



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

DAKOTA ENERGY
SEPTEMBER 2024 VOL. 25 NO. 5

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Crisp Breezes and Corn Mazes

Autumn Family Fun
Pages 8-9

Rodeo Champions
Pages 12-13

2024 Annual Meeting gives Cooperative Members the chance to vote

The Official Notice was mailed to the membership as an insert included in their July bill, which was mailed the first week of August.

Director Elections:

There are three director positions up for election on Thursday, August 22, 2024. Each director term is for three years. The three director positions are:

BEADLE AREA - (One position) held by:

Chase Binger
Hitchcock

REE AREA - (Two positions) held by:

Todd Bushong
Tulare

Chad Dearborn
Miller

As of July 25, 2024, there is only one director candidate who has filed a director petition.



Dan Langbehn


BEADLE AREA:

- Dan Langbehn and his wife Pam live south of Huron, where they raised their three children.

• He has been a member of

Dakota Energy Cooperative for over 50 years.

- Langbehn is a Huron High School and Dakota State University graduate with a BS in Information Systems.



**DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.**
"Service for your way of life"

PO Box 830 | Huron, SD 57350-0830
(605) 352-8591, office | www.dakotaenergy.coop
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Official Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the members of Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., Huron, South Dakota, a South Dakota Corporation, will be held, at the Cooperative Headquarters, in Beadle County, South Dakota, the Cooperative Office, in the City of Miller, Hand County, South Dakota, and the Highmore City Auditorium, in Hyde County, South Dakota, simultaneously connected by video on the 22nd day of August, 2024, at 11:00 o'clock a.m. through 1:00 o'clock p.m., and such meeting will be held for the purpose of electing directors and receiving upon reports for the previous fiscal year.

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS:

In connection with the election of directors scheduled for this meeting, the following positions are up for reelection. Each term is for three years.


BEADLE AREA: (One (1) to be Elected)
Chase Binger
38258 193rd Street
Hitchcock, SD 57348

REE AREA: (Two (2) to be Elected)
Todd Bushong
37295 185th Street
Tulare, SD 57476

Chad Dearborn
21342 358th Avenue
Miller, SD 57362

Please drive by or come into the Huron office, Miller office or Highmore City Auditorium between the hours of 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. to register using your annual meeting postcard and identification card, and election of directors. Postcards will be mailed on the fifth of August.

Please take further notice that any fifteen, or more, members acting together may make nominations by petition. Nominations made by petition, received at the Cooperative Headquarters at 40294 US Highway 14, Huron, SD, at least five days before the meeting shall be included on the official ballot.



Tommy L. Baruth, Secretary

- Dan worked as the area school district's Technology Coordinator/Network Administrator.
- He is retired and enjoys working in the Huron School District during the school year as a substitute teacher.
- He enjoys spending time with his grandchildren, hunting, and working in his garden.

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**



(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 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

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

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**DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.**
HURON, SD 57350



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

WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecasted.
- **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.

- **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

Source: National Weather Service



Power Line Safety “Don’t Fly Kites Close to Power Lines”

Lillee Pannell, Age 11

Lillee Pannell cautions kite flyers to be careful around power lines. Great advice, Lillee! Hobie’s parents are Scottie and Kimberly Pannell, members of Southeastern 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.

Summertime SWEETS

SUMMER FRUIT TART

Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust
1 egg white, lightly beaten
1/3 cup sugar
2 tbsps. cornstarch
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ginger
2 cups sliced peeled peaches,
(about 3 peaches)
1 cup blueberries
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Method

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Prepare crust as directed on package. Place on foil-lined 12-inch pizza pan. If necessary, press out any folds or creases. Brush crust with about 1/2 of the beaten egg white. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and ginger in medium bowl. Add fruit and vanilla; toss gently. Spoon into center of crust, spreading to within 2 inches of edges. Fold 2-inch edge of crust up over fruit, pleating or folding crust as needed. Brush crust with remaining egg white. Bake 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

