationships with our members, and our vendors, partners and associations who have a vested interest in our success. Not just for the short term but for long into our future.

Our mission has never been more important. Thank you for your continued support as we look towards the New Year. No matter what the future brings, you can count on your electric co-op to care about you.

Have a Blessed and Safe Holiday Season!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

(USPS 018-963)

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Donita Loudner - SDREA
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Editor: Courtney J. Deinert

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

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Office Information

M-F 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
800-477-2892 or
605-996-7516
www.centralecc.coop



Office closed to public until further notice

Mission Statement

Provide Reliable Energy & Services with a Commitment to Safety and Member Satisfaction

CO-OP NEWS

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met on November 16, 2020 both virtually and at the Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting.

The board approved the October meeting minutes and the October safety meeting minutes. The board then reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and the financials.

Board Report

Manager Schlimgen updated the board on the following:

- East River Manager's meeting summary.
- Basin Electric report and Annual Meeting summary.
- Invited interested directors to participate in online winter school training.
- Potential economic development opportunities.
- Electric vehicles.
- Capital credit retirement from Basin Electric.
- Recent election results and their impact on our cooperative.
- VW Settlement funds.
- New Chamberlain substation.
- Dakota Energy and East River dispute.

Director Hofer gave a report on the

NRECA board meeting.

Director Wolbrink gave an update on the East River Electric Cooperative Board Meeting, including their approval of the 2021 budget.

Board Action

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

Approved the 2021 Work Plan and Budget.

Approved to defer revenue to 2021 and decide on the amount of a power cost refund at next meeting.

Approved a board resolution to support an amendment of the NRECA 401K pension plan.

Approved market rate policy 871.

Approved a service agreement with a commercial member.

Approved engaging Eide Bailly as the auditor for 2020 financials.

Approved a wheeling agreement.

Tabled the board self-assessment until a face-to-face meeting.

Moved to go into executive session for the General Manager performance review.

The next board of directors meeting will be held December 21, 2020.

Please contact the cooperative office for more information regarding the board meeting.

Financial Report	October 2020	Year-to-Date
kWh Sales	28,210,934 kWhs	270,135,060 kWhs
Electric Revenues	\$2,720,841	\$27,107,491
Total Cost of Service	\$2,573,865	\$25,553,867
Operating Margins	\$146,976	\$1,553,624

Holiday Office Closings:

Christmas

December 24-25

New Year's Day

January 1

National Cut Your Energy Costs Day

If you resolved to spend less and save more in 2021, cutting back on a few regular expenses is a good place to start. Sunday, Jan. 10, is National Cut Your Energy Costs Day, so we've rounded up a few tips to help you trim your utility bills without making major lifestyle changes.

- **Cut heating and cooling costs.** We spend a great deal of energy heating our homes in the winter and keeping them cool in the summer, but are we really doing our best to minimize the cost of our comfort? A programmable thermostat can allow you to adjust the temperature when you're out of the house or sleeping. There's no reason to blast the heat when everyone is at work, and it's doubtful you need to sleep with the heat on high. So program your schedule into your thermostat, and it'll do all the work for you.
- **Watch out for energy draining appliances.** Big appliances like refrigerators, washers and dryers consume a lot of energy, so the next time you replace one of these appliances, upgrade to an energy-efficient Energy Star-certified model. These are designed to use much less energy than their older counterparts and often end up paying for themselves in savings over time. Keep these appliances clean and well maintained to ensure optimal performance and efficiency.
- **Pull the plug.** As we continue to be more and more "plugged in," it should come as no surprise that a greater proportion of our energy goes toward keeping our devices charged. To keep costs reasonable, plug electronics into a power strip and turn it off when they're not in use. This cuts off "phantom" usage and can save you a bundle. Some newer power strips even include an automatic shut-off feature.
- **Hit the lights.** As always, turn off the lights when leaving a room. You can also swap out light bulbs to increase your home's energy efficiency. Replace incandescent bulbs with LED versions for an easy and affordable way to save on electricity. Not only do LEDs last significantly longer, they also require much less energy.
- **Start with a simple home assessment.** Interested to know how your home's energy use compares to similar homes? Check out Energy Star's Home Energy Yardstick at energystar.gov to learn how much of your home's energy use is related to heating and cooling versus other appliance use, lighting and hot water.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Watch Out for Downed Power Lines!"

