

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Former co-op general manager Jim Moore is one of the original organizers of the Line Patrol Charity Ride and was the designated lead rider in 2021 as the group embarked on its adventure

## Line Patrol Charity Ride

**20 years of assisting  
co-op families**  
Pages 8-9

**Food co-ops meet  
community needs**  
Pages 12-13



# 2021 Annual Report

## Executive Summary



**Duane Wolbrink**  
Board President



**Ken Schlimgen**  
General Manager

We invite you to attend your cooperative's annual meeting on Monday, September 26, 2022, at the Mitchell Corn Palace. Registration and the meal both begin at 5:30 p.m. The business meeting will begin at 7 p.m. We are offering a three-meat buffet, door prizes and two \$250 scholarship drawings for current high school students.

The Annual Meeting provides a chance for us to recap 2021 activities and update members on current issues. We are blessed to have a strong team of talented and dedicated employees who are the key to your cooperative's success each and every year. They are professionals that take pride in serving you, our members, to the best of their abilities. Below are highlights from 2021.

## Highlights: 2021 At a Glance

### ELECTRIC RATES

- While the cooperative experienced extreme price hikes on materials, general service rates have not increased since January 2019.

### FINANCIALS, SALES & CAPITAL CREDITS

- Rising material prices and fuel costs affected the budget, but it was a positive year overall.
- Energy sales returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- Margins saw a boost from 2020 to 2021.
- \$1.376 million in capital credits were returned to member-owners. Of that amount, \$550,000 was Central Electric capital credits and \$826,000 was Basin Electric and East River Electric capital credits.
- Refer to page 6 for a detailed financial report.

### OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

- Supply chain issues affected material availability.
- 77 miles of new underground line constructed.
- 4 miles of new overhead line constructed.
- 80 new electric services and 64 services retired.
- Completed annual pole testing, pole replacements, tree trimming and other maintenance activities.

### SERVICE DEPARTMENT

- Supply chain issues affected material availability.
- 1,654 service requests performed.
- \$1,691,170 received in annual revenue.
- \$80,900 margins after expenses.
- Service work included heating and cooling installations, electrical improvements, security light repairs and appliance sales and service.

### WORKPLACE SAFETY & TRAINING

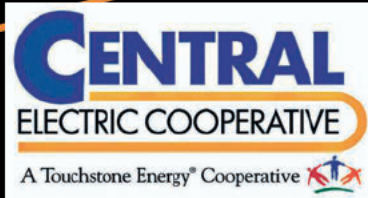
- Safety is a top priority and a critical component of Central Electric's overarching mission.
- Employees took part in annual safety training programs including first aid training, CPR training, forklift certification, defensive driving and poletop rescue, among other safety training activities.
- We strive to continually build on the strong safety culture at Central Electric.

**COOPERATIVES**  
THE POWER OF WORKING TOGETHER

Besides those highlights, longtime employees Mick [REDACTED] and Tim [REDACTED] retired in 2021. Many thanks to both Mick and Tim for their years of dedicated service to the cooperative. We also wish to express our appreciation to retiring board member Bernetta Burghardt. Bernetta provided strong leadership, initiative, encouragement and inspiration while serving as Miner County's director since 2004. Robert (Bob) Banks will officially begin representing Miner County in October.

Please make an effort to attend the Annual Meeting on Monday, Sept. 26. To contact us with questions, please call

[REDACTED] Until next month, stay safe!



## ANNUAL MEETING MONDAY, SEPT. 26



## CO-OP TRIVIA WINNER

**Abigail Anne Raak** of Mitchell was a recent winner of Co-op Trivia. She took home a yard game and "Say Watt" electrical education books for herself and her siblings. Thanks for playing!

September 2022 Youth Prize Winner: Izac Gales of Plankinton  
September 2022 Adult Prize Winner: Lavonne Oswald of Mitchell



# Practice fire safety this fall and winter

When the weather turns colder, you inevitably start hearing more news about house fires. Even a small fire can be devastating.

Most house fires are caused by cooking that gets out of hand. But the second most common cause is materials in the home that catch fire. This often occurs when a heat source, such as a space heater or flying embers from a fireplace, comes into contact with fabric or paper, which then ignites. Once a fire starts, it can move so rapidly that even the best efforts to put it out may fail.

When it comes to old houses, the risks are even higher. The older the wood is that a house is constructed of, the faster it burns. Once flames invade the walls of an old house, they move with frightening speed.

Fire protection in any home is necessary, but even more careful precautions should be taken if your house is older. Here's how to help ensure the safety of your house and everyone in it.

