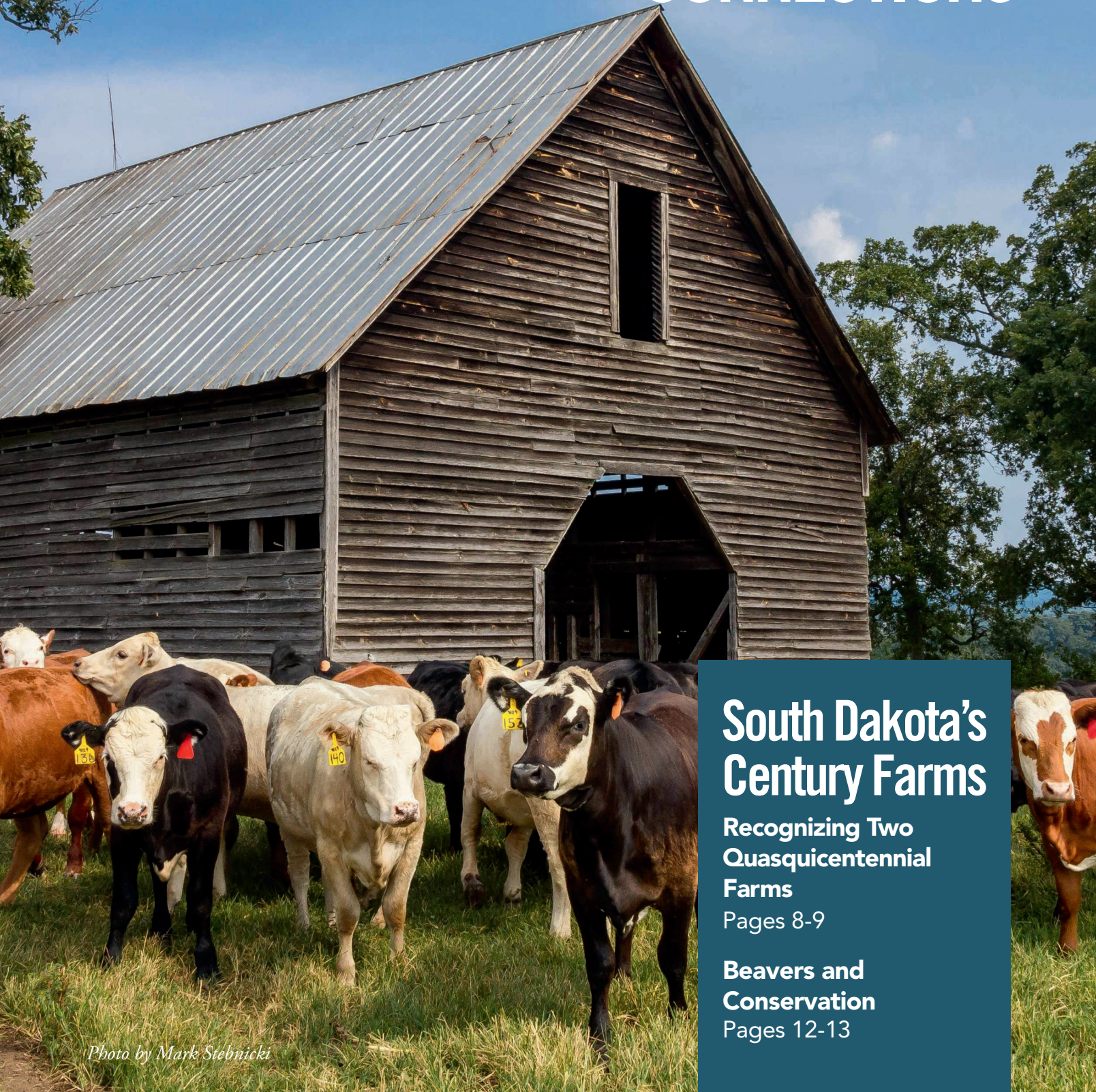




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**DAKOTA ENERGY**  
JUNE 2024 VOL. 25 NO. 2

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## South Dakota's Century Farms

Recognizing Two  
Quasiquicentennial  
Farms

Pages 8-9

Beavers and  
Conservation

Pages 12-13

*Photo by Mark Stebnicki*

## YOUTH

# \$1,000 Scholarships Awarded



**Journey Palmer**

\$1,000 Basin Electric Employee Scholarship

Journey graduated from Miller High School. She was an honor student, active in sports, FFA, HOSA, church volunteer, and 4-H. She plans to attend South Dakota State University and major in Nursing. Her parents are DEC's System Technician Coordinator Greg Palmer and Trinity Hunter of Miller.



