

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Christmas at the Capitol

Capitol Christmas
event turns 40
Pages 8-9

The wonders of
winter stargazing
Pages 12-13

Thousands of visitors are expected to view the nearly 100 Christmas trees on display in Pierre during the Christmas season.



Wrapping Up 2021



Ken Schlingen
General Manager

Your employees and directors would like to wish each of you a happy and safe Thanksgiving. Despite the continued impacts from the covid-19 pandemic, we have much to be thankful for. The fall has been good for harvest and we received some much needed moisture. We wish the crops would have been more plentiful, but we are also thankful for the better than expected pricing.

Congratulations to Jeff Gustafson of rural Ethan and Merl Bechen of rural Mitchell who joined your board of directors. Jeff and Merl are filling the shoes of past directors Butch Morrison and Jim Headley. We are thankful for their willingness to learn more about their cooperative and to serve our membership.

Your cooperative has managed well in 2021. Our kilowatt hour energy sales and revenues are ahead of budget, but our expenses are also higher. Our margins through the end of September are better than what we had in the budget, but less than this time last year. We expect the remaining months of 2021 to continue to be positive, and we should end the year in a good financial position.

The senior staff and I are working on our 2022 budget. It is a complicated prediction to guess the weather, the economy, revenues and expenses. We are thankful that the cost of the electric power we purchase is not changing although how that power is produced has seen many changes.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative provides Central Electric with our electric power needs that are above what we receive from the federal hydropower facilities. In 2000, 84% of Basin's power was produced by coal. In 2020, less than 40% of that power was produced by coal. That change has been powered mostly by wind, along with natural gas and market purchases. Basin continues to develop more renewable resources to meet our needs and to be good stewards of our environment.

Our crews have been busy replacing older overhead lines. They are trying to get another dozen or so miles completed before the ground freezes. If we get this done, we will have replaced about 65 miles in 2021. Lower interest rates help to minimize how this impacts our finances, but we have seen significant price increases for the materials we use.

If you need a new electric service or a change to the existing electric service, please contact us ASAP. We have a backlog of requests and will address them in the order that they are received. Once there is significant frost in the ground, we will stop burying cable to avoid damaging our equipment.

The Operation Round-Up committee met on Nov. 17 to review applications for grant funds. The grant funds come from members who voluntarily round up their main electric bill to the next whole dollar. Thanks to the many members who support this program. I encourage all members to participate and to improve our quality of life. The next grant application deadline is May 1.

Look to my column next month, as I hope to share our predictions, rates and potential projects for 2022. The board, employees and I are all thankful for the opportunity to serve you each and every day.

Until next month, be safe!

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



CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

Duane Wolbrink - President
 Todd VanWalleghen - Vice President
 Bernetta Burghardt - Secretary
 Mark Reindl - Treasurer
 Mark Hofer - NRECA Director
 Donita Loudner - SDREA Director
 Roger Campbell - Director
 Jeff Gustafson - Director
 Merl Bechen - Director At Large

Management Staff

Ken Schlimgen - General Manager
 Brian Bultje - Manager of Operations
 Dean Uher - Manager of Finance & Administration
 Lincoln Feistner - Sales & Project Manager
 Patrick Soukup - Manager of Member Services & Marketing
 Tara Miller - Editor, Manager of Communications

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

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Contact Us

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 Phone: 1-800-477-2892 or 1-605-996-7516
 Website: www.centralecc.coop

Our Mission

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

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. Central Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Board meeting summary

The board of directors met Sept. 20, 2021, at Central Electric Cooperative's Betts Road Service Center for the regular board meeting. The board approved the August 2021 meeting minutes. They then 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 Electric Power Cooperative's annual meeting
- Rural Electric Economic Development committee
- Covid-19 local case update
- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- Chamberlain Smokey Grove housing development
- Pukwana maintenance agreement
- POET large commercial power agreement
- Basin Electric updates
- Renewable energy credits

Darrin Lynch of the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation presented an analysis of 2020 trends.

The board discussed replacement of aging outpost facilities. The board will consider facility upgrades during the next strategic planning session.

Director Duane Wolbrink reported on East River Electric activities. Discussion followed.