**SMOKE DETECTORS.** These are the first and best line of defense; they allow you to get out of the house at the first whiff of smoke. Six in 10 deaths in house fires occurred in homes that did not have working smoke detectors. Go beyond the federal recommendations and put a smoke detector in every room. Stay on the even safer side by opting for those that detect both smoke and carbon monoxide.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.** Keep small fires from getting out of control with fire extinguishers that are easily accessible. Choose several extinguishers that are light enough for even kids to handle. Make sure they have simple pull mechanisms that don't require much strength. Look for fire extinguishers that work for various parts of the house; for instance, an extinguisher in the kitchen should be able to handle grease fires.

**INSTALL ARC-FAULT INTERRUPTERS.** These ingenious little gadgets detect the electrical arcing that occurs when an old wire buried deep in your wall begins to fail. Speak with an electrician about where best to install interrupters and how your particular ones work.

**MAINTAIN IT ALL.** Finally, test everything on a regular basis. Smoke detectors should be tested every month, their batteries replaced every six months, and old smoke detectors replaced every 10 years. Opt to purchase an extra fire extinguisher so your family can take it to the backyard and practice using it.

## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES REPRESENT AT DAKOTAFEST



Electric cooperative representatives were on hand at the 2022 Dakotafest in Mitchell to share information about energy efficiency and electric-powered lawn implements and to showcase a 2022 Ford Lightning electric pickup truck provided by Vern Eide Ford. Shown left to right are Sheila Gross, Jared Rakness, Jennifer Gross, Patrick Soukup, Kristie Hauck, Brett Snyders and Tara Miller.

To see a video of this event and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



## Do not touch power lines

Kendyl Gill

Kendyl knows that electricity always seeks a path to the ground and that all power lines should be treated as if they are energized. Kendyl is the child of Brent and Emily Gill, and they are members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

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.



# PRIMO PASTA!

## PASTA WITH ZUCCHINI AND TOMATOES

### Ingredients:

7 oz. short whole wheat pasta like penne fusilli or farfalle  
2 lbs. zucchini, chopped  
1 lb. grape or cherry tomatoes cut in halves  
3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil  
6 garlic cloves minced  
1/3 c. Parmesan cheese grated  
1 c. parsley or 1/2 cup basil finely chopped  
1 tsp. salt  
Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

Cook pasta per package instructions undercooking by 2-3 minutes or until pasta is cooked but firm. While pasta is cooking, preheat large ceramic non-stick skillet on medium-high heat and swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat. Add zucchini and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Return skillet to stove, swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat, add tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute, stirring a few times. Turn off heat and add cooked pasta and zucchini, remaining 1 tbsp. of oil, salt, pepper, cheese and parsley or basil; stir and serve. Adjust seasonings to taste. [ifoodreal.com](http://ifoodreal.com)

## MEXI-CORN LASAGNA

### Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained  
1 can Mexican corn  
1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce  
1 c. Pace picante sauce  
1 tbsp. chili powder  
1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin  
16 oz. low-fat cottage cheese  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 c. parmesan cheese  
1 tsp. oregano  
1/2 tsp. garlic salt  
12 corn tortillas  
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

### METHOD

Combine first six ingredients in large skillet. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Combine cottage cheese, eggs, parmesan cheese, oregano and garlic salt; mix well. Arrange 6 tortillas on bottom and sides of a lightly greased 13x9x2 baking dish, overlapping as necessary. Top with half the meat mixture. Spoon cheese mixture over meat. Arrange remaining tortillas over cheese. Top with remaining meat mixture. Bake 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Remove from oven and sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Let stand 10 minutes, serve with additional picante sauce. Serves 8.  
**Carol and Rollie Smith, Brandon**

## BAKED SPAGHETTI

### Ingredients:

8 oz. package angel hair pasta  
1/4 c. chopped parsley  
1 lb. ground beef  
1 lb. ground pork  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. garlic salt  
1/2 tsp. black pepper  
1 1/2 tsp. sugar  
1 tbsp. Italian seasonings  
2 c. tomato sauce  
1 c. water  
2 c. canned crushed tomatoes  
2 bay leaves  
2 garlic cloves chopped  
1/2 c. green peppers chopped  
1/2 c. onion chopped  
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese  
1 c. shredded Monterey Jack cheese

### METHOD

Cook pasta and set aside. Add 1 tbsp. olive oil to pasta and stir in to keep it from sticking together. Precook beef and pork together with salt, garlic salt and black pepper. Drain grease off and set aside. In a large pan add parsley, Italian seasonings, tomato sauce and water, garlic, green peppers, onions and crushed tomatoes. Bring sauce to a boil then reduce to a simmer and continue to cook for 30 minutes. Add cooked meat to the sauce. Let set while preparing the baking pan. Grease a 9x13 inch pan. Layer sauce with spaghetti noodles in the pan. Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes. At 30 minutes pull spaghetti from the oven and mix cheeses together then pour on spaghetti evenly. Bake 5-10 minutes until cheese is melted  
**Jane Cave, Sioux Falls**