**Kate Hamilton**

\$1,000 Basin Electric Member Scholarship

Kate graduated from Wolsey-Wessington High School. She was an honor student, active in sports, Student Council, FFA, HOSA, church volunteer, and 4-H. She plans to attend North Dakota State University majoring in Communications. Her parents are Jeff and Suzanne Hamilton of Wessington.



**Trace Van Regenmorter**

\$1,000 DEC Line Worker Scholarship

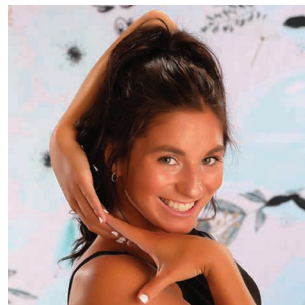
Trace graduated from De Smet High School. He was an honor student, active in sports, FFA, FCA, and church youth group. He plans to attend Mitchell Technical Institute in the fall to major in Power Line Construction & Maintenance. His parents are Dave and Abi Van Regenmorter of De Smet.

# \$500 Dakota Energy Scholarships Awarded



**Rebecca Bich**

Rebecca graduated from Iroquois High School. She was an honor student, active in sports, FCA, HOSA, FFA, Girls State Representative, Student Council, and church. She plans to attend South Dakota State University's Exercise Science program. Her parents are Greg and Kristen Bich of Cavour.



**Hamtyn Heinz**

Hamtyn graduated from Huron High School. She was an honor student, active in sports, FCA, church and the Huron Community Foundation Board and Huron Youth Leadership Council. She is enrolled in Dakota State University. Her parents are Dennis and Peggy Heinz of Huron.



**Jackson Mattke**

Jackson graduated from Huron High School. He was an honor student, active in sports, high school newspaper, music, choir, and church youth group. He enrolled in South Dakota State University's Sports Management program. His parents are Jared and Kara Mattke of Huron.



**Chloe Zens**

Chloe graduated from Redfield High School. She was an honor student, active in sports, FFA, Homecoming Queen, and church youth group. She plans to attend South Dakota State University's Radiology program. Her parents are Chris and Angela Zens of Tulare.

# Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet



Jackson Peck was honored at the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet held at SDSU's McCrory Gardens on Saturday, April 27 as the Scholar of the Week on January 7, 2024. He is a senior at James Valley Christian High School and the son of Travis and Janet Peck of Huron.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### DAKOTA ENERGY

(USPS No. 018-949)

**Board President:** Darrell Raschke, Huron

**Board of Directors**

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

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## Nemec Receives CCD Certificate



Director Nick Nemec completed NRECA's Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) program. The CCD program consists of five courses that focus on basic governance knowledge and the essential skills required of cooperative directors. The CCD prepares directors to fulfill their fiduciary duty as elected officials serving on behalf of their membership. Congratulations to Director Nemec.

## Prepare Your Family for Fire Emergencies

In only a matter of minutes, a small house fire can rage out of control, reaching temperatures of up to 1,500°F. In most cases, you have one to two minutes to get out safely.

We practice fire emergency drills at work and school, but don't forget to create and practice a home escape plan, as well. It is beneficial to keep your plan visible, like on the refrigerator, to help family and visitors remember what to do. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) stresses that even children as young as three years old can understand an escape plan.

### Helpful Planning Tips:

- Plan for two ways to escape from each room.
- Pick a meeting location away from your home.
- Plan for everyone in your home, including babies and others who may need help to escape.
- Teach children not to hide during a fire; they must get out and stay out.