Director Donita Loudner provided NRECA Region 6 updates. Discussion followed.

BOARD ACTION

- Unanimous ballots were cast to elect Duane Wolbrink as President, Todd VanWalleghen as Vice President., Mark Reindl as Treasurer and Bernetta Burghardt as Secretary.
- A motion was made and seconded to file notice to withdraw from the Basin FERC proceeding and to ratify any prior action in that regard. Motion carried by unanimous vote.
- A motion was made and seconded to nominate James Headley for the SDREA Legacy of Leadership Award. Motion carried by unanimous vote.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve a member loan application for installation of an electric heating system. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

The next board meeting was scheduled for Oct. 18 2021.

Please contact the cooperative office if you have questions about the board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE SEPT. 2021	YEAR TO DATE SEPT. 2020
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	269,635,143 kWh	241,924,126 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 26,385,863	\$ 24,386,650
Total Cost of Service	\$ 25,891,944	\$ 22,980,002
Operating Margins	\$ 493,919	\$ 1,406,648

Ready your home for a winter break during the holidays

If you're planning to be out of town for an extended period of time during the holidays, take heed of the following recommendations to save some energy and keep your home safe while you're away.

- Set your home's thermostat to 50 degrees. This temperature is a happy midpoint that avoids wasting energy to warm an empty house while still preventing damage to your pipes and plants. If sub-20-degree days are forecast during the time you are away, drip faucets.
- Turn off your electric water heater at the breaker or set it to the lowest temperature possible.
- To avoid a potential fire hazard, unplug the washer and dryer before you leave your home. Disconnect the hoses leading to the washer to prevent them from freezing.
- Unplug all of your small appliances. You'll reduce the risk of a house fire and save a bit on your electric bill.
- Don't broadcast your travel plans on social media. Instead, share photos from your trip after you return.
- If you set a timer for your outdoor or indoor lights, make sure to switch up the times over the days you'll be gone so it's not obvious to any onlookers that the house is empty when lights go on at 6 p.m. every day like clockwork. If possible, stagger several timers that control different lights to approximate the natural movement of someone through a house.
- Close blinds and curtains. Don't advertise your belongings to any would-be house burglars.
- Be strategic about putting out post-holiday recycling and trash. If there are a lot of boxes from new gadgets or other expensive electronics, wait until you get back to put them out so they're not sitting outside in full view for days. Or have a trusted neighbor set them by the curb on the appropriate day.
- Place a hold on all mail and newspaper deliveries, and ask a neighbor or a friend to pick up any packages from your porch.

DID YOU KNOW?



On Christmas Eve 1923, President Calvin Coolidge began the country's celebration of Christmas by lighting the first National Christmas Tree decorated with electric lights.



Don't cut down trees by power lines

Milo Thompson

Milo reminds electric cooperative members that cutting down trees located near power lines can be hazardous. Milo is the child of Kurt and Rebecca Thompson of Hayti. They are members of H-D Electric.

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.

HOLIDAY DESSERTS

CRANBERRY CAKE

Ingredients:
3 Tbsp. butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
2 cups flour
1 cup milk
3 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
2-3 cups raw cranberries

Butter Sauce

1 cup sugar
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup evaporated milk or cream
1 Tbsp. flour
1 tsp. vanilla

METHOD

Grease and flour a bundt pan or 9 x 13 inch pan. Cream butter, sugar and egg. Beat in flour, milk, baking powder and salt. Fold in cranberries. Spread batter in pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. Bundt pan may need one hour. Serve with butter sauce. For butter sauce, mix flour and sugar. Place all ingredients except vanilla in saucepan. Heat, beating well over high heat until hot and bubbly. Add vanilla. Serve warm over cranberry cake.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

BAKED RICE PUDDING

Ingredients:
2 cups milk
1 cup water
1/4 cup sugar
3 tbsps. rice
1 tbsps. butter
1/4 cup raisins
Pinch of salt

Topping

Sugar
Cinnamon
Milk

METHOD

In a 2-qt. baking dish, add milk, water, sugar and rice. Stir together. Add a pinch of salt and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Take out of oven and add butter. Let sit while you eat main meal. Dish up in bowls, sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon and add milk.