Gracie Richter, 9 years old

Gracie is a resident of Buffalo, S.D., and is the daughter of Jody Richter. They are members of Grand 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.

Warm and Cozy Soups

Tomato-Tortellini Soup

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2 - 14 ounce cans
reduced-sodium chicken
broth | cheese spread with chive
and onion |
| 1 - 9 ounce package of
refrigerated tortellini | 1 - can tomato soup |
| 1 - 8 ounce tub cream | Fresh chives (optional) |

In a medium sauce pan bring broth to a boil. Add tortellini then reduce heat to simmer uncovered for 5 minutes. In a bowl whisk 1/3 cup of hot broth into the cream cheese spread. Whisk until smooth. Pour contents into sauce pan. Stir in tomato soup and heat through. Serve with fresh chives, if desired.

Family Features/Better Homes and Gardens

Slow Cooker Split Pea Soup

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 lb. dried green split peas
(rinsed) | 2 cloves garlic, minced |
| 1 cup sliced carrots | 1 bay leaf |
| 2 stalks celery, diced, plus
leaves | 1/4 cup chopped parsley |
| 2 cups chopped onion | 6 cups chicken broth |
| | salt and pepper, to taste |

Layer ingredients in slow cooker in order given, adding broth last. DO NOT stir ingredients. Cover and cook on high for 4-5 hours or low for 8-10 hours until peas are very soft.

Gail Lyngstad, Pierre, SD

Baked Potato Soup

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 2/3 cup butter | 6 slices of bacon, cooked
and crumbled |
| 2/3 cup flour | 1-1/2 cups shredded sharp
cheddar cheese |
| 7 cups milk | 1 cup sour cream |
| 4 to 6 baked potatoes,
peeled and cooled | 3/4 teaspoon salt |
| 4 green onions chopped | 1/2 teaspoon pepper |

Melt butter, add flour and stir until smooth. Add milk and stir. Add potatoes and onion. Cook until mixture comes to a boil. Turn to low heat immediately and add bacon, cheese, sour cream, salt and pepper. Stir well. Makes 1 crockpot full.

Terri Halstead, Sioux Falls, SD

Clam Chowder

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 4 slices thick bacon cut and
fried | 4 cans 6.5 oz. minced clams
(save juice) |
| 1 onion | 1 15-oz. can chicken broth |
| 1 cup celery | 2 potatoes |
| 1/3 cup flour | 2 cups cream |
| 1 tsp. pepper | 1 bay leaf |

Cut and fry bacon. Add diced onion and celery and cook about five minutes. Stir in 1/3 cup flour using the drained clam juice until slightly thick. Add 1 teaspoon pepper, one can broth, 4 cans clams, 2 diced potatoes and one bay leaf. Cook until potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Add cream. Enjoy!

Sharon Waltner, Freeman, SD

My Mother's Tomato Soup

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 2 cups tomato juice or
pureed canned tomatoes | 1 qt. milk |
| 1/2 tsp. soda | salt to taste |
| | 1 tbsp. butter |

Combine tomatoes or juice with soda in a saucepan. Let froth up. Add milk, salt and butter. Heat and serve.

Doris Ekberg, Hamill, SD

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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Scholarships Available in amounts of \$1,000

Central Electric Cooperative is offering three (3) scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 each, as sponsored by Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the family of the late Jay Headley.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship

Basin Electric Power Cooperative is awarding one (1) \$1,000 scholarship to a dependent of a member-cooperative member-owner.

To be eligible, a student must be

- 1) a dependent of a member-owner whose primary residence receives electric service from Central Electric Cooperative;
- 2) Enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited post-secondary institution; and
- 3) a U.S. citizen.

Jay Headley Memorial Scholarships

The family of the late Jay Headley of White Lake, SD is awarding two (2) \$1,000 scholarships in honor of his memory.

To be eligible, a student must be

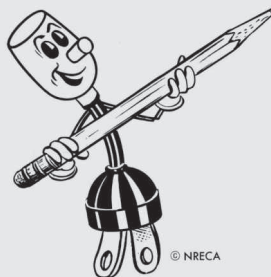
- 1) a dependent of a member-owner whose primary residence receives electric service from Central Electric Cooperative;
- 2) Pursuing a bachelor's of science degree in an agricultural related field; and
- 3) a U.S. citizen.

How to Apply

Applications are available at www.centralec.coop or by contacting our office.

Scholarships can be emailed to cec@centralec.coop or mailed to Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301.