McCormick

RHUBARB PIE

Crust

1-2 cups flour
1/2 stick butter or margarine
1/4 cup water

Add ingredients and knead to complete a pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
3 eggs, separated
2 tbsps. flour
1/8 tsp. salt
2 1/2 cups rhubarb
Smucker's Caramel Sundae
Syrup

Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 degrees until golden brown. You may also add more Caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

**Lisa Soukup (Kummer)
Tea, S.D.**

PEACH DELIGHT

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, melted
1 3/4 cups flour
Pinch of salt
2 tbsps. sugar
2 cups water
2 cups sugar
4 tbsps. cornstarch
3 oz. package peach jello
1 tbsp. butter
10 fresh peaches

Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine butter, flour, salt and 2 tbsps. sugar. Mix and pat in 9x13 inch pan which has been sprayed with Pam. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool when done baking. Combine 2 cups sugar and 2 cups water. Whisk in 4 tbsps. cornstarch until smooth. Cook until thickened in the microwave – stirring often. Remove from microwave and add 1 tbsp. butter and package of peach jello (do not add any water). Stir until dissolved and let cool. While cooling, dip fresh peaches in hot water and plunge in cold water bath. Remove skins and pits. Place back in cold water until all peaches are peeled. Drain peaches, slice into bite size pieces and mix into cooled peach glaze. Carefully pour the glaze over the crust and chill until firmly set. May be served with whip cream. You can substitute strawberry jello and sliced strawberries in place of the peaches. This makes a delicious cool summer dessert.

**Shirley Fletcher
Rapid City, 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.



Benefits of Having a Smart Home



Jared Rakness
IT Administrator

In recent years, the concept of a smart home has transitioned from a futuristic dream to a practical reality, offering numerous benefits that enhance convenience, security, and efficiency in our daily lives.

CONVENIENCE AND AUTOMATION

One of the most significant advantages of a smart home is the convenience it provides. With smart devices, tasks such as adjusting the thermostat, turning lights on and off, and managing household appliances can be automated or controlled remotely via smartphones or voice commands.

ENHANCED SECURITY

Smart home technologies offer advanced security features that are far superior to traditional systems. Smart locks, surveillance cameras, and motion detectors can be monitored and controlled remotely, providing real-time alerts and video feeds. Some systems can even recognize faces and detect unusual activities.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Smart homes contribute significantly to energy efficiency. Smart thermostats learn your schedule and preferences, optimizing heating and cooling to reduce energy consumption. Similarly, smart lighting systems can adjust based on occupancy and natural light

availability. These intelligent adjustments help lower utility bills and reduce the household's carbon footprint.

COMFORT AND CUSTOMIZATION

With smart home technology, you can create personalized environments tailored to your preferences. For example, you can program your lighting to match your mood or set your home entertainment system to provide an immersive experience with just a voice command.

INCREASED PROPERTY VALUE

Investing in smart home technology can increase the value of your property, as these features become more desirable among buyers. The appeal of a tech-savvy, efficient, and secure home makes it a worthwhile investment for homeowners.

IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Smart home devices can also contribute to better health and wellness. Air quality monitors, for instance, can detect pollutants and allergens, helping you maintain a healthier indoor environment. Additionally, smart kitchen appliances can assist in preparing healthier meals by providing recipe suggestions and monitoring cooking processes.

These are some of the benefits of a smart home that extend beyond luxury, offering practical solutions that enhance everyday living. From convenience and security to energy efficiency and increased property value, smart home technology is a wise investment that promises a more comfortable, efficient, and secure lifestyle.

JUNE 2024

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Bushong, Dearborn, Raschke, and Schaefer present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present. Director Nemeč was absent.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- Basin Electric
- GHDC
- SDREA
- NextGen
- CRC
- City of Miller
- Annual Meeting

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports for May
- Form 990
- Preliminary 2025 Budget
- Gross kWh taxes
- CFC loan advance
- Venture Communications

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Cut over URD west of Miller and north of Highmore
- Pole changes
- Service rebuilds
- Oil samples at Glacial Lakes Energy and Dakota Provisions

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- Upcoming youth presentations

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- Farmers Union Day Camp
- Upcoming community events
- Youth Tour
- New IRS requirements for pension plans
- Annual meeting preparation

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Internet
- Phone system
- Technology plan
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Appointed Director Nemeč as the voting delegate and Director Baruth as the alternate for East River

Annual Meeting

- Approved Miller FFA membership, and SD High School Rodeo Finals ad

BOARD REPORTS

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

Next monthly board meeting is August 27, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office.