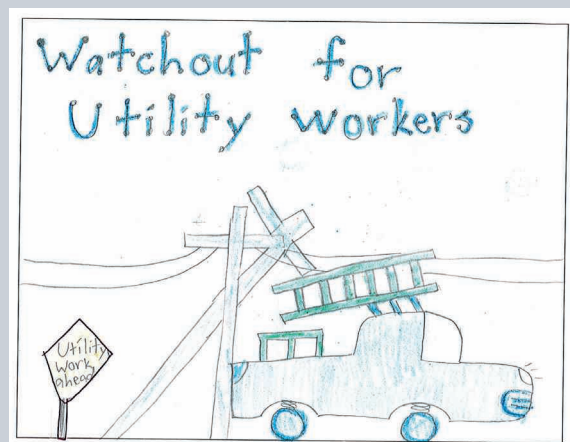
- Practice your escape drill with everyone in your family at least twice a year.

### Ways to Stay Safe:

- Clear toys, furniture and other clutter from exits.
- Check that windows open easily – fix any that stick.
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms monthly.
- Be sure that security bars on doors and windows have a quick-release latch, and everyone knows how to open them.

### Special Considerations for Apartment Buildings:

- If you live in a multi-story apartment building, map out as many escape routes as possible to get to the stairways on your floor.
- If you live in a high-rise, plan to use the stairs – never the elevator – to escape a fire.
- A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper-story windows – purchase only collapsible ladders evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Reese Rindels, Age 9

Reese Rindels cautions readers to watch out for utility workers. Reese's parents are Rochelle and Kyle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

# DELICIOUS *Dairy*

## CHOCOLATE FUDGE FROSTING

### Ingredients:

2 1/4 cups confectioners' sugar  
 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
 1/4 tsp. cinnamon  
 6 oz. (3/4 package) cream cheese, softened  
 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened  
 8 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled slightly  
 1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Mix sugar, cocoa powder and cinnamon in medium bowl until well blended. Set aside. Beat cream cheese and butter in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Gradually beat in cocoa mixture on low speed until well blended. Gradually beat in melted chocolate then vanilla until well blended.

McCormick.com

## RED VELVET HOT CHOCOLATE

### Ingredients:

4 cups whole milk  
 1/4 cup sugar  
 10 oz. semi-sweet baking chocolate, coarsely chopped  
 2 tsps. red food color  
 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract  
**Vanilla Whipped Cream**  
 1/2 cup heavy cream  
 2 tbsps. confectioners' sugar  
 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Place milk and granulated sugar in medium saucepan. While stirring, bring to simmer on medium heat. Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate with wire whisk until melted. Stir in food color and vanilla. Serve with marshmallows. For the vanilla whipped cream, beat heavy cream, confectioners' sugar and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form.

McCormick.com

## LEMON PUDDING DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 cup COLD butter  
 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened  
 1 8 oz. tub cool whip, divided  
 2 pkgs. (small) instant lemon pudding  
 2 cups flour  
 1 cup powdered sugar  
 3 cups COLD milk

### Method

In bowl, cut butter into flour until crumbly. Press into an ungreased 9 x 13 inch glass pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 22 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack. In mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in one cup cool whip. Spread over cooled crust. In bowl, beat milk and pudding mixes on low speed for 2 minutes. Carefully spread over cream cheese layer. Top with remaining cool whip. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or more. Yields 12 to 16 servings.

Mary Jessen  
 Holabird, S.D.

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.



**Matt Zomer**  
Manager of  
Operations

# Powering Reliability

Providing reliable power is one of the top priorities for electric cooperatives, including Dakota Energy. Safety for our employees, members, and the public is another priority.

Spring is when many of us are outside doing yard work, fieldwork, trimming trees, and many other activities. We enjoy the warmer spring weather while working outside but should always be aware of our surroundings.

Farming equipment seems to get bigger yearly, so you must know where the overhead powerlines are. When operating large equipment around overhead powerlines, always maintain a minimum distance of 10 feet from the overhead lines.

If you hit a powerline, stay in your equipment's cab and call 911 and Dakota Energy. DO NOT exit the cab until the line crew comes to turn off the power and gives you the clearance to exit.

