



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

DAKOTA ENERGY
MARCH 2024 VOL. 26 NO. 11

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



From Cows to Canvas

Michelle Weber Captures
Rural Life in Art

Pages 8-9

Sacred Hoops: Shooting
for Success

Pages 12-13

Rebates and Incentives for Dakota Energy Members

Water Heaters



Dakota Energy will pay a rebate of \$3.00 per gallon of water heaters volume, 50 gallon or greater, for a new electric water heater provided:

1. There has not been a rebate paid on a “lifetime” warranty water heater at this location in the past 10 years.
2. The unit carries a lifetime manufacturer’s warranty against tank leakage or 10 year warranty for a commercial model.
3. All water heaters receiving rebate payment must:
 - Be installed on Dakota Energy lines.
 - Have a water shut off valve above the water heater.
 - Be energized by no less than 208 volts.
 - Have electrical hookup meet NEC Code.
 - Be inspected by an employee of the Cooperative.
 - Be controlled by the Cooperative’s load management system.

Electric Heating Systems



Members may qualify for up to \$600.00 in rebates. To qualify:

1. Equipment must be primary service of heat and must be at least 2-ton electric heat panel and/or 4 kW minimum.
2. Only one electric heating incentive payment will be paid per structure every 15 years.
3. The member shall purchase and have the equipment installed by the Cooperative that is necessary for metering. The Cooperative will furnish the meter only.

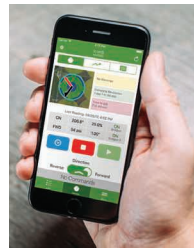
Commercial Lighting Incentives



Dakota Energy will pay per structure up to \$1,000.00 and a minimum of \$50.00 for the replacement of inefficient lighting systems in non-residential installations.

1. The incentive is for **replacement lighting only**.
2. The incentives will be calculated based on 20 cents per total watts reduced.

Third-Party Irrigation Systems



Dakota Energy will provide a one-time \$750.00 rebate per device for a third-party remote management system that meets the following requirements.

1. New system must:
 - Replace old load control receiver.
 - Shed and restore load via email, text, or voice once notice is automatically sent.
2. If member discontinues third-party control within five years and requests old control be reinstalled, the member is required to pay for a new receiver and equipment.

For more information, call 605-352-8591 or 800-353-8591.

Energy Explorers Answer key: 1. flashlight 2. lightning 3. tornado warning 4. thunder 5. drill

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

**DAKOTA
ENERGY**

(USPS No. 018-949)

Board President: Darrell Raschke, Huron

Board of Directors

Nick Nemeč, Holabird - Vice President
Tommy Baruth, Alpena - Secretary
Brian Bonebright, Wessington - Treasurer
Brian Baum, Alpena
Chase Binger, Hitchcock
Todd Bushong, Tulare
Chad Dearborn, Miller
Doug Schaefer, Orient

CEO/General Manager: Chad Felderman

Manager of Operations: Matt Zomer

Manager of Finance & Administration:
Eric Hasart

**Manager of Human Resources &
Communications:** Jodene Decker

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Dakota Energy Cooperative, PO Box 830, 40294 US Hwy 14, Huron, SD 57350. Members subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Dakota Energy Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. USPS No. 0819-949 Periodicals Postage Paid at Huron, SD 57350. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections, PO Box 830, Huron, SD 57350; telephone (605) 352-8591; fax (605) 524-7064; email dakotaenergy@dakotaenergy.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.dakotaenergy.com
Facebook @dakotaenergy
Twitter @DakotaEC



Dakota Energy promotes Gilbert and Hasart

Jeff Gilbert - Manager of Member Services



Jeff Gilbert was promoted to Manager of Member Services officially assuming his duties effective February 1, 2024. Gilbert's knowledge of Dakota Energy's membership, experience as an electrical contractor, and proven leadership over the member services electricians will make Jeff an excellent fit for the position.