Deanna Dean, Artesian

FANCY CHRISTMAS CAKES

Ingredients:

Cakes

1 pkg. (2-layer size) white cake mix
1 tbsps. McCormick® Red Food Color
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 tbsps. McCormick® Green Food Color
1 pkg. (16 oz.) chocolate candy coating, such as CANDIQUIK®

Buttercream

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 pkg. (16 oz.) confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tbsps. milk
Pinch of salt

METHOD

Preheat oven and prepare batter as directed. Divide batter evenly into 2 bowls (about 1-1/2 cups of batter each). Stir red food color and vanilla into first bowl. Stir green color into second bowl. Pour red and green batter into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pans. Gently tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. (If you do not have 2 13 x 9-inch pans, bake one color cake first, then reuse the pan to bake the second.) Bake 6 minutes. Remove pans from oven and tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. Return pans to oven and bake 6-9 minutes longer. Cool in pans 10 minutes. Invert cakes onto wire rack. Cool completely. Refrigerate cakes until ready to assemble. For buttercream, beat butter in large bowl with electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add vanilla and mix. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar on low speed, scraping sides and bottom of bowl after each addition. Add milk and salt; beat on medium-high until light and fluffy, at least 3 minutes. If frosting is too thick, beat in additional milk.

www.mccormick.com

Please send your favorite soup 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, phone number and cooperative name.



Call Us for Your Trenching Needs

Do you need trenching work done at your home or on the farm? If the answer is yes, we can make it happen.

- Electrical service upgrades
- Convert overhead to underground
- Bury lines on the farm

Central Electric Cooperative's service department recently purchased a new trencher to meet the growing demand for trenching services.

Free Estimates: 1-800-477-2892

CO-OP HAPPENINGS

YEARS OF SERVICE



DeEtte Bohr
Accounting & Customer
Service Supervisor
24 years on Dec. 1



Tara Miller
Manager of
Communications
1 year on Dec. 16

Mission Complete for Seasonal Utility Workers

Friday, Nov. 5, was the final day on the job for our seasonal 1,000-hour utility workers, Kameron Brown (left) and Chandler Bakely (right). Since May they assisted operations crews to fulfill their 1,000 working hours required after completing powerline school at Mitchell Technical College.

Brown and Bakely were a tremendous help to the line crews this year, and we wish them the best as they move forward in their careers.



NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



Central Electric Cooperative Director Donita Loudner greets people at this year's Buffalo County district meeting in Fort Thompson. During the meeting, retired Directors Jim Headley and Butch Morrison were honored with star quilts in recognition of their contributions to the community.

Tara Miller
taram@centraleccoop

November is National Native American Heritage Month. This is a time to honor the contributions of Native American people toward the advancement of our country and our society.

In celebration of National Native American Heritage Month, we recognize Central Electric Cooperative Director Donita Loudner for her leadership and for being a strong voice for Native American people in South Dakota. Loudner is an enrolled member of Hunkpati Dakota Oyate residing on the Crow Creek Reservation.

Loudner not only serves on the Central Electric board, she has also represented us on the statewide board for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA). To our knowledge, Loudner is the first person of Native American descent to serve on the board at Central Electric Cooperative. She is thought to be the third Native American woman to serve on the SDREA board in the organization's history. Now, that's something to celebrate!

Central Electric provides power to the Crow Creek Sioux Reservation and the Dignity statue near Chamberlain, representing the rich Native American culture in South Dakota. We are proud to recognize National Native American Heritage Month.



Central Electric Cooperative's Buffalo County district meeting was held at the Powwow Grounds in Fort Thompson this summer.



Donita Loudner is a Central Electric Cooperative Director and enrolled member of Hunkpati Dakota Oyate residing on the Crow Creek Reservation.

CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPITOL

Each year, musicians and other entertainers from across the state perform for the tens of thousands of visitors who travel to Pierre to see the “Christmas at the Capitol” displays and decorations. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Christmas at the Capitol: Celebrating 40 years of yuletide splendor and dazzling displays

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With all of its spectacular lights, familiar carols and colorful decorations, Christmas at the Capitol inspires thousands to become awash in the spirit of the season.