If there is a fire, then you should exit the cab by crossing your arms on your chest, putting your feet together, and hopping away from the equipment for a minimum of 20 feet.

If your spring project requires digging, call 811 to locate any public utility lines at least 48 hours before you begin work.

## CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

We have identified several spring and summer construction projects in areas experiencing load growth and needing more capacity.

When the construction projects are in full swing, you will see Dakota Energy crews putting in underground and overhead lines. A total of around 19 miles of underground and overhead powerlines will be installed.

### SUMMER CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

#### UNDERGROUND:

- Northwest Hyde County - 4 miles of three-phase
- Central Hand County - 7 miles of three-phase
- Western Beadle County - 6 miles of single phase

#### OVERHEAD:

- Central Beadle County - 2 miles of three-phase

# MARCH 2024

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, March 26, 2024, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Binger, Bonebright, Bushong, Dearborn, Nemecek, Raschke, and Schaefer present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present.

## MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- Basin's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission filing
- Basin Electric market rate, financials, and patronage allocation
- Greater Huron Development
- CRC dispatch
- Crow Creek resolution
- 2023 Audit report

## OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- February financial reports
- Workman's Compensation audit and year end report
- EIA-861 survey
- SAMs registration
- 2023 Outside consultants report

## OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance, and retirement activities
- Highmore substation blinking lights
- SCADA options with Verizon meters
- Pole changes and rebuilds
- Retired metering equipment in Highmore substation

## MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- New load management program
- School safety presentations

## HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- Sale barn coffee events
- James River Youth Rodeo sponsorship
- StartToday SD Apprenticeship program
- Scholar of the Week Joanlei Baker
- Employee Advisory Committee

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- MDM implementation
- iPads and laptops purchased
- New security cameras installation
- Email retention plan
- Website and cybersecurity

## BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented

- Approved policies and Miller Speedway sponsorship
- Approved 2023 audit report

## BOARD REPORTS

Director Raschke reported on East River's April 2024 regular board meeting.

Directors who attended reported on the Credentialed Cooperative Directors courses.

Next monthly board meeting is May 28, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	Mar-24	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,288,746	\$7,065,036
Cost of Power	\$1,650,168	\$5,022,467
Operating Expenses	\$625,550	\$1,924,796
Total Margins	\$121,878	\$376,648
KwH's Purchased	22,681,467	70,213,732
Services in Place		3,625
Miles of Line		2,535
Members per Mile		1.43

**SAVE THE DATE**

**DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE ANNUAL MEETING**

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024**  
**11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

Locations:  
 Dakota Energy Offices  
 Huron & Miller

Highmore City Auditorium

Format:  
 In-Person and Drive-Thru

Question and Answer  
 Session - 1:15 - 1:45 PM



# South Dakota's Century Farms

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

## Soukup Homestead: Raising families and farmers for over 125 years

Nestled in the heart of southcentral South Dakota lies a cherished piece of land with a name that's been long-established in Charles Mix County – the Soukup Homestead.

Almost anyone with Wagner ties knows a Soukup.

There are even a few members of the Soukup family who are also part of South Dakota's rural electric cooperative family, including Charles Mix Electric District 1 Director Denise Soukup.

But it all had to start somewhere, and good things take time.

That was the case for the Soukup's Century Farm and the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead, a farm located near Britton that's served by Lake Region Electric.

Really, it's a common theme for Century Farm families to be located within rural electric cooperative service areas.

The South Dakota Farm Bureau and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources began the Century Farm Program in 1984 to recognize farm and ranch families who have kept the farm in the family for 100 years or more.

Farms reaching the milestone of 125 years, known as

Quasiquintennial Farms, and the venerable Sesquicentennial Farms, marking an impressive 150 years, are also given their due recognition.

With over 3,000 families honored to date, the program continues to shine a light on the enduring legacy of South Dakota's agricultural heritage. To qualify for these prestigious honors, farms must encompass at least 80 acres and provide documented proof of their original purchase date. That means a family member must have always had ownership of the land over the last 100 years, including during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

The annual award presentation is a cherished tradition held at the South Dakota State Fair.