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# 2021 YEAR END FINANCIAL REPORT

BALANCE SHEET	2020	2021
<i>ASSETS - What we have</i>		
Lines, Office Bldg and Operational Equipment	89,802,103	95,391,390
Less Depreciation	25,903,427	27,158,141
Total Electric Plant Less Depreciation	63,898,676	68,233,249
Cash and Investments:		
General Fund	3,832,027	2,071,934
Investment (Associated Organizations)	20,810,131	22,366,651
Total Cash Investments	24,642,158	24,438,585
Accounts Receivable	2,683,846	3,279,117
Materials and Supplies	2,200,104	2,617,896
Prepaid Insurance	140,397	167,688
Other Current and Accrued Assets	6,600	6,600
Deferred Debits	493,995	353,081
TOTAL ASSETS	\$94,065,776	\$99,096,216
<i>LIABILITIES - What we owe</i>		
Loans Payable to RUS & CFC	46,702,802	49,067,145
Accounts Payable	129,063	2,538,678
Other Current and Accrued Liabilities	1,256,629	1,328,855
Deferred Credits & Regulatory Liabilities	513,663	393,985
Consumer Deposits	2,264,140	126,796
TOTAL AMOUNT OWED	\$50,866,297	\$53,455,459
<i>MEMBER EQUITY - What's left after liabilities</i>		
Patronage Capital and Other Equities	43,199,479	45,640,757
TOTAL EQUITIES	\$43,199,479	\$45,640,757
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$94,065,776	\$99,096,216

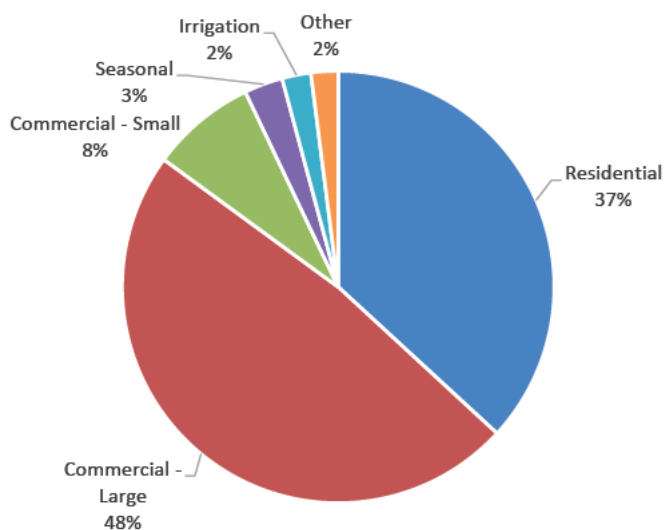


OPERATING STATEMENT	2020	2021
<i>REVENUES - What the cooperative takes in</i>		
Revenue from the Sales of Electricity, Wheeling/Fees	31,960,255	35,442,954
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$31,960,255</b>	<b>\$35,442,954</b>

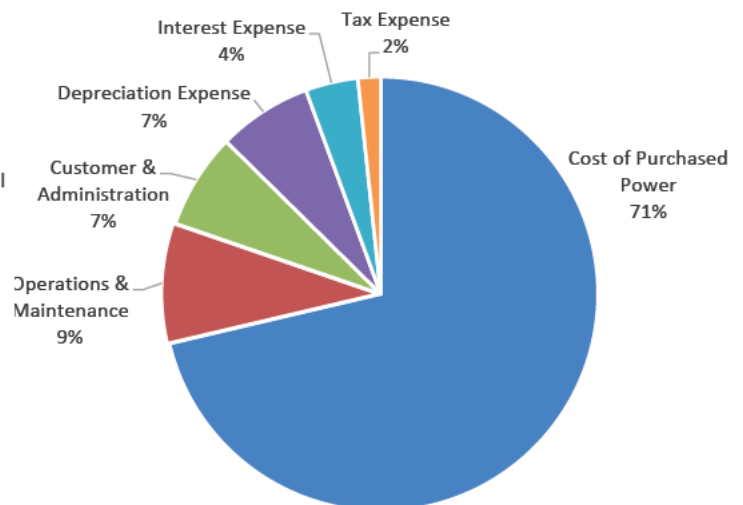
<i>EXPENSES - What the cooperative spends</i>		
Cost of Purchased Power	22,119,520	24,454,946
Distribution-Operations Expense	1,193,161	1,207,007
Distribution-Maintenance Expense	1,543,731	1,858,002
Consumer Accounting and Collecting Expense	233,688	247,006
Consumer Service and Information Expense	472,106	438,921
Sales Expense	135,973	112,587
Administrative and General Expense	1,478,497	1,621,563
Depreciation Expense	2,154,324	2,398,811
Tax Expense	535,129	579,317
Interest Expense	1,355,708	1,344,302
Other Deductions	15,325	25,084
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$31,237,162</b>	<b>\$34,287,546</b>