Applications are due by February 1, 2021.



© NRECA

Scholar of the Week

Mitchell Senior Awarded \$250



Adaya Plastow was named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week for the week of November 28 – December 4.

Plastow is the daughter of Robert and Pamela Plastow and is currently a senior at Mitchell High School.

Plastow participates in HOSA, Kernal Kouncil, cross country, track, basketball, takes EMT courses, volunteers with religious services, and is proficient in American Sign Language. Past achievements include national FCCLA recognition, a service trip to Haiti, as well as assisting at a local flu clinic. Among these commitments, Plastow maintains a 4.0 GPA and will graduate high school with nearly 25 college credits.

“Adaya is such a deserving candidate for the Scholar of the Week award not only because of her academic success but also for her willingness to help others,” says school counselor Erin Fowkes. “Any university fortunate enough to have Adaya Plastow amongst their student body will have an incredible and inspiring student.”

Following graduation, Plastow plans to pursue biochemistry to become a military physician as well as become involved in ROTC and basketball.

Central Electric, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, awarded a \$250 scholarship to Plastow. Plastow was featured on Dakota News Now, and that interview can be viewed online at dakotanewsnow.com.

The Scholar of the Week scholarship was created by Dakota News Now and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives to recognize outstanding students across the region who set an example of hard work and high academic standards. Area school principals and faculty nominate students for this award, based on excellence in the classroom, service in the community and extracurricular participation.

Youth Tour 2021 Canceled

Due to COVID-19 and its impact on travel and accommodations, South Dakota will not be participating in the 2021 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C. We value this opportunity for our students, and the decision was not made lightly. For any questions or concerns, contact our office.

Employee Years of Service



Mick Poncelet
Journeyman Lineman
January 3 - 37 years



Tony Roth
Area Foreman
January 3 - 16 years



Kevin Johnson
Journeyman Electrician
January 16 - 15 years



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager
January 28 - 36 years



Best Wishes, Poncelet

Many thanks and best wishes to Mick Poncelet, Journeyman Lineman on the Mitchell crew, as he plans to retire in January 2021 after 37 years of service to Inter-county/Central Electric.

Local Discounts with your Co-op Connections® Card



Your cooperative membership earns you discounts at local participating businesses.

Simply show your Co-op Connections Discount Card and save.

- 1) **Buckshots, Letcher, SD;**
\$1.00 off all Buckshot Burgers.
- 2) **County Fair Food & Fuel, Mitchell, SD;**
\$.05 discount/gallon of fuel.
- 3) **Dakota Sunset, Mitchell, SD;**
\$.05 discount/gallon of fuel.
- 4) **Daylight Donuts & Coffee, Mitchell, SD;**
Donut and regular coffee for \$1.00.
- 5) **Der Platz - Bill & Ila's Bed & Breakfast, Mitchell, SD;**
\$10 off stay.
- 6) **Double D Body Shop, Woonsocket, SD;**
\$5 off windshield chip repair.
- 7) **Gene's Photography, Mitchell, SD;**
1/2 price session fees.
- 8) **Genevieve's Print*Art*Design, Wessington Springs, SD;**
15% off labor for services.
- 9) **Graham's Interstate Sinclair, Mitchell, SD;**
7 cents off gallon gas/fuel.
- 10) **Hair Expressions Salon, Chamberlain, SD;**
\$25 off 1st set eyelash extensions; \$20 off spa facial with microdermabrasion.

For a full list of ways to save, visit www.connections.coop.

To request a card or become a participating business, visit www.centraleccoop.org or call 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516.



Tourism in South Dakota has remained robust despite the impact of the global pandemic.
Photos courtesy of the SD Tourism Department.

SD TOURISM GOING STRONG

Tired of Being Shut In: Visitors Flock to South Dakota

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Probably the last time a member of the Hustead family was worried about going broke, it was back in the 1930s.

Ted and Dorothy Hustead had just purchased a small drug store in Wall and were having a hard time getting the business to grow in the middle of a severe drought and the Great Depression.

The business that went on to become known as Wall Drug has been named one of the busiest tourist attractions in the northern part of the country. The prospects of the Husteads going broke have been very slim since the store hit its stride.

That is until last March.

Third-generation owner Rick Hustead won't lie: he was downright worried that Wall Drug might bite the dust when COVID-19 prompted lockdowns and travel restrictions.