After migrating with family from what is now known today as the Czech Republic in the late 1800s, Joseph and Mary Soukup



Tom Soukup stands beside his Farmall Red International Harvester 460 tractor. Photo courtesy of Linda Soukup



came to the Dakota Territory at a time when most of the land open for settlement had already been settled.

While living in Tabor with family, Joseph Soukup applied for a homestead on reservation land that was now open for settlement at the U.S. Land Office in town of Mitchell on Jan. 30, 1896.

“In the following five years he built a frame house 13 feet by 18 feet in order to establish a residence, then a grainery, a corn crib, and he also fenced in 80 acres,” said Linda Soukup, the wife of Tom Soukup. Her husband is Joseph and Mary’s grandson.

Joseph and Mary raised ten children on the very homestead that Tom and Linda raised their kids.

“There’s a lot of pride in the heritage and the legacy of, you know, having it passed down,” Linda said. A new house was built on the site of Joseph and Mary’s original home’s structure in 1952.

That’s where Tom and Linda lived and became the third generation to live on the homestead.

“When we lived here and Tom’s parents and their brothers and sisters used to all come here,” Linda said, as she started walking towards one of the farm buildings on the property referred to as “the shed.”

“And they would butcher hogs and cattle and we would process them down there. We had a meat cooler in the basement. And then one of the families owned the meat saw and one owned the sausage stuffer,” she recalled. “That was always kind of what we did until, well, families got bigger, and you couldn’t. You just couldn’t keep up, you know? We could have had a critter in there all the time,” she said.

Tom and Linda raised their children – Becky, David, Kathy and Mary – in the house as well.

Their son David works as a project engineer for Phillips Petroleum in Texas. Two of their daughters live in different towns but remain relatively close to the homestead.

Kathy Jaeger lives in Tyndall and Mary Ringling lives in Platte. In 1996, their daughter Becky and her husband, Mike

Brunsing were living in Montana when Tom and Linda decided to move into town, so in 1998 the Brunings moved back to South Dakota and began helping Tom on the farm while living in the house.

Becky raised three children of her own in the house she grew up in herself.

Becky and Mike still live on the homestead but in a more recently built home.

Now her son Dylan, 28, is raising his own family in the 1952 farmhouse.

In doing so, he became the fifth generation on the homestead.

Dylan and his wife, Keely, have two sons – a 20-month-old and an infant born in late March.

### **After 126 years, Torger Gronseth’s homestead continues to bring family together.**

It’s hard for Carol Evans to put into words how she feels when she reflects on the 126 years of history of her family’s farm in Marshall County.

“It’s so important to us,” Evans said. Then she takes pause.

“I’m sorry, it’s emotional for me,” she says, before telling her family’s – and the farm’s – origin story.

In 1872, her great grandfather, Torger Gronseth, immigrated to America from Norway at only 14 years old.

He made the trip to join his eldest brother in Minnesota. He officially “staked his claim” and homesteaded in the Pleasant Valley Township of Marshall County in 1901.

Over the next two decades, Torger and his wife, Berthe Lea, amassed over 960 acres of undeveloped land in the Coteau de Prairie of northeastern South Dakota.

To each of their six children, Torger bequeathed a quarter of land.

The pioneering couple sold a quarter to their daughter, Louise, upon her marriage to George Fiegel for \$1.

While they were building the house that Carol and Frank Evans now call home, the Fiegels welcomed their first child.

“All of them were born in that house built in 1920. The first born was born on

the actual homestead. The house was being built when my first aunt was born,” Evans said.

Louise and George owned the house and quarter of land until 1972, at which point ownership was passed onto their daughter Joyce and her husband Orvin Nelson.

“We bought the house in 2011. Last year after my mom passed, we were able to buy the entire quarter,” she recalled.

Carol and Frank then got to work refurbishing the 800-square-foot house.

The Evans live in Arizona in the fall, winter, and spring months, but spent years renovating the farmhouse over the course of several summers.

“We go back in May every year, and we’ve renovated the house from the chimney to the basement,” Evans said.