<i>MARGINS - What's left after expenses</i>		
Patronage Capital and Operating Margins	723,093	1,155,408
Non-Operating Margins	154,427	955,388
Generation and Transmission and Other Capital Credits	1,306,800	1,280,704
<b>PATRONAGE CAPITAL OR MARGINS</b>	<b>\$2,184,320</b>	<b>\$3,391,500</b>

## 2021 REVENUE



## 2021 EXPENSES





Roger Lawien and his wife, Kris, are regular participants in the Line Patrol Charity Ride. *Photos by Brad Letcher*

## Line Patrol Charity Ride marks 20 years of serving those in need

**Billy Gibson**

When Roger Lawien encountered some unexpected health problems, his fear and anxiety were assuaged by the assurance that he had several key factors in his favor.

He knew he could rely on his faith. He knew he could rely on his family. And he knew he could rely on his fellow cooperative employees across the state.

Lawien, member services manager at Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake, is a part-time volunteer and full-time advocate of Line Patrol, Inc., a charitable organization that exists to provide financial relief for South Dakota electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

Since the program was launched in 2003, hundreds of co-op employees have contributed to the emergency response fund by staging golf tournaments, bowling tournaments, auctions, trap shoots, 5K runs, raffles,

bake sales and more. One of the most popular and highly anticipated events is the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride held each September.

This year's 20th annual event took place on Sept. 10 and was co-hosted by Rushmore Electric, Butte Electric and Grand Electric. More than 200 riders and other participants gathered in Whitewood at the Iron Horse Inn and spent the afternoon motoring through the picturesque northern Black Hills.

Lawien was there perched aboard his prized Indian Roadmaster, soaking in the experience with his co-op friends and feeling grateful to have a dependable network of support that can be counted on not only to help rebuild lines and poles after a storm but also render aid in a personal crisis situation.

"Having been a recipient of funds from this program, it means a lot to be among these fellow co-op employees who are all so eager and willing to demonstrate their kindness and sincerity by showing up every year to contribute

Estimated amount of Line Patrol funds

**\$580,000**

donated to electric co-op employees

to a worthy cause like this," Lawien said. "It's that same cooperative spirit that bonds us all together. It's the can-do attitude they bring to their jobs every day in service to their members and their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities. They are salt-of-the-earth people who care deeply for one another and the people around them."

Lawien said more than 240 families have received assistance through the fund totaling roughly \$580,000. He is one of three directors of the program along with Jessie Tucker (West Central Electric) and Tim Neises (Central Electric).

Jerry Swartz was one of the first





Jerry Swartz, pictured above-left, was the first recipient of Line Patrol funds after he was injured in 2004.

recipients of Line Patrol funds after he was involved in a workplace accident. He expressed what the charitable organization has meant to him and his family.

“Back in 2004, I had an extreme accident at work. I spent six months in recovery and this foundation gave us a check for \$500 to help us out. It may not seem like much money, but at the time it meant everything to me and my family. It’s amazing. God bless this fund and the people who donate to it and keep it running,” Swartz said.

One of the original organizers of the Charity Ride is former Northern Electric General Manager Jim Moore. Each year, as is the custom, Moore leads the cavalcade of dozens of motorcycles

away from the gathering site and along the chosen route.

“The ride has just gotten bigger and better over the years,” Moore said. “The money goes to help co-op employees in need. One person had a tornado damage their home, another lineman from Yankton was killed in Afghanistan and we set up a scholarship fund for his three children. I always tell my wife, Janice, this is the one thing I look forward to every year and truly love because we’re helping employees and their families get back on their feet.”

Laine Mitchell, communications director at Butte Electric, said helping to host the Charity Ride was an honor for the cooperative and something the organization was happy to support.

“Having many of our own employees benefit from the Line Patrol fund over the years, we are thrilled to co-host this year’s event and help raise money for other cooperative families across South Dakota. The ride is just one of the many ways the foundation bonds our cooperatives together and has touched countless lives in the last 20 years,” Mitchell said.

The weekend began with a social on Friday evening and concluded the following night with a buffet dinner and charity auction.