The entire operation – the stores, the restaurants, the galleries and even the free ice water – came grinding to a stop for 71 days just as the travel season was about to kick into gear.

"I was afraid we might go broke and we might not make it. They're projecting that half of the restaurants out there are going to close down permanently," Hustead said. "We were closed that whole time and had to cut back on our employees because we felt that trying to 'flatten the curve' was the right thing to do."

The business reported losses through the summer, but returned to the black in August due in part to traffic from the Sturgis motorcycle rally. Hustead reported that September and October also showed considerable increases over 2019 numbers.

"People just got tired of being shut in and they got in their cars and on their motorcycles and their RVs and came to South Dakota," he said, noting that even President Trump made his way to Mount Rushmore for a Fourth of July gathering.

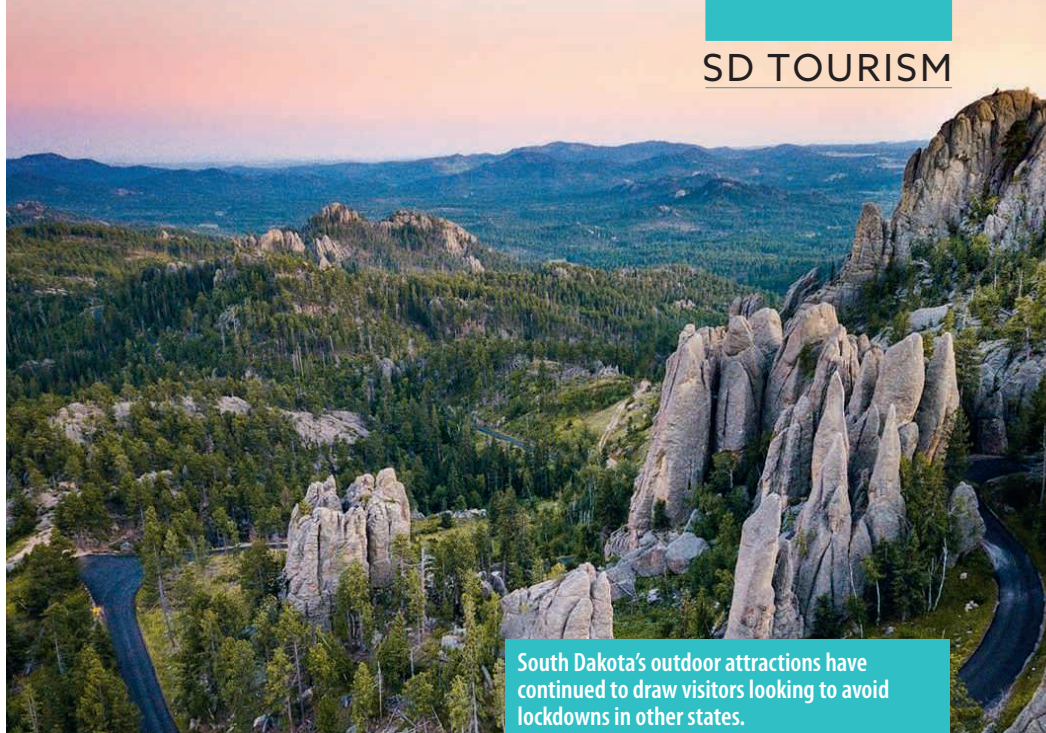


The annual Buffalo Round Up at Custer State Park continues to attract visitors from throughout the country.

The Thing I Love Most about Living in South Dakota is...

What do you love most about living in South Dakota? Share your thoughts with us (200 words or less) and you could win a \$25 gift card!

Send your response to editor@sdrea.coop by Jan. 4, and don't forget to include your contact information.



Hustead said he took public safety measures such as installing Plexiglas barriers, posting hand-sanitizer stations and requiring that employees wear masks. He said no employees have been known to contract the coronavirus. The bottom line also received a boost from some federal relief money.

Once the financial fog lifted, Hustead called his mother Marjorie – who is in a care facility in Rapid City but is “still involved in the business” – and told her he felt Wall Drug was going to make it through the crisis after all.

“I told her, ‘Mom, I think we’re going to make it.’ And that made her happy,” Hustead said.

He was quick to heap praise on the South Dakota Office of Tourism and leader Jim Hagen.

In assessing the state of tourism in South Dakota, officials paint a picture similar to Hustead. While many annual events have been canceled or postponed to a later date, outdoor events and activities such as Sturgis, walleye fishing, pheasant hunting and the many outdoor tourist attractions have led to a healthy industry performance and outlook.