**NEW
PAY-BY-PHONE
TOLL-FREE NUMBER
1-855-938-3403**

As part of our commitment to keeping you informed, we want to let you know that Dakota Energy's toll-free Pay-By-Phone number has changed, effective Aug. 8th. The new number is **1-855-938-3403**. This change is due to an update with our software company.

The system is automated. **YOU** will enter your credit card and payment information, and it will **NOT** be stored in the system. You may hang up at any time to discontinue the call.

It's important to note that you will need your **ACCOUNT NUMBER** (located in your bill's upper left-hand column) to use the automated system.

After dialing the new number, you will be directed to the main menu. From there, you will be prompted to press numbers for the actions you wish to complete. This step-by-step process will guide you through the payment process.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	June-24	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,012,374	\$13,069,595
Cost of Power	\$1,497,831	\$9,347,611
Operating Expenses	\$556,255	\$3,710,313
Total Margins	\$79,647	\$639,759
KwH's Purchased	19,874,378	128,693,466
Services in Place		3,627
Miles of Line		2,533
Members per Mile		1.43



CRISP BREEZES AND CORN MAZES

A broken-down 1950s-style Chevrolet pickup welcomes visitors to the Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

Celebrating Autumn on the Family Farm

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

The first signs of autumn sweep across the plains as daylight dwindles and treetops wither into amber. For some, the nostalgia of fall is evoked by the first crisp breeze at a football game or the taste of a freshly picked apple from the orchard. But for Clint and Kelly Brandlee, Lake Region Electric members living in rural Pierpont, the magic of the harvest season begins with the opening of their family-owned corn maze.

The Brandlee family homesteaded their land in 1886 on the western edge of the Coteau Hills, an area characterized by rolling hills, fertile ground and native pastures. With deep roots extending through five generations of ranching and farming, Clint and Kelly's daughters, Jaycee

and Kylie, represent the sixth generation on the farm.

Over the years, the family has maintained their commitment to traditional farming values while embracing innovation. In 2020, Clint and Kelly

transformed their operation into a direct-to-consumer agriculture business, launching Back Forty Beef, LLC. Their new venture allowed them to provide locally raised beef at a fair price while giving customers the opportunity to see



Back Forty Beef hosts a number of family-friendly events including duck races. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

how their animals and crops are raised, from farm to table.

“During the pandemic, people were looking for a direct source for their beef, and we wanted to provide that,” Kelly said.

Through Back Forty Beef, Clint and Kelly supplied their area with local beef and discovered new ways to engage their community. Just last year, the two started an annual tradition by planting a 12-acre, agriculture-themed corn maze as a way to bring something new to their part of the state. In just a year, the maze has become a hub for families to come together and celebrate agriculture and the harvest season.

“We wanted to do something really fun and get families outside in northeastern South Dakota during the fall, and what better way to do that than through a corn maze?” Kelly said. “It’s a way for us to share our passion for agriculture and our story. As a population, we are getting two to three generations removed from the farm. There is less of a connection to rural life, so any time we can provide people an opportunity to get out onto the farm and learn something, that benefits the whole of agriculture.”

This fall, Clint and Kelly are again inviting their surrounding communities to visit their homestead and explore this year’s newly designed maze. The maze is set to be open to the public every weekend after



A bird’s-eye view of last year’s Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

Labor Day to the last week of October. The theme is pollinators, featuring images of a corn cob, flower, bee and barn. Several twists and turns will be embellished with fun facts about pollinators and crop production in South Dakota, making it an educational experience for all ages.

Along with the corn maze, Back Forty Beef is planning to incorporate other family-friendly activities, including duck races, farm animal exhibits, farm basketball, a straw mountain slide and more. Back Forty Beef will also host a farm store where customers can buy everything from local pumpkins to their homegrown beef.