Gilbert joined Dakota Energy as a journeyman electrician in May 2011. He completed the requirements for an electrical contractor in August 2011. Gilbert held the electrician foreman position from November 2017 until recent.

Gilbert is a graduate of Mitchell Technical College in Electrical Construction and Maintenance.

Jeff and his wife, Tammy, have a daughter, Alexandria, and a son, Joshua. In his spare time, Gilbert enjoys hunting, fishing and attending his children's sporting events.

Eric Hasart - Manager of Finance and Administration



Eric Hasart was promoted to Manager of Finance and Administration, effective December 1, 2023. Hasart joined Dakota Energy on October 3, 2022, as assistant office manager, where he gained experience and knowledge of the cooperative.

Hasart graduated from Lake Area Technical College with a degree in business accounting.

Eric and his wife, Emilee, have one daughter, Elea. Hasart enjoys coaching and officiating basketball, announcing car races, and going to the lake or river during the summer.

Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

It may come as a surprise that the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death is falls. In 2021, 44,686 people died in falls at home and at work, according to Injury Facts®. For working adults, depending on the industry, falls can be the leading cause of death.

Falls are 100% Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project:

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned above
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment

We tend to think we're always safe on flat ground, but the thousands of injuries each year tell us otherwise.

- Falls are the #1 cause of death for older adults; fall-proof your home
- Keep floors and surfaces clear of clutter
- Keep file cabinets and desk drawers closed
- Keep electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on stairways
- Wear sensible footwear
- Never stand on chairs, tables or any surface with wheels
- Properly arrange furniture to create open pathways
- Maintain good lighting indoors and out

More than 6.9 million people were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries in 2021. A fall can end in death or disability in a split second, but with a few simple precautions, you'll be sure stay safe at home and at work.

Source: National Safety Council



Trim Your Trees

Brace Tapio, Age 8

Brace Tapio cautions readers to trim their trees to prevent power line damage. Brace's parents are Nate and Elsa Tapio from Armour, S.D., members of Douglas 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.

SEAFOOD SPECIALS

CAJUN SHRIMP

Ingredients:

1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2-3 tsps. cajun seasoning
2 tbsps. butter

Method

Coat shrimp with seasoning. Melt butter in large skillet on medium heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir three minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Serve over cooked rice, if desired.

McCormick.com

CRAB SALAD SPREAD

Ingredients:

8-12 oz. imitation crab meat, flake style, tear into small pieces
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup (approx.) shredded Cheddar cheese
1 small can black olives, sliced
Mayo (must be Mayo), to get correct texture, less is better than too much
1/4 to 1/2 pepper, cracked

Method

Mix by hand. Serve with Club or Ritz crackers.

Linda Hubbard
Rapid City, S.D.

CREAMY SHRIMP LINGUINE

Ingredients:

8 oz. linguine
1 tbsp. butter
1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cup heavy cream
1 package garlic butter shrimp scampi
2 tbsps. white wine

Method

Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well.

Melt butter in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Add cooked pasta, Seasoning Mix, cream and wine. Reduce heat to medium; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

McCormick.com

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Introducing SmartHub



DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.

Your life is busy and managing your account can feel complicated. With our new SmartHub tool it won't be. Save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere. Here are some of the ways SmartHub will put you in control of your account.

Save time and money by managing your account at anytime from anywhere

HOW CAN SMARTHUB HELP YOU CONTROL YOUR ACCOUNT?

Our SmartHub web portal or mobile app will keep you informed and will show you where to save time and money on your bills.

Billing & Payments: No more waiting for your bill to arrive in the mail, access your bill at anytime from anywhere. Save time with easy payment options to avoid late fees and service interruptions.

Alerts & Notifications: Stay informed on important account events via email or text messages. Receive the information you need to make the right decisions about your account.

Paperless Billing: What if you could save some time and a tree at the same time? Activate SmartHub paperless billing, an eco-friendly way to instantly access your bill.

Usage Monitoring: Worrying about usage or surprising bill amounts can be stressful. When you know what devices are using the most energy, you can make money-saving decisions about your account. Imagine opening your bill and seeing an amount less than expected.