Hagen’s office has also taken the initiative to develop innovative programs to ensure that South Dakota stays top-of-mind when people throughout the region and nation make their travel plans.

The department recently launched an on-line learning program for children and their families to learn more about South Dakota and experience the attractions of the state from the comfort of their homes or in a classroom setting. There are eight virtual pages that allow site visitors to learn more about the icons, wildlife, people and history of the state, each featuring games and activities for the entire family to explore.

“These online lessons provide an opportunity to educate children and adults alike about our state’s Great Faces and Great Places,” said Gov. Kristi Noem. “We hope that they are used as a tool to engage families

and inspire them to explore our great state.”

The department also partnered with Badlands National Park to promote its virtual Junior Ranger program. Once the virtual exploration is complete, kids can become official Badlands National Park Junior Rangers.

Last summer, the department teamed up with tourism officials in Wyoming to develop a program called “Black to Yellow” to entice travelers to explore scenic routes that wind from the Badlands National Park to Wyoming’s iconic Yellowstone National Park.

To help travelers plan their trip, the states put together itineraries that explore their most well-known attractions and lesser-known gems. From taking in roadside stops, like Wall Drug and Wyoming’s Devils Tower, to exploring the scenery of Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Badlands National Park, travelers were encouraged to explore the beauty of the states’ wide open spaces, unparalleled wildlife and the freedom of the open road.

State tourism leaders will meet in Pierre on Jan. 20-21 for the 2021 Governor’s Conference on Tourism. There will be limited in-person engagement as well as an online attendance option. The theme for this year’s meeting is, “Onward!” While 2020 could have been worse, leaders are hoping that travel will continue to be a significant economic driver in the state.



Heating Help Is Available

The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) helps eligible South Dakotans pay for home heating costs.



Energy assistance may not pay for all your home heating costs, but it will help ease the strain of the heating season. Energy assistance is available from October 1 - May 15.

Eligibility for the program is based on:

- 1) Number of people in household,
- 2) Gross income of everyone in household,
- 3) Type of heating for the home,
- 4) Geographic area you live in.

Applications can be obtained by calling **1-800-233-8503**, online at <http://dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energyassistance/lowincome.aspx> or at the **local Department of Social Services office**.

OPERATION ROUND-UP® FUNDS AWARDED

The Operation Round-Up Board of Trustees met on November 17, 2020 to review applications for funding. The committee awarded \$11,650 to eight organizations:



1. **First Circuit Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)**, \$2,000 for computer and A/V equipment;
2. **City of Plankinton**, \$750 for Main Street holiday lighting;
3. **Emery Summer Recreation Program**, \$1,200 for a field scoreboard;
4. **Fishing for a Cure**, \$1,000 for cash cards for cancer patients;
5. **Helping with Horsepower**, \$1,700 for tack shed wiring;
6. **Howard Children's Care Corner**, \$1,000 for security cameras;
7. **Letcher Cemetery**, \$2,500 for tree removal; and
8. **Prairie Hills 4-H Club**, \$1,500 for courthouse landscaping.

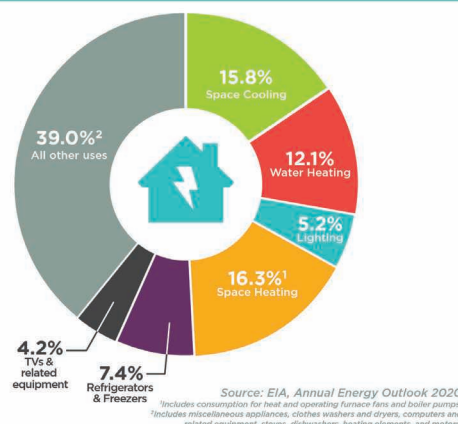
Operation Round-Up grants are funded by Central Electric members who voluntarily round-up their electric bill to the nearest dollar. **Thank you to our members for your generosity.**

Since the program's initiation in 2015, Operation Round-Up has awarded nearly \$115,000 to local projects.

The next application deadline is May 1, 2021. For more information about the program, visit www.centralec.coop or call 800-477-2892.

How Americans Use Electricity

The combined use of clothes washers and dryers, computers, dishwashers, small appliances and other electrical equipment (noted as "all other uses" below) accounts for nearly 40% of electricity consumption.