Sponsors for this year’s ride were Irby, Altec, RESCO, Dakota Supply Group, Border States Electric, WESCO and The Okonite Company.



Hundreds of riders from across the state participate in the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride each year. The program exists to provide financial support for electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

# Minutes of Central Electric Cooperative's 2021 Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the members of Central Electric Cooperative Inc. was held on Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, at the Corn Palace, Mitchell, South Dakota. Duane Wolbrink, President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Attorney Jake Tiede was appointed acting secretary. President Wolbrink announced that there was a quorum of registered members present (301) at the time the meeting began.

President Wolbrink called upon associate Pastor Tom Schulz from Loomis Community Church to give the invocation.

President Wolbrink recognized past and present American service members in the audience. Attendees were asked to stand for a video of our National Anthem, followed by attendees reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Wolbrink asked if there were any members who wished to discuss the proof of notice or the order of business that had been mailed to them. There being no objection, the reading was dispensed with and the order of business was approved as mailed.

The minutes of the 2020 Annual Meeting were mailed to each member as part of the Central Electric Cooperative Connections Annual Report. President Wolbrink asked if there were any objections to dispensing with the reading of the minutes. There being no objections, the minutes were approved as mailed.

President Wolbrink announced that registration had closed.

President Wolbrink called on Attorney Jake Tiede to preside over the election of Director-At-Large. The two candidates for Director-At-Large; Merl Bechen and Scott Kolousek were introduced and given an opportunity to speak to the membership. The membership was then asked to vote for Director-At-Large.

President Wolbrink gave the president's report which included discussion of the financial report, capital credit retirements, growing energy demand, and beneficial electrification.

President Wolbrink introduced the guest speaker, Reggie Gassman. Mr. Gassman is the Manager of Customer Electrical Services with Sioux Valley Energy in Coleman SD. Mr. Gassman discussed lessons learned from his personal experience with the electric vehicle he owns. President Wolbrink thanked Mr. Gassman, Vern Eide Ford and member Paul Iburg for allowing Central Electric to display their electric cars at tonight's annual meeting.

President Wolbrink introduced Manager Ken Schlimgen. Manager Schlimgen welcomed members to the Annual Meeting and gave the manager's report. He recognized this

year's recipient of the Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship, Morgan Hinckley, Ethan; and the two recipients of the Jay Headley Memorial Scholarships, Rylee Schultz, Bridgewater-Emery High School and Abigail Connor, Howard High School.

Manager Schlimgen introduced the nine-member volunteer board of trustees for Operation Round-Up:

Scott Kolousek, Jerauld County; LeAnn Moe, Hanson County; Connie Hattervig, Miner County; Carla Amick, Sanborn County; Ellen Speck, Buffalo County; Dave Jorgenson, Davison County; Julie Dykstra, Aurora County; Jill Ekstum, Brule County; and Jim Headley representing the Central Electric Board of Directors.

Manager Schlimgen recognized former coworker Tim Johnson. Tim lost his battle with cancer in 2020 after serving the cooperative for 42 years. Manager Schlimgen recognized Tim's wife Darla and family present and requested a moment of silence in Tim's memory.

Manager Schlimgen reviewed accelerated line replacement progress, new metering system upgrades, residential rate comparison, and; discussed efforts the cooperative is making to learning about new technologies such as electric vehicles, smart homes, battery storage, and distributed generation. Manager Schlimgen then recognized board members and Central Electric employees.

Manager Schlimgen introduced Attorney Jake Tiede to announce the Director-At-Large election results. Attorney Tiede announced Merl Bechen as the next Director-At-Large for Central Electric.

President Wolbrink introduced Jeff Gustafson as the director for Davison County having been elected at the Davison County District meeting in June. Director Gustafson and newly elected Director-At-Large Bechen will take their seat on the Board of Directors at the September 20, 2021 regular board meeting.

President Wolbrink recognized retiring directors Jim Headley and Butch Morrison with a gift presentation and were given an opportunity to speak to attendees.

President Wolbrink called for any unfinished business. There was none. President Wolbrink then called for any new business. There was none.

President Wolbrink introduced Manager of Operations Brian Bultje and Manager of Member Services and Marketing Patrick Soukup who drew names for prizes.

President Wolbrink asked for and received a motion and a second to adjourn the 2021 Central Electric Annual Meeting. There being no further discussion from members the meeting was adjourned.



# East River Electric 2021 Report



**Bob Sahr**

General Manager  
East River Electric

Individual distribution cooperatives across our region had the foresight 71 years ago to join together and form East River Electric Power Cooperative. Our founders understood that together we can do more than any individual system could ever achieve alone. Through our collective effort, we have supplied the region with low-cost hydropower and an increasing mix of renewable energy, implemented innovative shared

services, built complex infrastructure to ensure reliability and much more, all while our rate has gone down over the past four years. The power of our cooperative family was built on working together and our continued success will come from remaining united and committed to our collective future.