SmartHub gives you complete control over your account by giving you the tools that deliver the right information at the right time so you can make the right decisions.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO REGISTER FOR SMARTHUB?

You will need an email address and your account number. You can find your account number on your bill.



Billing & Payments



Alerts & Notifications



Paperless Billing



Usage Monitoring

HOW WILL YOU REGISTER FOR SMARTHUB?

Getting started with SmartHub is as easy as 1-2-3.

Step 1: Register your account in SmartHub

Whether through our web portal or mobile app, you can register your account, for free, in SmartHub. You can find the registration button on our SmartHub support page at domain.com/smarthub.

Step 2: Activate the features you want

Now is the time to take advantage of features like alerts/notifications, Auto Pay, and paperless billing to have more control over your account.

Step 3: Managing your account from anytime at anywhere

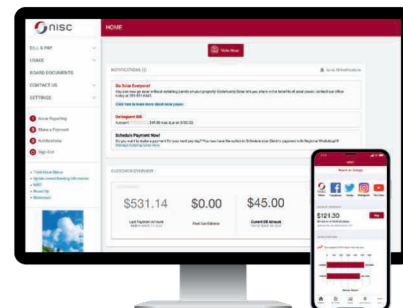
The more features you take advantage of, the more time and money you can save!

Give Auto Pay a try: After you register your account in SmartHub, to keep your scheduled payments on track you can set up your account for Auto Pay. Visit our SmartHub support page at domain.com/smarthub for instruction.

Activate Paperless Billing: At the end of the registration process, we encourage you to select our paperless billing option so you can receive your new bill immediately, no matter where you are.

Mobile App Downloads:

For information on how to download our free, secure SmartHub app from the Apple or Google Play stores.



NEED ASSISTANCE?

If you have any questions or issues, you may contact us by sending an email to dakotaenergy@dakotaenergy.coop or calling 605-352-8591. Visit our SmartHub support page at www.dakotaenergy.coop/your-account/payment-information for more information.

DECEMBER 2023

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, December 19, 2023, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Binger, Bonebright, Bushong, Dearborn, Nemeć, Raschke, and Schaefer present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Hasart, Moncur, Picćek, and Zomer were present

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- CRC dispatch
- DEC load management transition
- NextGen
- Greater Huron Development Corp
- Meter changes

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Finance and Administration Hasart reported on the following items:

- Financial reports for November
- 2024 Audit
- Revenue deferral
- SmartHub redesign
- Capital credit general retirement
- Basin capital credit retirement

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance, and retirement activities.
- Annual truck inspections
- Pole changes
- Glacial Lakes
- Mid Dakota Rural Water
- Capital budget items
- Meter changes

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load management
- Submeter changes
- Key account visits
- Consignment auction

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Manager of HR/Communications Decker reported on the following items:

- Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week Jackson Pećk
- 2024 Summary of Material Modifications
- Year end required notices
- Scholarships and youth tour information
- Website/cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Appointed CRC delegate
- Appointed NRTC delegate
- Approved CFC paying agent service board resolution
- Approved revised policies

BOARD REPORTS

Director Nemeć reported on SDREA November 2023 regular board meeting.

Director Raschke reported on East River’s December 2023 regular board meeting.

Director Baum reported on Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting.

March 2024 regular board meeting.

Next monthly board meeting is March 26, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	Dec-23	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,360,694	\$26,857,632
Cost of Power	\$1,512,802	\$17,903,861
Operating Expenses	\$575,523	\$7,121,640
Total Margins	(\$552,631)	\$1,007,130
KwH’s Purchased	23,863,045	254,945,265
Services in Place		3,615
Miles of Line		2,537
Members per Mile		1.42

DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE, INC.
HURON, SD 57350

Call our electricians for all your electrical projects

- New construction
- Remodeling
- Generator system sales, installation, and service
- Lighting - security, home, and business
- Underground locating and fault repair
- Trenching and backhoeing

Call 605.352.8591



Rural Artist Michelle Weber has illustrated 11 children books in addition to showcasing her art nationwide and internationally.

Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

During her upbringing in Windom, Minn., Michelle Weber discovered her passion for art at a young age. She was the kid who was always doodling, often paying more attention to her drawings than to the class. Holding on to her passion, Weber took her first art class in high school with her art

teacher, Mark Nass. Although the class had a rocky start, Nass recognized her potential and helped fuel a passion that would ultimately lead Weber to becoming a prominent rural artist.

“I was a junior in high school when I enrolled in my first real art class, and to be honest, I kind of hated it,” said Weber. “That first week, I was mortified that I wasn’t any good.”

Initially contemplating dropping the class, Weber sought a signature from her art teacher to change her art class to a study hall instead. Despite her request, Nass refused to let her drop the class and encouraged her to try give the class another chance.

“After a few weeks, everything just clicked,” said Weber. “I fell in love with painting and began living in the school’s art room.”

In less than a year, Weber made substantial progress in her artistic abilities. Enough so, that her teacher encouraged her to apply for the Congressional Art Competition. She applied,

and her painting not only won in her district but also earned a spot in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C., where it was showcased for an entire year.

Weber's success in the Congressional Art Competition foreshadowed what was to come. Drawing inspiration from her upbringing on a farm and involvement in 4-H, Weber began primarily painting livestock. In 2011, Weber's friend from Mitchell, S.D., Amanda Radke, approached her with a request to illustrate a children's book featuring livestock and rural agriculture, a perfect fit for Weber's artwork. This opportunity led to the creation of "A World With Cows," marking Weber's first foray into a full-time career as an artist.

"The book was a huge stepping stone for both of us," said Weber.

The children's book marked not only the beginning of a career but also established Weber's niche – capturing the focal point of rural life on canvas: livestock, horses, buffalo, and more. Weber has since illustrated 10 additional children's books and successfully sold her artwork both nationwide and internationally.

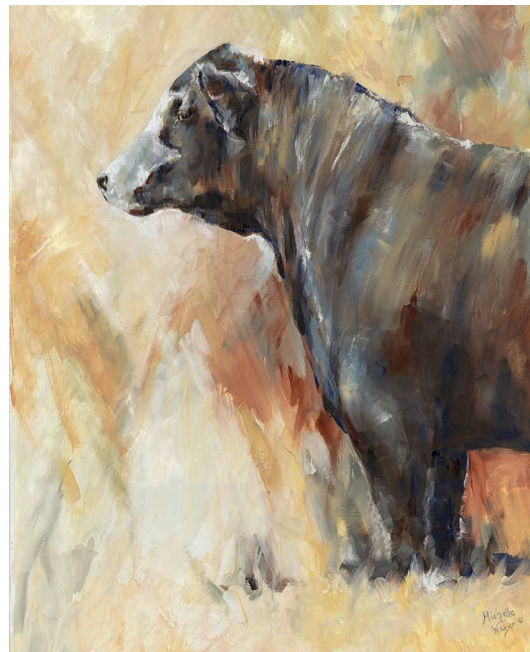
Traditionally, her oil paintings have been rooted in a realism, capturing every detail of the depicted animals. More recently, Weber has expanded her art to include a more whimsical and abstract representation of the rural lifestyle.

"My niche market is the producer, so it's important that my art reflects an authentic rural lifestyle," said Weber. "I want these paintings to have a touch of who I am, but also have the integrity of this lifestyle retained on canvas too."

Today, Weber resides just outside Lake Benton, Minn., a town just outside the South Dakota border. From her small town, Michelle Weber also maintains a website, michelleweberstudio.com, where she showcases a wide range of products

featuring her artwork, including prints, notecards, children's books, and even cake pans. In addition to her website, Weber recently opened a studio named, "The Studio by Michelle Weber" in the center Lake Benton.