It’s an especially magical and meaningful event for Moriah Gross, founder and director of the Pierre Youth Orchestra. Over the past decade, Gross and her students have performed in the Capitol Rotunda and added to the yuletide ambiance that more than 20,000 visitors travel from far and near to experience.

Gross is one of many performers slated to appear in the Rotunda as Christmas at the Capitol takes place from Nov. 23 through Dec. 26. Visitors to this year’s celebration can expect to see brilliant hues of ruby, pink and pearl in recognition of the event’s 40th anniversary.

“Winter Wishes” is the theme for 2021 as nearly 100 decorated trees will line the halls and fill the

historic structure. Local businesses and government agencies, non-profit organizations and other community groups from across the state will once again put their decorating skills to the test and give the Capitol and its environs a South Dakota Christmas flair.

This year’s official lighting ceremony will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at 7:30 p.m. The popular Pie Day is set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., when complimentary slices of pie, cookies, coffee and ice cream will be offered along with live musical entertainment sure to spark the Christmas spirit.

Gross said she and her students look forward to the event each year, but one memory stands out for her among the rest. Two years ago, she accompanied a guest performer who sang the traditional carol Silent Night in the language of the Lakota Sioux.

“It was so spectacular and moving to be able to have that experience there inside the State Capitol and honoring the Lakota people and

culture, and also to have our students experience that as well,” said Gross, a member of Oahe Electric Cooperative outside of Pierre.

A native of Kansas and accomplished string instrumentalist, Gross relocated to Pierre 10 years ago and soon realized there was no educational string program for public school students. So, she started the Pierre Youth Orchestra, which has nearly 40 students who are set to perform at the Capitol on Sunday, Dec. 19, at 5 p.m.

THIS YEAR’S OFFICIAL LIGHTING CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE TUESDAY, NOV. 23, AT 7:30 P.M. THE POPULAR PIE DAY IS SET FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 4, FROM 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Gross said while she calls the Capitol “one of my favorite places to perform,” the experience is also beneficial for her music students in many ways.

“It’s just the opportunity to play for

DECKING THE CAPITOL HALLS



Nearly 100 trees are decorated by clubs, associations, non-profits and government agencies. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

an audience in this kind of setting. It's very intimate and not like playing on a stage in a large theater where the audience is sitting at a distance away from you," she said. "In the Rotunda, there are people all around, sometimes standing room only, and they're very close and intimate. It's an emotional time of year and you get to really connect with the audience. At the same time, they have to be disciplined and focused on what they're doing. It's a unique experience that a lot of students don't always get to have."

She said many students will return after they've graduated from the program and sit in on the performance and have their photos taken with the current crop of students at the Capitol.

Observing Christmas at the Capitol from behind the scenes, Gross noted the many individuals and volunteers who help make the event a success each year.

"I can't say enough about all the committees, greeters, volunteers, organizers and others around the

Approximate number
of annual visitors

20,000

to the Christmas at
the Capitol event.

community who make this possible for people coming in from all over the country and the world. You have the sights and sounds and scents of the pine trees, and it all adds up to a wonderful holiday experience," she said. "There are so many people who all work together to make this something special."

The annual holiday event started back in 1981 with a dozen decorated trees and has grown in popularity through the past 40 years. Visitors can look for some of the more popular recurring displays such as a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments from the China Painters Organization and an old wooden nativity scene that the local Knights of Columbus group sets up on the second floor of the Capitol each year.

Those interested in serving as a volunteer for the event can contact rick.augusztin@state.sd.us.



The State Capitol grounds are also decorated to evoke the spirit of Christmas. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

Take Steps to Lower Heating Costs this Winter

While cold temperatures mean higher heating bills, don't forget some easy steps to make your home more energy and cost effective this winter.

Energy dollars can pour out of your living space through drafty doors and windows as well as unused portions of the home. The Energy Education Council (EEC) encourages people to make a small investment of time for big dividends in keeping your home or apartment warm and cost efficient this winter.