Other local businesses are also joining

in the fun. A different local food truck is scheduled to attend each weekend during the open season, and local businesses are offering small discounts and deals for participants who complete the maze.

“There are checkpoints in the maze, and each checkpoint is equipped with a fun fact and a partnered local business,” said Kelly. “For example, Dairy Queen is offering a buy one, get one free offer for those who hole punch their card at their checkpoint and read the fun fact about pollinators and production agriculture.”

Clint and Kelly’s efforts to engage the community have resulted in a community that engages with their business. Like many other direct-to-consumer operations, Back Forty Beef has its own website and online shop for its brand of beef, dairy products, merchandise and even hand-poured tallow candles. The Brandlee family has also found success through their beef subscription club where boxes are regularly delivered to the doorsteps of customers every month. Whether it’s through the corn maze or the subscription beef boxes, Kelly said the local community has fully embraced Back Forty Beef.

“We had a lot of people who attended that had never done a corn maze before, so a lot of people were excited to do something new and different,” said Kelly. “We had a great turnout to our maze last year, and that’s why we decided to do it again.”



Owner-operators of Back Forty Beef, Kelly and Clint Brandlee and their two daughters, Jaycee and Kylie. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

YOUTH TOUR



My trip to Washington DC

Tanner Wallman's Youth Tour experience

This summer, I had an incredible opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., thanks to my local energy cooperative. This trip was special because I explored the nation's capital and met kids from every state. It was a mix of learning, adventure, and making new friends.

Right after we landed in Baltimore, we toured Fort McHenry. It was fascinating to see where the Star-Spangled Banner was written and learn about the weapons used in the war. Later that day, we checked into the Gaylord Hotel, an impressive place overlooking National Harbor and the Potomac River.

After settling in, we went on a riverboat cruise down the Potomac. Kids from multiple states were on the cruise, and it was fun talking to them and sharing a meal.

On Monday, we visited Mount Vernon and the Jefferson, Korean,

Vietnam, WWII, and Lincoln memorials. Our day ended with a tour of the Pentagon Memorial and dinner at the Pentagon Centre Mall. Seeing George Washington's home and learning about how the farm was run in his day was fascinating. The war memorials were also cool, especially since we got to talk to some veterans who were on an honor flight.

Tuesday was packed with activities. We toured outside the White House, visited the Renwick Museum, and saw how money is made at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. We also toured the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress, and ended our day with a parade at the Iwo Jima Memorial. It was very entertaining listening to the Marine Band.

Wednesday morning started with a delicious breakfast at the Hard Rock Cafe. We then

watched a show at Ford's Theatre, visited the Holocaust Museum, and listened to Mike Schlappi, a motivational speaker who was in a wheel chair and went to the Olympics to play basketball. All of the states were in the room so it was fun to talk with them.

On Thursday, we toured Arlington Cemetery. Visited the Smithsonian Zoo, and explored various Smithsonian museums. We ended the day with a dinner and dance at the hotel, a perfect finale to a great trip.

I want to thank Dakota Energy for an all expense paid trip to Washington, D.C. A trip like this is a once in a lifetime experience. This journey to Washington, D.C. was more than just a sightseeing trip it was an educational and social experience that I will cherish forever.

Brylee Wallman's Youth Tour experience

The week I spent in Washington D.C. was one of the best weeks of my life and it was truly a life changing experience. I talked to so many new people and I learned a lot about history.

My favorite part about this trip was making new friends and talking to new people. I met kids my age from all across South Dakota and across the United States. I love meeting new people and making new friends and this was the perfect opportunity to do just that. I started out the week only knowing one or two of the people on the trip, but as the week went on we started doing things together and by the end of the week it felt like we were one big family. I also met people from across the nation either in the hallways of our hotel or at the dance or even people on the street. It was

so interesting to hear all of their stories and how they lived. They were also surprised at how others from South Dakota and I lived and liked hearing how we live in rural America. The group also got to meet our representatives and hear from them about issues that impact our communities such as the carbon pipeline and the war between Russia and Ukraine. It was interesting to hear their perspectives on these issues directly from them and not just from a news article.