Their summer stay at the farm begins with the help of Lake Region Electric Association.

“The first thing we do when we get there is turn the power on. Then we turn the water on and then we mow,” she said.

The week over the Fourth of July holiday is especially meaningful to Carol. That’s when her grandchildren make their pilgrimage back to the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead.

“They’re always here around Fort Sisseton Days,” Evans said.

The traditional agenda for the kiddos also includes picnics at Roy Lake, routine farm work, and touching up the paint on an American Flag pallet display located at the base of Torger Gronseth’s tombstone.

“Every one of the kids has learned how to drive when they’re back in South Dakota – because it’s safe,” Evans said.

Evans ensures the next generation knows their family history.

“They know their great grandpa was only 14 years old when he left Norway. The strength of the person to do that – the longevity of our genetic background, the struggle, and the fact that we’re so fortunate – are something they’ll understand,” Evans said.

“And that it’s home. It’s never going to the farm. It’s going home.”



# ENERGY SCAMS UNMASKED

**It is the world we live in today – the necessity to pause and consider before we click, answer, or respond to someone seeking information.**

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

Dakota Energy wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or leak of your personal information. Here are some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

### RECENT UTILITY SCAMS

Scammers typically disguise themselves, either physically or digitally, as utility employees or

representatives to steal consumers' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage, and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is—it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

### SPOTTING A SCAM

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam.

Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

**WHAT DAKOTA ENERGY WILL (AND WON'T) DO**

Dakota Energy will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, [www.dakotaenergy.coop](http://www.dakotaenergy.coop), scheduled payments, SmartHub and Pay Now.

**AVOIDING SCAMS**

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual

claiming to be a Dakota Energy employee requesting banking or other personal information. We will only send you text messages if you have opted in for important alerts from Dakota Energy.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at 605-352-8591 so we can assist. Dakota Energy wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.



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**THURSDAY, AUGUST 22, 2024**  
**11:00 AM - 1:00 PM**

Locations:  
 Dakota Energy Offices  
 Huron & Miller

Highmore City Auditorum

Format:  
 In-Person and Drive-Thru

Question and Answer  
 Session - 1:15 - 1:45 PM

**SIGNS OF AN**

**ENERGY SCAM**

**High-Pressure Tactics**

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

**Sketchy Payment Methods**

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

**Dodgy Communication**

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.





# REBUILDING HABITATS

Beavers provide many environmental benefits including drought resilience, flood control and wildlife habitat. *Photo Credit: Richard Hamilton Smith.*

## BEAVER-INSPIRED STREAM RESTORATION

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Centuries ago, the arrival of European traders in North America marked the beginning of a multi-century hunt for furs. The pelt of the North American beaver was at the forefront of this fur trade, prized for its use in crafting felt hats. These stylish hats fueled an ever-increasing demand for beaver furs that persisted for centuries, leading to a severe decline in beaver populations. By the early 1900s, beavers had become critically endangered, nearly vanishing from the expansive wetlands across the continent.

As the beavers dwindled, so did their dams. Lazy streams and rivers, once

tamed by beaver dams, began to flow more rapidly. The disappearance of the dams caused waterways to narrow and floodplains essential to willow trees and cottonwoods to vanish. The loss of these beaver-engineered habitats set the stage for the significant erosion of precious prairie lands.

In 2020, The Nature Conservancy set out to combat these issues by launching a project in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota State University and local conservation agencies to restore stream health in western South Dakota.

“Our West River streams make up a small percentage of the total landscape – just under two percent of our total acreage is stream and valley

bottom,” said Lori Brown, riparian health program manager with The Nature Conservancy. “Yet, nearly everything in the prairie depends on these streams, including us in our rural communities.”

Prior to launching the project, The Nature Conservancy engaged local landowners in discussions to best understand their challenges and needs. During the discussions, several landowners faced similar issues: streams were eroding the land, fence lines were being washed away, and the water table was too low. Despite having effective tools for managing grasslands, landowners lacked the means to best maintain healthy streams.