*Helping Santa make Christmas
Merry & Bright!*

**Wishing our members a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!
Employees & Board of Directors**



Ice fishing is a pursuit that's enjoyed each winter by South Dakotans of every stripe.

Guys, Gals and Castles on Ice

South Dakotans Stay in Hot Pursuit of Cold Fish

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

What happens if you hold an ice fishing tournament and it turns out there's no ice?

You improvise.

That's what organizers of the annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament had to do 10 years ago when Mother Nature refused to cooperate and left them scrambling to come up with a Plan B.

At that time, the tournament was just gaining traction as a main winter attraction for Mobridge. No one dreamed that what started as just a handful of anglers vying to win an ice auger has grown into a field that's capped at 525 two-person teams arriving from 16 different states.

Jeff Jackson is owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge and one of the founders of the tournament marking its 20th anniversary this year. He remembers a bit of panic setting in when hundreds of fishermen were scheduled to descend on Mobridge and the ice on the Missouri River wasn't thick enough to ensure the safety of competitors. Fortunately, the organizing committee had scheduled enough attractions and activities around the one-day tournament that there was plenty for the eager visitors to do.

"We got the word out that the competition was canceled, but 420 out of the 450 teams that were registered showed up anyway," Jackson recalls. "They wanted to come and have a good time."

Those non-angling activities included raffles and prize drawings, an expo featuring all the latest fishing gear, gizmos and gadgets, and according to Jackson, lots of libations.

"People keep coming back year after year," Jackson said, noting that the town's population doubles in the second week of each January. "We've had to limit the number of participants so we have an Ebay auction for three spots that can go as high as \$3,000, and we have another lottery drawing for 26 spots where we usually have up to 800 names."

Instead of a simple ice auger as a grand prize, today the tournament gives away roughly \$225,000 in prizes, including Ice



Hundreds were in attendance at the Dakota Anglers Fishing Expo in Sioux Falls. Photo provided by Dakota Angler.



Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, \$5,000 worth of Scheel's gear, \$3,000 in Runnings gear, clam shacks and more.

The tournament is a boon for Mobridge, bringing an economic impact of \$500,000. According to Jesse Konold, chairman of the town's tourism committee, over the past four years proceeds paid for South Dakota's first climate-controlled indoor fish cleaning station, ADA compliant bathrooms, improvements to the town's rodeo grounds and more than \$100,000 in donations to local non-profits. This year's tournament will be held Jan. 7-9 at the Sherr-Howe Center in Mobridge.

Not Everyone is Hooked

Among the state's population of electric cooperative linemen, there are many who look forward to chasing walleye in winter. In Josh Lemburg's case, the term "chasing" walleye would be close to accurate.

Lemburg, operations foreman at Moreau-Grand Electric who lives in Timber Lake, prefers to stay on the move when he fishes on the ice. Eschewing the "ice castle" approach that calls for staking out a spot and staying put for the weekend, Lemburg uses a portable flip-over shack and keeps his auger close at hand.

"Ice castles are fun, but I'm not afraid to move around and dig holes," he said. "If I'm not catching fish in an hour, I'll 'run-and-gun' til I find them."

Even with his "move-and-groove" approach, Lemburg has failed to get his entire family sold on the merits of ice fishing. Even hooking a lunker walleye didn't

convince his son to swear a life-long oath to ice fishing.

Several years ago, Lemburg took his dad and his elementary-age kids, Landon and Kendal, out on the ice. His dad and daughter were in one shack and he and Landon were in the other. After a few hours, just as Landon was getting bored and ready to call it a day, a walleye snatched his bait.

"Landon had his line in the water and I saw a big mark on my Vexilar," Lemburg recalls. "I told him he had a big fish on the line but he just gave me his pole and said he wasn't interested. I kept trying to get him to reel it in, but he kept giving me the pole back. Finally, I got the fish to the surface I looked in the hole and there was nothing but fish. My dad reached down in the water to his armpits and it was a 12-pound walleye."

Brent Reilley is an electrician at Selby-based Cam Wal Electric, which serves the Mobridge area. Over the past 20 years, he has only missed the tournament twice - once when he had to decide between ice fishing and a week in Cancun.

He and his wife, Tandy, have actually both claimed titles at the prestigious Mobridge tournament. One particular year the husband-and-wife duo were on separate teams. Brent was on the first-place team and Tandy and her partner placed second. But Tandy believes she has her



Above, hundreds attend the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year. Below, "ice castles" bring comfort and convenience to the sport.



husband beat: her second-place finish was clinched by reeling in a 25-inch walleye while she was six months pregnant.