A major test to our region over the past year came in the form of extreme cold temperatures that arrived in mid-February 2021. The weather event led to historic levels of energy demand on the U.S. power grid resulting in widespread rolling power outages throughout the central portion of the country, including within East River's service area.

The historic cold snap and the energy emergency that followed highlighted just how critical it is to have a stable, reliable and affordable power supply. It also showcased the importance of being connected to a cooperative family to share risk and avoid fluctuations in the energy market. Unlike consumers in Texas who were stuck with utility bills exceeding ten thousand dollars in some cases following the emergency event, East River's members paid the same rate during and after the energy emergency as they paid before because we have long term resources to serve our members. That's the power of being connected to a cooperative power supply.

East River is currently in the third year of our Transmission System Upgrade Plan. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we made significant progress on the upgrade plan over this past year. We completed several key projects that are designed to strengthen our system's backbone. As always, this critical work was completed with a primary focus on ensuring the safety of our workforce.

The upgrade plan is designed to accelerate additions and replacements to our infrastructure and was originally approved by East River's board of directors in August 2018. East River is prioritizing Southwest Power Pool projects in the first years of the upgrade plan. Doing this allows us to limit the impact on member rates. Main focus areas of the plan include delivery point substation construction, expanding 115 kV delivery further into the East River system and rebuilding or adding to our backbone

transmission lines and system. These projects will improve the reliability of the system and provide for future load growth.

East River and our power supply partners are continuously looking to ensure we have a mix of power resources to serve our membership with reliable and affordable electricity. As a result, we employ an 'all of the above' generation strategy. Part of that strategy is using renewable energy. We continue to see an increase in the amount of renewables within our generation mix. In 2020 we reached an exciting milestone, with more than 47 percent of our power supply coming from wind and hydropower, including nearly 30 percent from wind energy. Solar energy will also soon be added to our generation mix through new solar projects that were announced recently by Basin Electric. Two projects in western South Dakota, the Wild Springs Solar Project and West River Solar Project, are slated to begin power generation in the near future. With the increasing cost of gas and diesel, people are increasingly looking to electric vehicles and we want to ensure we are in a position to meet that demand.

East River's board-driven farm safety campaign continued in 2021. It's a collective effort of our cooperative network that reminds farmers to be aware of electrical equipment when working on the farm. It also educates them on the steps to take if their equipment contacts a power line. We continue to hear many positive stories of how the campaign's message has led to farmers taking the proper actions after accidents involving their equipment and power lines.

Since 1996, the Rural Electric Economic Development, or REED, Fund has provided more than \$110 million dollars in economic investments to 374 businesses and community ventures to aid in our region's development. Governed by 26 cooperatives in South Dakota and Minnesota, including your co-op, REED highlights the strength of our membership's commitment to our communities.

We also work in close step with our member systems in many other ways to live out the cooperative principle of commitment to community. For many years, we have supported youth development programs in South Dakota and Minnesota including 4-H and FFA. Those programs are so important for preparing tomorrow's leaders. Our commitment also extends to Feeding South Dakota as well as to local food pantries that have seen a great deal of need during the pandemic. The list also includes the United Way, Special Olympics, Junior Achievement and many more organizations that have positively impacted our region.

As a not-for-profit wholesale power supplier, we exist to enhance the value of our member systems. Our history is ripe with examples of the power that comes from working together. The continued success of our cooperative family will come from staying committed to our unified future.

# CO-OPS OFFER HEALTHY CHOICES

The Sioux Falls Food Co-op has persevered for 50 years by adhering to the co-op model. *Photo by Sioux Falls Food Co-op*

## Food co-ops meet the need for nutritious, healthy choices

Billy Gibson

Back in the 1930s, rural community leaders all across the country began traveling from farm to farm knocking on doors and asking for \$5 as seed money to build out a network of electric distribution systems.

It was not an insignificant sum to solicit from many farmers and ranchers contending with substandard soil conditions, the vagaries of weather patterns and fairly primitive mechanization compared to today's operations.

But in exchange for that investment, those same community leaders turned the promise of rural power into a reality and presently there are more than 750 locally-owned electric cooperatives serving roughly 40 million Americans.

Bess Pallares keeps that electric co-op success story close to mind as she embarks on establishing a grocery store in Brookings County using the

cooperative business model as her template.

Pallares is president of the Dakota Community Market board of directors, whose members have been working since 2019 to bring a food cooperative to the Brookings area. She reports that the endeavor hasn't been a cake walk, but she continues to be inspired by the way like-minded electric co-op leaders back in the '30s managed to gain popular support for locally-owned, independent entities created to provide a valuable service.