“We needed to explore options

that any landowner could implement – strategies that didn't require a hydrologist to implement or an engineer to design," Brown said. "Our ranchers and landowners are some of the best stewards of the land. A lot of them are hungry for information and tools that can help them help the land."

The solution was simple, inspired by the ingenious works of an aquatic rodent: an artificial beaver dam. After all, if a beaver can engineer a dam, why can't a landowner?

Known as beaver analog devices, these simple speedbump-like structures quickly became integral to a broader strategy known as process-based restoration, a method that uses nature to help nature. Composed of locally sourced sticks, rocks and mud, beaver analog devices replicate a key natural process once performed naturally by beavers centuries ago. When established correctly, they filter water,

slow fast-flowing streams, and even recreate floodplains.

After settling on a solution, The Nature Conservancy set out to implement the idea in the real world, working with 10 landowners to help build and record the effects of the simulated beaver dams.

"Every day that I go out to one of these sites and I see that the beaver dams that we have built aren't totally washed out, it absolutely amazes me," Brown said. "I've read the manuals and I know how it's supposed to work, but I'm always in awe at what we are able to accomplish with the right building blocks in place."

After four years of the project, Brown said there is a lot to be excited about as the benefits of the project are evident. Signs of stream restoration are well underway. Sediment is accumulating rather than eroding, and revitalized floodplains are sprouting new willow trees.

"Without any planting on our part, woody species are now returning to these stream channels," Brown said. "The next step will be to lean into the success of this project. We want to act as a support for our conservation partners and other interested landowners that want to see their stream condition improve on their properties."

Others have been inspired by demonstrations led by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations in the state to take action to slow down and hold water.

"We are just starting to see some of the effects from our outreach and education side of this project," said Brown. "The most rewarding part of this effort has been hearing the stories from local ranchers and landowners and hearing them get excited about the project."



A rock structure installed to help prevent headcuts from eroding upstream reaches. *Photo Credit: Joe Dickie, Generation Photography, Inc.*



# Reliable Energy is in Jeopardy

### Steve Barnett

General Manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, a statewide association that represents 31 member-owned electric cooperatives. He previously served as Secretary of State for South Dakota.



South Dakota's families and businesses rightfully expect their lights to stay on at a price they can afford. Our national energy policies should support our cooperative mission, which is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to our member-owners.

Unfortunately, our country is now confronted with a harsh reality – we are quickly approaching a point where there won't be enough electricity to go around.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is the nation's grid watchdog. For years, the organization has issued a string of increasingly dire reports warning that threats to grid reliability are mounting, and more frequent rolling blackouts could soon become the norm. NERC's recent assessment predicts more than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation, enough to power about 35 million homes, will retire through 2033.

And all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions over the next five years.

Keeping the lights on is not a partisan issue. Yet, politics and energy policy have had an outsized impact on how we got here. The current state of our nation's energy policy related to electricity can be summed up simply: Do more with less.

That's just not sustainable. From data centers to EVs, from home heating and cooling to the way we run America's farms, our nation is increasingly reliant on electricity to power the economy. As technology and energy demands advance, a recipe for rolling brownouts and blackouts is brewing.

Opposite that increasing demand for electricity is an alarming reduction in supply as our country shutteres existing always-available power plants to comply with various federal and state regulations.

### Jim Matheson

CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association that represents the nation's more than 900 not-for-profit, consumer owned electric cooperatives. He previously served seven terms as a U.S. representative for Utah.



South Dakota experiences extreme weather conditions throughout the year with temperatures rising above 100 degrees in the summer and falling far below zero in the winter. When the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing, renewable energy sources do not fit the bill for reliability. We simply cannot fully retire power plants that still have a useful life ahead of them.

The final challenge to meeting our nation's energy needs is the arcane set of rules and regulations required to build anything in this country. The process for siting, permitting and building infrastructure – everything from solar farms, to pipelines to transmission lines – is mired in red tape and years of litigation.

These trends are not going to get any better in the coming years.

On April 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized four new rules to regulate power plants. The path outlined by the EPA is unrealistic, unachievable, and unlawful – exceeding the EPA's authority and disregarding Supreme Court rulings. It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid.