"Most winterizing steps can pay for themselves relatively quickly with heating bill savings," says Erin Hollinshead, EEC Executive Director. "And don't overlook simple energy-saving steps such as letting the sun warm rooms on sunny days or closing the damper when the fireplace is not in use. These are effective

energy-saving tips that cost you nothing."

Costs associated with heating and cooling account for the majority, about 44 percent of utility bills. Lowering the thermostat is the easiest way to save energy. Energy use is reduced for every degree dialed down. With an eight-hour setback of 10 degrees, the savings is about 20 percent, about 2 percent each degree lowered over an eight hour period. If two eight-hour setbacks of 10 degrees lower are used while sleeping and during time away from home, up to 40 percent savings can result. Turn it down when you are away from home or sleeping, and keep it to the lowest comfortable level when you're at home. Consider installing a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust the temperature day and night.

Efficiency Tips

- Replace your furnace filter every month to save energy and improve heat circulation. And if you haven't already, it's not too late to have a professional check and service your furnace system to ensure peak efficiency and safety.
- Use sunlight's natural heat to your best advantage. Open curtains and blinds on sunny days to let the sunlight warm your home, and close them on gloomy days and at night to keep the heat inside.
- Close your fireplace damper when you're not using the fireplace to prevent heat from escaping and cold from entering through your chimney.
- As long as there's a cold air return, you can close the vent and door for rooms you don't use. Experts say without a cold air return, closing off a room can build up pressures that cause the furnace to work harder.
- If you have older or leaky windows, consider temporary fixes, such as plastic film kits that create the effect of an interior storm window.
- Weather stripping is relatively easy and available at your local home improvement store. Stop drafts from coming in, and heat from leaking out of your home through drafty doors and windows. You could save up to 10% of your heating costs by eliminating those leaks.
- Use caulk to seal gaps in the walls of your home or apartment. Wherever different building materials meet, or wiring comes out of a wall, there are gaps that may contribute to the loss of heat in your home.
- Invest in a water heater insulation blanket. If the top of the electric water heater is warm to the touch, you are wasting energy; this means that the heater has to work even harder to heat the water in your home and therefore, uses more energy.
- Use electronic timers for lamps and appliances. Timers can be used to automatically turn appliances on and off. This is especially useful for those times of the day that you are out of the home.
- Using a microwave to cook meals uses much less energy than a conventional oven.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with more efficient, compact, florescent ones that use one-fourth of the energy and last substantially longer.

"Most people will be pleasantly surprised to realize double digit percentage savings on their heating bills by using these simple measures," Hollinshead said. "And don't forget, saving energy is the cheapest and cleanest way to add to our energy supply."

For more efficiency information, visit www.EfficiencyResource.org. The online Energy Efficiency

Resource Center is a service of the non-profit Energy Education Council, supported by hundreds of organizations including utilities, businesses, educators and other committed to promoting safe and efficient use of energy. Learn more at www.EnergyEdCouncil.org.



Members to Receive Capital Credit Refunds on Next Statement

The Central Electric Board of Directors has approved a capital credit general retirement of approximately \$835,000 for 2021.

Members with active Central Electric accounts will receive their refund as a credit on their bill received in early December. By doing this, your member-owned cooperative saves the cost of printing and mailing checks. Inactive members will receive a check in the mail.

When transferring service out of your name or moving off the service territory, ensure that Central Electric has your updated contact information for future capital credit payments.

Cooperative members are “owners” of the cooperative. As a non-profit cooperative, margins are allocated back to members each year. Funds are retained by the cooperative to maintain cash flow and good financial standing. Then, the Board of Directors approves capital credit retirements when financially possible. That’s something customers of an investor-owned utility do not see.

Remember to keep a copy for your records. If you have questions, please contact our office or visit www.centralec.coop/capital-credits.

CO-OP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Closed

Our office will be closed in recognition of upcoming holidays on the following dates:

- Nov. 25 & 26 for Thanksgiving
- Dec. 24 & 27 for Christmas

Retirement Open House

After 37 years with Central Electric Cooperative, Tim Harrington has announced he plans to retire. Members, family and friends are invited to attend an open house to celebrate his retirement at the Betts Road office community room on Friday, Dec. 10, from 2-4 p.m.