The board's market analysis indicates that a "low food access zone" exists within Brookings County when it comes to full-service retail grocery stores with just two providers in a 50-mile radius.

"On average, there are typically 2.84 grocery stores per 10,000 population. We have .68 in this area," she said. "People keep saying they're sick of having to drive miles and miles to get to a full-service grocery store that stocks



Bess Pallares

what they want and need for their families."

To generate start-up capital, the board is offering memberships at \$150, a little more than a week's worth of groceries for many families. Meanwhile, Pallares and her board members are scouring the landscape for additional financing sources and federal grant opportunities with plans to have a retail store up and running as soon as possible.

She has had discussions with East River Electric in Madison about accessing available funds through the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund (REED). The REED program





Caselli's Garden is among a growing list of fresh food suppliers for Dakota Community Market. *Photo by Caselli's Garden*

is designed to provide financing to help build the economic base of rural communities within East River Electric's regional service area. Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.

**Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.**

Pallares said she sometimes feels exactly like those early electric cooperative pioneers, attempting to pave the way for providing a reliable source of quality, low-cost food in the Brookings area. She has become active in the Billie Sutton Leadership Institute Rural POWER program to help tap into the regional business community with the goal of developing an optimum financial strategy and making connections with future suppliers and other partners.

"The Institute opens up a giant network across the state where you can meet a lot of people doing the same kinds of things you're doing, and they've

got great ideas and big goals and a fearless entrepreneurial spirit. One of our board members has gone through the class and I'm doing it now. It's been transformational," she said.

The Dakota Community Market is not the only fearless group striving to launch a locally-owned and locally-controlled food cooperative. The Coteau Community Co-op is also trying to establish a food co-op to serve the Watertown area. Both have plenty of successful models and supporters to help guide and inspire their efforts.

The National Food Co-op Startup Network and the National Co-op Grocers based in Minneapolis are both available to provide resources and expertise. Additionally, there are a few successful stores already operating in South Dakota, including Natural Abundance in Aberdeen, Breadroot Natural Food Co-op based in Rapid City and the Sioux Falls Food Co-op.

Patrick Sayler is general manager of the Sioux Falls Food Co-op on West 18th Street, an operation that has been going strong for the past 50 years through several relocations, growing competition and even a fire. Sayler sees food co-ops across the region as sharing the same common goals and working together to accomplish those goals.

"We tend to put a different twist on things, but in the end we all want the families we serve to have a better way of

accessing the food they eat to maintain good health and a healthy lifestyle," said Sayler, who used to frequent the store as a teen and replaced long-time manager Molly Langley in 2016. "It's always encouraging to see different leaders working hard to do what we've been able to do. It takes a lot of effort and it takes tireless visionaries to stay focused and committed to achieving what you want to accomplish together."

In meeting its commitment to improve the quality of life in the community, the co-op has a program called Big Change, where shoppers are invited to round up their expenditures to the next whole dollar amount. The difference is added to a fund that goes to support local charities such as the Teddy Bear Den, Mobile Pantry of Sioux Falls, Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, SD Voices for Peace and many more. The co-op even has a space available for public meetings and workshops.

The store recently celebrated an expansion and re-opening, and Sayler said he's optimistic about the future while keeping an eye on industry trends.

"We're growing. There's a lot of competition, but we've got a great location, great employees and a great product," he said. "The co-op model is alive and well. We have members who support us and are committed to our mission of providing a source of healthy, affordable good choices."



# Board of Directors 2021-2022

Representing you at the Annual Meeting are local members elected by you to the Board of Directors. Each board member invests a tremendous amount of time in the co-op. They meet monthly to review operations of the co-op, and they often attend outside meetings to stay informed and capable of making sound decisions. It is their duty to ensure governing decisions are in the best interest of the cooperative and member-owners. We thank the Board of Directors for the time they invest to ensure your lives are powered reliably and affordably.