The American economy can't succeed without reliable electricity. Smart energy policy recognizes this fundamental truth, while keeping the lights on. This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future.

EPA finalized its rule against a backdrop of daunting threats to reliability as electricity demand surges and supply decreases. This will lead directly to more blackouts, higher costs, and uncertainty for America. That's a dangerous approach to regulation.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit challenging the EPA over its unlawful power plant rule on May 9. This suit points out that the rule goes far beyond what Congress has authorized the agency to do, violates the Clean Air Act and disregards recent Supreme Court rulings. The rule hinges on the widespread adoption of carbon capture and storage – a promising technology that is simply not ready for prime time.

South Dakota's Attorney General is also one of several dozen that have filed suit against the EPA for similar reasons.

Policymakers cannot overlook the laws of physics or the reality of the current situation. Adding more renewable resources to the nation's energy portfolio can be part of the solution; however, since the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine, our country also needs a robust supply of readily available energy resources to call on at a moment's notice.

Any long-term solution requires policymakers to recognize the need for time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure. These are essential ingredients for an energy future that prioritizes reliable electricity for all consumers.

Electricity powers industries, businesses, and technology. It fosters economic development vital for medical facilities, ensuring the functioning of life-saving equipment. Reliable power is essential for emergency services, law enforcement, and disaster response efforts. It also fuels innovation by supporting research, development, and deployment of new technologies.

Keeping the lights on is vital to South Dakota's economy. The stakes are too high to get this wrong.



**JUNE 12-JULY 20, 2024**  
**Prairie Repertory Theatre**  
**Summer Season**  
Oscar Larson Performing  
Arts Center  
Brookings, SD  
605-688-6045



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.

**MAY 31-JUNE 2**  
**Lake Andes Fish Days**  
Lake Andes, SD  
605-487-7694

**JUNE 1**  
**Frühlingsfest**  
7 p.m.  
Main Street Rapid City  
Rapid City, SD

**JUNE 6**  
**"Wild Race Car Night" Wheel Jam**  
7 p.m.  
Dakota State Fair Speedway  
Huron, SD

**JUNE 8**  
**"Challenge Cup XXII" Wheel Jam**  
7 p.m.  
Dakota State Fair Speedway  
Huron, SD

**JUNE 13**  
**IHS Health Fair**  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Fort Thompson, SD

**JUNE 14-16**  
**Highmore's Old Settler's Day Weekend**  
Highmore, SD

**JUNE 15**  
**1st Annual CheeseFest**  
10 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Farm Life Creamery  
Ethan, SD

**JUNE 15**  
**Branding Party & Brisket Feed**  
6 p.m.  
102 Dakota Ave.  
Wessington Springs, SD

**JUNE 21-23**  
**Scavenger's Journey**  
Yard sales, farmer's markets & specialty shops  
Wall to Wagner  
[www.scavengersjourney.com](http://www.scavengersjourney.com)

**JUNE 22**  
**Alexandria Car Show**  
Sponsored by Alexandria Fire District  
Facebook.com/  
[alexandriafiredistrictSD](https://www.facebook.com/alexandriafiredistrictSD)  
Alexandria, SD

**JUNE 22**  
**Huron MS Walk/Run**  
8 a.m.  
Huron Country Club  
Huron, SD

**JUNE 28-30**  
**Donnie Days**  
Stickney, SD

**JULY 20**  
**1st Annual John Zens Memorial Parade**  
Epiphany, SD

**JULY 20**  
**S.D. MCC Relief Sale**  
**Food Court, Bake Sale, Live Auction & Silent Auction**  
Free Admission & Parking  
Pioneer Hall  
Freeman, SD  
605-925-7009

**JULY 20-21**  
**Charles Mix Saddle Club**  
SDRA Rodeo  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**JULY 26-28**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
Facebook & Instagram  
Bruce, SD  
605-627-5671

**AUG. 9**  
**Northern Bull Riding Tour Finals & Bull-a-Rama**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**AUG. 17**  
**"Harvest of Champions"**  
7 p.m.  
Dakota State Fair Speedway  
Huron, SD

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