Holiday Open House

Stop by for some holiday cheer! Members are invited to visit our Betts Road office for cider, coffee and goodies during office hours Dec. 16-17 or 20-22.



A Touchstone Energy[®] Cooperative 

1-800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516

WWW.CENTRALEC.COOP

RECIPES NEEDED FOR THE

Country Cookin' cookbook

Your recipe could be featured in the 38th volume of East River Electric's Country Cookin' cookbook! Help us create another great cookbook by submitting your favorite recipes.

Submit recipes via email to ajohannsen@eastriver.coop, fax to 605-256-8057, or contact your local cooperative for more information. Submission deadline is Tuesday, January 11, 2022.

SEARCHING FOR THE STARS

Badlands Observatory photographer Teresa Hofer captured this image of The Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters.

Badlands Observatory welcomes stargazers, researchers and others interested in pursuing the field of astronomy

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

For centuries, astronomers have sought to find a scientific explanation for the Star of Bethlehem, which is described in the Gospel of Matthew as the celestial sign that led the Magi into the presence of the Christ child.

Some have speculated that the object high in the night sky could have been a supernova, a comet or possibly a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus.

Accomplished astronomer Ron Dyvig has views of his own. As a researcher who adheres to scientific methods, he's a bit hesitant to plow into topics where science and faith may collide.

But when pressed to offer an educated opinion on the Christmas Star, he replies, "There are several elements that make it challenging to address from a scientific standpoint and there are a

half-dozen theories beyond what's there in the Biblical accounts. But I think it could have been a nova or the planet Venus. Venus can be remarkably bright after sunset when it appears to descend in the west for several weeks. That may have been what the Magi saw and would be something they could follow. But a lot of people have strong religious beliefs about it, and if you believe it was a miracle, then science can't really explain it adequately."

Dyvig is founder of the Badlands Observatory, which he opened for his own private viewing and independent research in 2000. Two years ago, he began renovating the facility located in the small community of Quinn just north of I-90, with the goal of one day welcoming members of the public interested in astronomy.

While the renovation project is not fully complete and a grand opening is set for next spring, Badlands

Observatory is now welcoming visitors by reservation only.

"Since we got settled into this facility, there has just been so much public interest in it that we decided to go public. It's as simple as that," Dyvig said. "Right now we're taking it slow with small groups. During the winter months our activities will be curtailed a bit, then we'll expect a busy spring."

A native of Deadwood, the 79-year old Dyvig took a keen interest in astronomy at an early age when he was



Teresa Hofer and Ron Dyvig are long-time collaborators who have opened the Badlands Observatory to public access.

introduced to the discipline by his local Boy Scout troop leader. He created his first observatory as a youngster when he made a concrete pad and a cylinder to hold his telescope in place in the middle of a rancher's field. During his high school and college years, he spent late nights scanning the skies, marveling at the vastness of the universe and hoping to discover new heavenly bodies.

As a college student, Dyvig learned and taught the art of telescope-making and became president of the Black Hills Astronomical Society. He later designed and fabricated the optics for the Hidden Valley Observatory in Rapid City.

Dyvig spent time honing his craft as a research assistant at the University of Arizona where he worked under several mentors and utilized the advanced facilities at Kitt Peak National Observatory. He was chosen to help design and test image intensifier camera systems for Steward Observatory.

While through the decades he kept day jobs to support his avocation, his evenings were spent star gazing and pursuing new discoveries. His passion and dedication to astronomy paid off when he discovered - and aptly dubbed - Asteroid 26715 South Dakota just a year after opening the Badlands Observatory. It's just one of the 25



Photographer Bob Rossiter and Ron Dyvig are shown with the 26-inch Newtonian Reflector telescope at Badlands Observatory.

discoveries credited to Dyvig during the course of his astronomy work.

Building the observatory was no small task. First, he found and converted an old medical building in Quinn to house the facility. Then he personally designed and fabricated all of the optics, including grinding and polishing the mirror for the 26-inch f/4.8 Newtonian Reflector telescope. West River Electric

Cooperative worked with Dyvig and the town of Quinn to install hoods over surrounding street lights to reduce "light pollution" and enhance the ability to scan the night sky.