"The Studio is a space located right in the heart of Lake Benton," said Weber. "Some people look at Lake Benton with a population of less than 700 or less and ask, 'Why would you open your studio there?' But I stand behind supporting these small. They are the heartbeat of this country, so it only seemed fitting to bring it home."



A Weber painting, titled "Side Eye."



Weber is widely known for her oil paintings that capture the essence of an authentic rural lifestyle on canvas.

Clearing the Path to Reliability

Trees are majestic, beautiful, and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Dakota Energy strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

RELIABILITY

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events, with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation. This is why you sometimes see Dakota Energy crews or contractors in the community

trimming trees near power lines. Our trimming crews have been trained and certified based on the latest industry standards.

All U.S. electric utilities must trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we can better prepare for severe weather events.

Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than to make repairs after the fact.

SAFETY

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our line workers. For example, trees touching power lines in our members' yards can pose a grave danger to families. Children can climb into a danger zone if they can reach those trees. Electricity can arc or jump from a power line to a nearby conductor, such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and hazardous for line workers to restore power.

AFFORDABILITY

As a co-op, Dakota Energy always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management, there are ways you can help. When planting new trees, ensure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 feet or smaller) should be planted at least 25 feet from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 feet) should be planted at least 50 feet from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers—plant shrubs at least ten feet from the transformer door and four ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, contact 811 before you begin any project requiring digging.

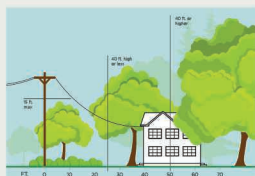
Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch dangerously close to overhead lines, please get in touch with us by calling 605-352-8591 or emailing dakotaenergy@dakotaenergy.coop.

We have deep roots in our community and love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is crucial in ensuring service reliability.

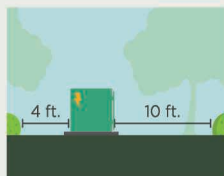
3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them. Here's how you can help:

1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don't block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



**Trimming improves safety for all.
Let's work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**

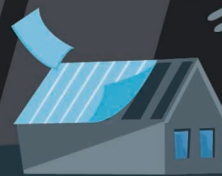
STORM SAFETY FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Spring is a wonderful season, but it can bring powerful storms.

Read the clues below, then use the word bank to complete the storm safety tips.



1. Keep a _____ handy in case of a power outage.
2. Be watchful for signs of a thunderstorm, including dark skies, flashes of _____ or strong winds.
3. If a _____ is issued, seek shelter in a centrally-located room in your home, a basement or storm cellar.
4. If you're outside and hear _____, go indoors immediately.
5. Practice a tornado _____ with your family once a year.



WORD BANK

- thunder
- drill
- flashlight
- tornado warning
- lightning

Answer Key: see bottom of page 2



Sacred Hoops Coach Tuffy Morrison is just one of many volunteer coaches who make Sacred Hoops Basketball a reality for rural athletes.

SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

Sacred Hoops Basketball Scores Big with Rural Youth

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Sacred Hoops Basketball, a nonprofit organization unique to South Dakota, has been changing the game for youth basketball across the state for more than six years. Using basketball as a tool for youth development, the program organizes teams, trains coaches, and hosts tournaments and workshops for young individuals in all communities – both big and small.

Since the program's conception, the emphasis has centered on rural engagement. Allan Bertram, the owner and operator of Sacred Hoops, co-founded the program alongside Jordan Long and a few other movers and shakers as a way to bring quality basketball instruction to students who would otherwise need to travel hundreds of miles to participate. Their goal was to make basketball accessible to all athletes across the state, not only improving their basketball skills but

also their life skills.

"We wanted to bridge the gap for kids in rural areas, particularly our athletes in low socio-economic areas who may not have been able to play basketball otherwise," said Bertram. "We want to ensure that every kid who wants to play can."