I also learned so much about history. I learned about all of the memorials and why they were built and some interesting stories behind them such as the Washington Memorial and how they got halfway done and quit building and ran out of money. Then a few years later they decided to finish it and could

not find the same kind of rock so if you look close you can see that it is two different colors. I also learned so much at the museums, such as the Smithsonian where I learned how certain kitchen items were created and other technology. I also learned at Mount Vernon about how George Washington ran his farm and how they used the slaves and the technology of the past. I also learned how they lived in the house and what kind of plants they grew and animals that they raised.

I am so thankful for this opportunity and all of the friends I have made. As I have said, I had so much fun and it was truly a life changing experience that I will never forget. Thank you for making this trip possible by supporting the youth tour and thank you for selecting me to experience it.

5 Tips for a Safe Harvest

Electrical safety during harvest season requires vigilance and proactive measures. Follow these tips to reduce the risk of electrical accidents.

1. Maintain at least a 10-foot distance from power lines when operating equipment like grain augers, elevators and other tall machinery.
2. Use a spotter to navigate safely around power lines and other electrical equipment.
3. Ensure all farm workers are trained on electrical safety procedures.
4. Regularly inspect all electrical equipment and machinery for signs of wear and damage.
5. Keep first aid kits and emergency contact numbers in an easily accessible location.





RODEO CHAMPIONS

Short Go Finalists Win Touchstone Energy Shirts During the State Competition in Ft. Pierre

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

South Dakota's electric cooperatives united in celebrating rodeo on June 15 during the state high school competition in Ft. Pierre, S.D. Cowboys and cowgirls competed in events that mimic the daily chores of a typical rancher, racing to place in the Short Go.

Short Go state finalists earned the coveted Touchstone Energy shirts that mark them as the top competitors of a beloved rural pastime. After a season of competing, the visual representation of wearing this shirt is

more than a fashion statement.

"These shirts are almost like a trophy," said Kylee Ellerton, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D. "It's something you can keep and look back on to remember."

Ellerton earned the Short Go shirt, sponsored by Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives. She won 10th place in goat tying at state.

"My grandpa and dad grew up rodeoing," Ellerton said. "So, I got started in rodeo pretty young."

High school rodeo events began in 1949, and by 1951, South Dakota was among five states that established the National High School Rodeo

Mataya Ward keeps her eyes on a goat she tied during the Short Go. Photo credit: Charles Minor

Association.

It's a shared heritage for many in the state, and electric cooperatives have a 22-year history of celebrating rodeo by sponsoring the Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirt program. More than \$150,000 has been given to this program since 2002, and these funds are used to honor the contestants who make it to the Short Go round



Photo credit: Charles Minor



Kailey Deknikker rounds a Touchstone Energy barrel during the state Short Go in barrel racing. Photo credit: 4-C Photography

of the state finals competition in their respective events.

Kailey Deknikker, member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Lennox, S.D., has a passion for rodeo and wishes to go as far as she can in the sport. She will be attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for business management and joining

the college rodeo team in barrel racing and pole bending.

“The shirt shows that your hard work paid off,” explained Deknikker after placing in the Short Go and winning a Touchstone Energy Short Go shirt. “It shows your accomplishment.”

Decknikker placed 7th in barrel

racing after running a time of 18.246 seconds in the 1st Go, 17.802 seconds in the 2nd Go, and 18.078 seconds in the Short Go.

Leighton Sander, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., won 6th place in the bareback riding Short Go competition. Sander works with his family on a cow/calf operation outside of Custer, S.D.

“There’s some pride that goes with wearing that Short Go shirt,” said Sander. “You go to a rodeo and see a couple people wearing those shirts outside of the high school season, and you think, ‘they must have been good enough to make it to the Short Go – I better watch that guy.’”

Sander explained that his draw to one of the toughest events in the sport of rodeo is the adrenaline rush. He hopes to use his bareback riding skills in future horse training efforts while noting, “being able to stick to a horse is important.”