Dyvig describes himself as fortunate to find a partner in Teresa Hofer, a career accountant who shares his passion for all things celestial.

There's always something to be done

at the observatory, Hofer said. Ongoing duties include maintaining and upgrading the optical and drive systems, control systems for the telescope and dome, facility management, designing and implementing new educational programs for visitors, website updates and keeping up-to-date on developments in the field of astronomy.

"There's plenty to do, especially since we decided to make the facility public after we figured people might like to see what we do," she said. "We had to make sure everything was comfortable for the public and do a lot of renovating and painting and upgrading."

Hofer said she is starting to promote the observatory as a destination for astronomy enthusiasts who might be interested in touring the facility and peering through one of seven telescopes on the observation deck. Dyvig is in the process of also building a radio telescope to add to his collection.

Those interested in experiencing the Badlands Observatory can call 605-381-1521 to set up a viewing time or visit www.badlandsobservatory.com.



The Orion Nebula has long captured the imaginations of star watchers as it has been associated with the Greek myth of a huntsman placed among the stars by Zeus.



FROM HAMMERS & CLIMBING HOOKS TO BUCKET TRUCKS & COMPUTERS

INDUSTRY VETERANS HARRINGTON AND VETCH PLAN TO RETIRE

Tara Miller

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Storm jobs and staking sheets will soon be a thing of the past for two tenured Central Electric team members. It's hard to believe, but more than 70 years of experience will be walking out the door over the next few months with the upcoming retirements of staking technician Tim Harrington and journeyman lineworker John Vetch.

Harrington joined the team at InterCounty Electric in 1984 as an apprentice lineworker. He eventually became the Mitchell area foreman and was most recently promoted to staking technician.

Vetch previously performed powerline construction and worked for East River Electric. He joined InterCounty Electric in 1988. InterCounty Electric joined forces with Tri-County Electric in 2000 to form Central Electric Cooperative.

Vetch is originally from Hosmer and Harrington is from Laurel, Nebraska. Both ended up here, at least in part, because their spouses are from the area. Ronda Vetch's hometown is Stickney and Karen Harrington's hometown is Alpena.

Throughout their decades of service, Vetch and Harrington have witnessed the transition from hammers and climbing hooks to bucket trucks and computers.

"Service orders were all on paper," Vetch recalls. With the advancement of technology in the electric industry, many processes have gone digital, which is a remarkable contrast from when he worked for East River Electric Power Cooperative from 1980-1988.

Recalling the early days at InterCounty Electric, Vetch said, "We had one bucket, and we did a lot of climbing."

Historic Tornado Tuesday occurred on June 24, 2003, and South Dakota experienced 67 tornadoes within an eight-hour timeframe according to the National Weather Service. Vetch and Harrington remember that day well. The Mount Vernon area experienced extensive damage to electrical infrastructure, and they were there to help pick up the pieces and restore power for cooperative members. They also helped with restoration efforts following the 1998 Spencer tornado.

"TIM AND JOHN'S HARD WORK THROUGHOUT THEIR CAREERS ENABLED US TO BUILD A ROBUST AND RESILIENT COOPERATIVE THAT WILL POWER OUR MEMBERS WELL INTO THE FUTURE. THEY WILL TRULY BE MISSED."

-Ken Schlimgen, General Manager

Spending so much time on call and working storm jobs often meant sacrificing time with family and friends. Retirement might be the perfect time to make up for it.

Vetch plans to spend time with family, travel and do more camping when he hangs up his climbing hooks in January. Ronda, his wife of 40 years, will retire on the same day from her position at Life Quest in Mitchell. The couple has three children and four grandchildren.

Harrington and his wife of 41 years, Karen, want to travel and visit family after he clocks out for the last time in December. They have two children and two grandchildren.

"I was never home with my kids on a snow day," Harrington recalls. Being on call during inclement weather is part of life for a lineworker, and he hasn't regretted one moment of it.

“We were on an outage caused by an ice storm south of Kimball, near Ola, and we didn’t think we were going to get power restored until after Christmas. We pushed hard and we were able to get the power back on by 3 p.m. on Christmas Eve,” Harrington said. Members were thankful for their efforts that day, many years ago. He also remembers working large-scale storm jobs in Omaha and Selby.