Beyond hosting tournaments and teams, Bertram and the organization's other volunteers have found other ways to make changes on and off the basketball court. In addition to hosting more than 120 high school instruction programs across the state, Sacred Hoops Basketball annually distributes more than \$70,000 in scholarships that aid athletes from low-income families to play ball. The organization was also the driving force behind a recent initiative that placed 2,000 new pairs of shoes in the hands of children from select, rural



Sacred Hoops Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier draws up a play for the the Sacred Hoops West River Youth Team.

elementary schools in South Dakota.

“We’ve seen so many kids grow and fulfill their passion,” said Bertram. “In today’s world, our youth sometimes don’t understand what their purpose or passion is, and that’s why so many of our youth are struggling. It doesn’t matter what a kid is passionate about – it could be music, sports, gaming, or whatever – but it’s our job to help feed that passion because that is what gives those kids a purpose.”

Today, the program has expanded to encompass more than 50 dedicated volunteers and 600 athletes across 60 teams in their summer season, with athletes spanning from third grade to high school. These numbers, said Bertram, have added up to a real impact for athletes across the state. Within Sacred Hoops Basketball, more than 75 athletes have gone on to play college-level basketball.

“It gives us a great sense of pride because those kids are not only getting a post-secondary degree but also get to continue their passion by playing at the next level,” said Bertram. “Many of these kids come from rural areas or

locations.”

Sacred Hoops Basketball Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier also emphasized the impact that the nonprofit has had on West River athletes. Standing Soldier regularly works with athletes from several rural

West River communities, including Pine Ridge, Belle Fourche, Kadoka, and more.

“We have athletes from all over come to play on one team, and it’s changing the game for these kids. We have seen several of our athletes start making junior varsity and varsity teams as middle schoolers,” said Standing Soldier. “These are kids we want to help reach their full potential, both on and off the court.”

Reflecting on his upbringing, Standing Soldier said that basketball played a significant role in his early life, ultimately leading to college scholarships that allowed him to play basketball for Platte Community College in Nebraska and later the University of Mary in North Dakota. Those opportunities, he said, are ones that he wants to share with other youth in South Dakota.

“Basketball has been a part of my entire life,” he said. “I developed a love for the game. God has used it to impact my entire life, and now I’m using it to impact others.”



The Sacred Hoops Basketball AAU West Coast National Championship Team.



Ali Van Sambeek's one-year-old smiles while feeding the chickens.

Keeping Chickens

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

During summertime mornings, Ali Van Sambeek will send her five-year-old out into the backyard to retrieve what's needed to cook that morning's breakfast.

"He's learned how to fry an egg on the stove, so in the summer he'll go out to the coop, bring back an egg and cook himself breakfast. Or I'll tell kids we need some tomatoes and eggs for breakfast, and they'll go out to get them in the backyard," Van Sambeek said.

Nestled in the Black Hills between Hermosa and Keystone, Ali and her husband raise four children, all under the age of seven, and a couple dozen chickens.

The chickens were added to the Van Sambeek family about a year ago.

"We wanted our kids to have more chores. We both grew up ranching and farming. We don't personally do that

anymore and we wanted our kids to have a taste of that life," Van Sambeek said.

"We haven't had to buy a store-bought egg since we started," she gleamed.

To begin, Van Sambeek started asking friends who raised their own chickens in their backyards a lot of questions.

Around that time and by chance, Van Sambeek learned of a friend that was looking to get rid of a couple hens and a coop for free.

So Van Sambeek took advantage of the opportunity and gave the hens a home in her backyard.

"We started with four, and were up to 20 at one point. And now we're down a little bit after an unfortunate situation with a hawk. That was our kids' first experience with losing animals. But this spring we'll get chicks again," Van Sambeek said.

The Van Sambeeks started off with Dominique brown layer chickens, but expanded the number of breeds in their

coop to get a more colorful plethora of eggs.

"I really wanted the green, dark brown and blue eggs. We pretty much have all the colors now. They've stopped laying throughout the winter, in the summer we'll get about eight or nine eggs a day," Van Sambeek said.

With her children being at the ages of 7, 5, 3 and 1, raising chickens has been



Ali Van Sambeek's son refills the water jug for the family's chickens.

a great way to teach them that their food doesn't just come from the store.