Duane Wolbrink, President  
Aurora County (District 1)  
Served 1995-Present



Roger Campbell  
Brule County (District 2)  
Served 2014-Present



Donita Loudner, SDREA Dir.  
Buffalo County (District 3)  
Served 2002-07  
& 2017-Present



Jeff Gustafson  
Davison County (District 4)  
Served 2021-Present



Mark Hofer, NRECA Dir.  
Hanson County (District 5)  
Served 1990-Present



Mark Reindl, Treasurer  
Jerauld County (District 6)  
Served 2010-Present



Bernetta Burghardt,  
Secretary  
Miner County (District 7)  
Served 2004-2022



Todd VanWalleghen,  
Vice President  
Sanborn County (District 8)  
Served 2010-Present



Merl Bechen  
Director-At-Large  
Served 2021-Present



Robert Banks  
Miner County (District 7)  
\*Term begins Oct. 2022

## 2021-2022 Retirees

*We express our thanks to Mick Poncelet and Tim Harrington who both retired in 2021 after 37 years on the job. This year, John Vetch retired after 34 years of service and Curt Guindon retired after 46 years. Talk about dedication!*



Mick Poncelet, Retired  
Lineworker



Tim Harrington, Retired Line  
Foreman & Staking Tech



# BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

The board of directors met July 18, 2022, at Central Electric Cooperative's Betts Road headquarters 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 Schlimgen updated the board of directors on the following items:

- Rural Electric Economic Development
- East River manager meeting
- Basin Electric Power Cooperative
- Chamberlain substation replacement plans
- SDREA Legal Seminar
- Potential bylaw updates

Former board member James Headley has been selected to be inducted into the South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame.

Southwest Power Pool (SPP), our regional transmission organization, is offering a tour for interested utility representatives. Manager of Marketing and Member Services Soukup plans to attend the tour.

Directors Gustafson and Bechen reported on the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) forum takeaways.

Director Hofer reported on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) board meeting and associated activities.

Director Loudner reported on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) board meeting and associated activities.

Director Wolbrink reported on the East River Electric board meeting and associated activities.

## BOARD ACTION

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- Approved a member loan for \$8,000 for heat pump replacement.
- Approved 2nd quarter legal fees and expenses.
- Approved the auditing committee's report which reviewed second quarter board and general manager expenses.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for August 15. Members may call the office with questions regarding the board meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT	PRIOR YEAR TO DATE JULY 2021	YEAR TO DATE JULY 2022
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) sales	211,580,995 kWh	203,147,709 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 20,635,110	\$ 20,271,103
Total Cost of Service	\$ 20,305,639	\$ 19,138,178
Operating Margins	\$ 329,470	\$ 1,132,925



John [REDACTED] Retired  
Lineworker



Curt [REDACTED] Retired Line  
Foreman

# CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

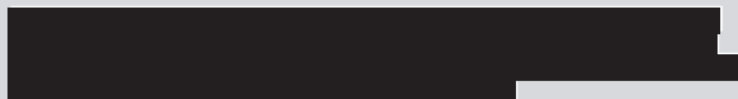
(USPS 018-963)

## Board of Directors

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



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 [REDACTED]



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## Our Mission

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

## 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.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop)



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.

**SEPT. 26**  
**Central Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting**  
 Buffet - 5:30-7 p.m.  
 Meeting - 7 p.m.  
 Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD  
 605-996-7516

**SEPT. 29-OCT. 1**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival**  
 Custer, SD  
 605-255-4515

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 1**  
**Oktoberfest**  
 Citywide, Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 2**  
**SiouxperCon**  
 1201 N West Ave.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**OCT. 1**  
**VFW Post 2750 Chili Cookoff**  
 315 N Main St., Mitchell, SD  
 605-770-2115

**OCT. 1-2**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Festival**  
 Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD  
 605-881-3273

**OCT. 7**  
**The Pumpkin Patch**  
 Rapid Valley United Methodist Church, Rapid City, SD  
 605-393-1526

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Great Scarecrow Festival**  
 Campbell Park, Huron, SD  
 605-353-8530

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Black Hills Powwow**  
 444 Mt. Rushmore Road  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605 341-0925

**OCT. 7-8**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vender Show**  
 Philip, SD  
 605-441-1060

**OCT. 8**  
**Fall Festival**  
 Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD  
 605-255-4329

**OCT. 15**  
**Fall Festival**  
 18473 US Hwy 83, Onida, SD

**OCT. 22**  
**Ladies Day**  
 The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD  
 605-390-2939

**OCT. 28-30**  
**ZooBoo**  
 Great Plains Zoo  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-7003

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Yankton's Harvest Halloween**  
 Downtown, Yankton, SD  
[harvesthalloween.com](http://harvesthalloween.com)

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge**  
 100 4th Street SW, Huron, SD  
 605-352-0000

**NOV. 5-20**  
**Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

**NOV. 11-13**  
**Christmas at the Barn**  
 Front Porch 605, Groton, SD  
 605-216-4202

**NOV. 12**  
**Black Hills Meat Festival**  
 Black Hills Harley Davidson  
 2820 Harley Dr., Rapid City, SD  
 605-390-7917

**NOV. 18-20**  
**Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival**  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**DEC. 2-3**  
**Christmas in the Hills**  
 Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD  
 605-745-4140

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