“A lineman’s guardian angel doesn’t work 8:00 to 4:30,” Harrington explained. “They work around the clock.”

The cooperative can’t necessarily replace employees with this level of experience, but we will do our best to build upon the legacies they are leaving through their years of dedicated service and all the miles of line they helped construct.

We wish these veterans of the electric utility industry a very happy retirement. Gone are the days of missed holidays and birthday parties. It’s time to relax, knowing you aren’t on call. Congratulations on many great years at Central Electric Cooperative. Enjoy your retirement.

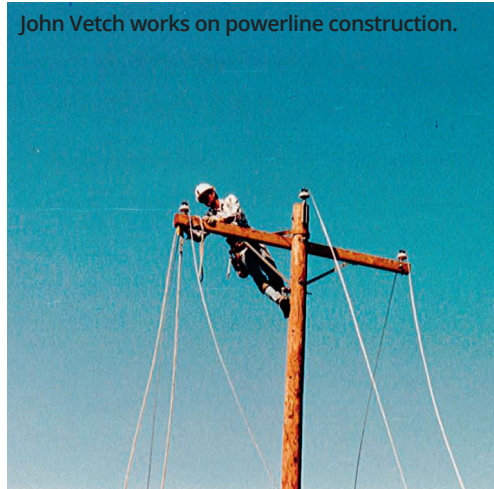
Congratulations on your retirement!

Tim Harrington served cooperative members from 1984-2021.

John Vetch served cooperative members from 1988-2022.



Tim Harrington and Mick Poncelet receive their Journeyman certificates.



John Vetch works on powerline construction.



Tim Harrington on the job.



John Vetch and Ken Schlimgen examine an ethanol plant control panel.



John Vetch and Tim Harrington work to repair a conductor over the James River.



Tim Harrington gives a safety demonstration.



CPR training.



Tim Harrington John Vetch



Christmas Day
December 25, 2021

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.

NOVEMBER 26

Parade of Lights
Dakota Avenue, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

NOVEMBER 26-28
Beautiful – The Carole King Musical

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/> for more info and tickets

NOVEMBER 26-28

DECEMBER 4-6, 10-23, 26-31
Christmas Nights of Lights
Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

NOVEMBER 27
Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade

Downtown, Rapid City, SD,
605-381-4204

DECEMBER 2
Christmas on the Prairie
526 North Broadway Avenue,
Miller, SD, 605-853-3098

DECEMBER 2
Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights
Downtown, Yankton, SD,
605-668-5231

DECEMBER 3

Handel's Messiah
First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

DECEMBER 3-4
Christmas in The Hills – “Visions of Sugar Plums”
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, 605-890-0519

DECEMBER 4
Plankinton Hometown Christmas
Various Locations, Plankinton, SD, Details at facebook.com/PlankintonServiceClub/

DECEMBER 4
Rapid City Garden Club's Wreath & Centerpiece Sale
Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

DECEMBER 5
Magical Medora Christmas
Homestake Opera House, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.homestakeoperahouse.org/> for more info and tickets

DECEMBER 10
Central Electric Retirement Open House for Tim Harrington
Betts Road Office, Mitchell, SD, 2-4 p.m., 605-996-7516

DECEMBER 11

Breakfast with Santa
Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown, SD, tickets go on sale after Thanksgiving, 605-882-6269

DECEMBER 11

Frontier Christmas
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD,
605-448-5474

DECEMBER 11-12

Christmas with the Symphony: 'Tis the Season
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

DECEMBER 11-12, 18-19

Christmas Tours of the Historic Adams House
22 Van Buren Street,
Deadwood, SD, 605-722-4800

DECEMBER 15-18

Lakota Nation Invitational 45th Anniversary
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

DEC 16-17, 20-22
Central Electric Holiday Open House

Betts Road Office, Mitchell, SD, free coffee, cider and goodies, 605-996-7516

DECEMBER 18

Vendor and Craft Market
Watertown Mall, Watertown, SD, 605-882-1734

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve with The Davis Sisters
601 Columbus Street, Rapid City, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

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