"Somebody has to put work into it – it's kind of cool when it's your own work. That's been one of the biggest things. We also have a pretty big garden. We feed the scraps from the garden back to the chickens. It's so much fun for the kids to see that process," Van Sambeek said.

Over in the eastern part of the state near Brandon, Stephanie Peterson has taken her love of raising backyard chickens and her expertise in doing so to new levels.

Peterson grew up in Lemmon and Rapid City before moving to Washington, D.C., to work on Capitol Hill for U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle.

During her time in Washington, D.C., Peterson raised four backyard chickens. Nine years ago, Peterson and her family moved back to South Dakota and bought a small acreage just outside of Brandon.

She purchased 15 hens and one rooster in the process and immensely enjoyed caring for the chickens and was entertained by their antics.

That developed into a full-fledged business for Peterson, named Fruit of the Coop.

"I heard that the backyard chicken keeping classes instructor for Sioux Falls Community Education was no longer available to teach, and I stepped right into the opening. I've been teaching classes since 2015. I also help small communities draft and pass backyard chicken ordinances for their towns, in addition to offering private consultations for folks who want personalized help getting started with backyard chickens," Peterson said.

She even offers advanced classes on veterinary care for flocks and is a distributor of non-GMO, organic chicken feed grown and milled by a local family farm.

"I started my egg business in 2016, working directly with chefs and restaurant owners to provide pasture-raised eggs to Sioux Falls restaurants. I also offer farm tours and field trips, and operate a farm stay AirBnb here at Fruit of the Coop," Peterson said.

What drives Peterson's passion for chicken and eggs is how interesting of an animal she's found chickens to be, with what she described as "unique biological makeups and also fun personalities."

Over the years, Peterson has seen the number of people raising their own chickens increase.

According to the American Pet Product Association's survey, ownership of backyard chickens increased from 8% in 2018 to 13% in 2020.

"And since COVID-19, the numbers have skyrocketed. The pandemic allowed for folks to have the time to pursue their backyard chicken hobby. But more importantly, many people began to focus on where their food was coming from and how to eat more locally," Peterson said.

"Raising your own chickens for eggs is an easy way to take control of a small part of the food system we all participate in. It

is now estimated that 12 million people in the U.S. own backyard chickens."

Things you need to know when considering backyard chickens:

- Hatching a Plan (local laws, cost, choosing a breed, where to buy)
- Chicken Little (setting up a brooder, food and water, heat, socializing)
- Feather Your Nest (coops and runs, predator proofing, cleaning, nest boxes, ventilation, space needed, seasonal care)
- Chicken Scratch (feeders and waterers, nutrient-dense feed, oyster shell, grit, treats)
- Ruling the Roost (free range, dust baths, molting, pecking order, injuries and diseases)
- Eggs/The Fruit of Your Coop (laying age, the "bloom," winter laying)



The Van Sambeek kids inspect the chicks that will be added to their coop.



MARCH 1-3, 2024
National Pheasant
Fest & Quail Classic
 1201 N West Ave.
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 2
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 7
Elevate Rapid City Economic Summit
 8 a.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed & Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy & 3rd Annual Shamrock Gala
 5 p.m.
 Alex Johnson Ballroom
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 11-15
Black Hills Institute's 50th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 14-16
Spring Rummage Fundraiser
 Spearfish Senior Center
 Spearfish, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWF 31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 15-16
Badlands Quilter Weekend Getaway
 5:30 p.m. Friday, all day Saturday
 Wall Community Center
 Wall, SD

MARCH 16
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 16
South Dakota Poetry Society Poetry on the Road & Open Mic
 1 p.m.
 Tri-State Museum
 Belle Fourche, SD

MARCH 16-17
Hill City Antiques, Railroad & Collectibles Show & Sale
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 17
St. Patrick's Day Green Pancakes and Sausage
 8:30 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 20-23
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Hill City Children's Easter Egg Hunt
 Visitor Info Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 24
Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

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