The two have always had pretty good luck with the raffles and random prize drawings as well. Tandy won a side-by-side one year and a family friend has won two four-wheelers.

"We just love being outdoors in the winter when there's nothing else to do," Reilley said. "You can get outside and enjoy the fresh air. It gets cold, but it beats sitting inside and it's something great to do with the family. My son is addicted. He'd love it if all he could do is fish all day."



Seasonal Affective Disorder impacts roughly 10 million Americans each year. Experts are anticipating a rise in cases after many months of dealing with COVID-19.

BEATING SAD

Here's How to Treat and Beat Seasonal Affective Disorder

Billy Gibson

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For years, the mental disorder now known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) was given about as much credibility as Big Foot and the Loch Ness monster.

It was common folk knowledge that certain times of the year brought on what was passed off as the “winter blues” or the “winter doldrums.” But through considerable study and extensive research over the course of time, the psychiatric community eventually determined that SAD is not only a real affliction related to clinical depression, but according to the National Institute of Health it impacts an estimated 10 million Americans each year.

Women are more likely to contract the condition than men, and in most cases symptoms can begin appearing in early adulthood. Those with pre-existing mental conditions such as bipolar disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, anxiety disorder and others are also at significantly greater risk.

And while so much attention has been given to the coronavirus since the spring of 2020, SAD is yet another health risk that continues to afflict the U.S. population and especially those residing in northern regions of the country.

Mental health professionals share a concern that those who are susceptible to SAD will experience an even greater struggle in

2021 and have more difficulty managing their symptoms during the winter months after nearly a year of dealing with the forced shutdowns and isolation caused by COVID-19.

Both employees and members of South Dakota's electric cooperative system are prone to experiencing the impact of SAD as the winter season sets in, according to Mark Patterson, Director of Safety and Loss Control at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre.

Patterson and his accredited safety team at SDREA provide a variety of field and workplace training programs for the state's cooperative network, and they advise everyone to be aware of the signs and symptoms of SAD and to seek treatment if needed.

“These long South Dakota winters can be harsh,” Patterson said. “But in order for our cooperative employees to be at their best and perform at the top of their game, we need to make sure we're mindful of our risk of experiencing not only physical ailments that can limit our capabilities but mental ailments as





Tracy Romey: "The good news is that SAD can be treated."

well. That also goes for all of our cooperative members that we serve. If you're feeling the onset of depression and having difficulty coping, don't hesitate to reach out and find the help you need."

The most commonly reported symptoms associated with SAD include significant fatigue, pervasively sad mood, loss of interest in activities, sleeping more hours than usual, difficulty concentrating and eating more starches and sweets.

Experts also point out that the "seasonal" in SAD doesn't necessarily refer to winter, although symptoms occur most commonly in January and February. Clinical depression can also occur in the spring and summer months, a condition known as summer-pattern SAD.

For winter-pattern SAD, a gradual decrease in photoperiod – or daylight – is the primary trigger and the strongest predictor of daily mood swings in individuals. Researchers have identified a direct relationship with the number of cases that rise and fall depending on available sunlight and change in temperature in a particular year. Sunlight prompts the body to produce hormones, which has a direct impact on a person's mood. For instance, inconsistent levels of the neurotransmitter

Signs and Symptoms of SAD

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Experiencing changes in appetite or weight
- Having problems with sleep
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Having low energy
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide
- Oversleeping (hypersomnia)
- Overeating, particularly with a craving for carbohydrates

serotonin can alter moods while changes in melatonin levels can interrupt sleep cycles.

Mental health providers are bracing for an anticipated increase in cases of SAD this year due to the pandemic and lockdown. Those with underlying mental conditions who are especially sensitive to stress could face severe challenges.

According to Tracy Romey, a board certified psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner in Hot Springs, those susceptible to SAD should not despair; many forms of treatment are available.

"This is the time of year we start seeing more cases of SAD. Anxiety can be a component of SAD, which negatively impacts everyday functioning," she said. "The good news is that it can be treated and usually improves when spring arrives."

Romey added that treatment is often

tailored to the individual and can be directed toward certain prevailing symptoms.

"There is no specific test for SAD, however, the same treatments prescribed for a major seasonal depressive disorder may be effective for seasonal affective disorder, including light therapy, vitamin D replacement therapy and medications. Other options include spending more time outdoors and exercise. I encourage anyone who is negatively affected by seasonal change to see your mental health provider and receive an evaluation."

Those who find themselves in immediate distress can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or the toll-free TTY number at 1-800-799-4TTY (4889). Also available is the Crisis Text Line (HELLO to 741741) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website, <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for "Co-op Connections Plus" and you'll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



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

November 27-December 27

Trees and Trains at the South Dakota Railroad Museum, Weekends, Contact the Museum for Days and Times. Hill City, SD
605-574-9000

December 4-25

Fort Sisseton Drive Thru Christmas Light Display, Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD
605-448-5474

December 5-January 1

Custer State Park Festival of Trees, Custer, SD
605-255-4515

December 5-January 6

Garden Glow, McCrory Gardens Education & Visitor Center, Evenings From 5-8 p.m., Brookings, SD
605-688-6707

December 16-19

Lakota Nation Invitational, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

December 17-20, 27

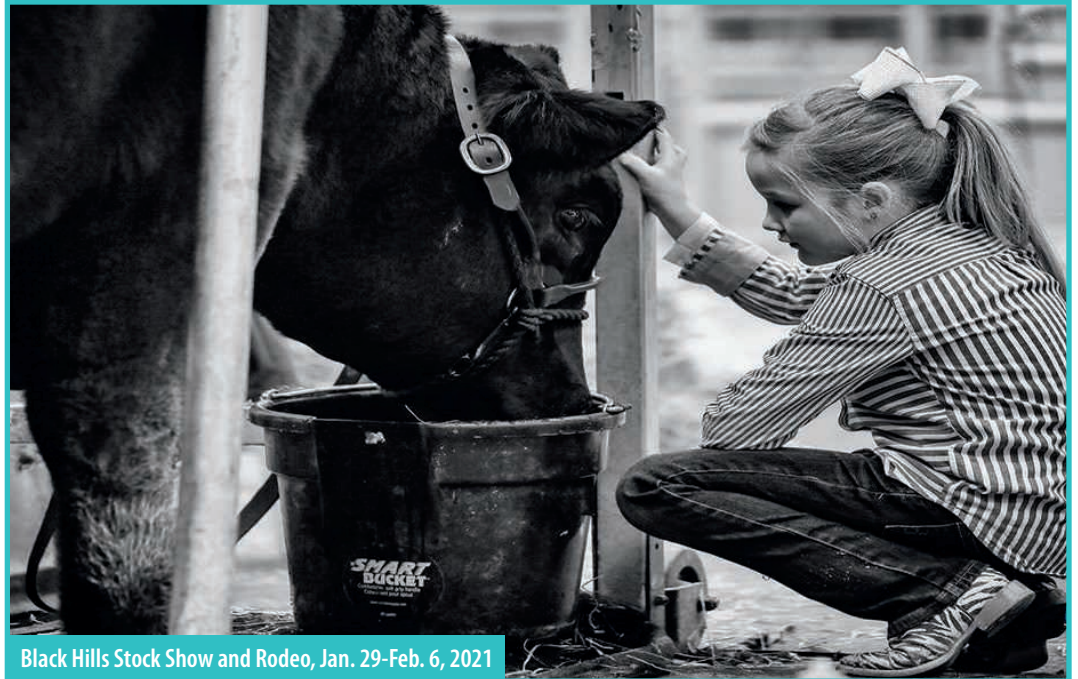
Twilight Flights, Strawbale Winery, Renner, SD,
605-543-5071

December 19

Cirque Dream Story, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

January 9

Dakota Ridgetop Toy Show, Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD
712-261-0316



Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo, Jan. 29-Feb. 6, 2021

January 14-17, 21-24

Elf The Musical, Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

January 15-17

BH Rapid Winter Classic Indoor Soccer Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

January 16

Annual Burning Beetle Festival, 5 p.m., Pageant Hill, Custer, SD
605-673-2244

January 23

9th Annual Lakota Games on Ice, Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village, Mitchell, SD
605-996-5473

January 29-February 6

Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-335-3861

January 29-30

Pro Snocross Races, Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

January 29-31

Winterfest, Lead, SD
605-335-3861

February 5-6

Mardi Gras Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

February 10-13

Watertown Winter Farm Show, Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills Film Festival, Virtual,
605-574-9454

February 20-27

SD State High School Wrestling Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD
605-859-2280

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.