“I don’t know how to explain it,” Sander said. “It’s super scary before you start, but once you climb into that chute and they open up the gate, it’s like eating your favorite cake.”



Finalists wear Touchstone Energy Short Go shirts. Photo credit: Charles Minor



FROM FARM TO LODGE

A group of hunters showcase their success after a day of hunting on Larry Schecher's land. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

Prairie Meadows Lodge Fuels Economy and Conservation

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When a pheasant hunter travels to South Dakota, dons an orange hunting vest and steps out onto one of the state's many acres of pristine hunting land, they are doing more than just participating in local recreation and tradition; they are bolstering one of South Dakota's cornerstone industries. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks estimates that hunting alone contributes \$683 million to the

state's economy, far exceeding the contributions from fishing and state park visitation.

Many producers across the state are enthusiastically welcoming these outdoor recreationists, including landowner Larry Schecher. Schecher is a fourth-generation, lifelong rancher, farmer and member of Grand Electric in Bison, S.D., who recently made the savvy decision to develop a private hunting lodge and accommodate hunters on his land.

So what prompted the lodge? In 2019, Schecher expanded his



Fourth-generation farmer and rancher Larry Schecher. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

operation, taking the usual steps to purchase land that he had previously been leasing. The land came with one interesting perk: an outbuilding that the previous owner had used to repair and rebuild classic cars. The outbuilding became the perfect avenue for him to not only expand his operation physically but also add an entirely new revenue stream by transforming the old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge.

“It wasn’t insulated or anything, but it was a nice enough building,” said Schecher. “We just took it to the next level and remodeled the entire interior.”

What started as a car garage quickly became a private hunting lodge on Schecher’s land, equipped with a complete kitchen and living space, two bedrooms with four beds each, an electric fireplace, and even a washer and dryer.

Yet, accommodations are only half the equation. Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts are self-guided, meaning hunters can explore the plentiful food plots, thick shelter belts and acres of brush that adorn Schecher’s land and plan their hunt accordingly. The producer estimates that he owns more than 300 acres of premier hunting land for Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts, scattered across almost 3,000 acres of farm and ranch land. The land, he said, harbors a healthy population of wild pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse and partridge.

Since starting Prairie Meadows Lodge, Schecher said he and his son, Bradley, have begun planting food plots specifically to promote healthy habitat and food sources for the wild birds on their land.

“We planted a few food plots this year with a ‘pheasant mix,’” said Schecher. “The mix includes



Prairie Meadow's Lodge welcomes pheasant hunters from across the nation. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

flowering species that attract insects and milo, millet and sunflowers to produce seeds for the birds to eat. We plan to continue adding more food plots in the future to enhance our bird numbers, which have been steadily increasing over the past few years. It’s been great for being in the business of letting people hunt.”

A year after purchasing the outbuilding and preparing the land, Schecher invited hunters to test the newly renovated operation. The launch was a success, and Prairie Meadows Lodge has since hosted hunters from all over the country, including those from surrounding states and as far away as Washington, Texas and Pennsylvania, many of whom are repeat customers.

“Adding wildlife into the equation has just become another facet of being a producer,” said Schecher. “In many ways, it’s like adding another crop to the mix. It gives an incentive to create more habitat and include more conservation techniques into my operation, enhancing the ability of the wildlife to thrive and prosper.”



In 2019, Larry Schecher renovated an old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge, a private hunting lodge for unguided pheasant hunts. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

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SEPT. 20-22 **South Dakota Festival of Books**

Various Locations
Brookings, SD
605-688-6113

SEPT. 27-29 **Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**

Meadow, SD
605-788-2299

OCT. 5-6 **Run Crazy Horse Marathons**

Crazy Horse
605-390-6137
www.runcrazyhorse.com

OCT. 5-6 **Magic Needlers Quilt Show**

Codington County Extension Complex
Watertown, SD
605-881-3273

OCT. 5-6 **The Black Market**

Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Expo Building
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 6 **Giant Pumpkin Festival**

Bentley Memorial Building
Bison, SD
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.
605-244-5475

OCT. 10-11 **Rural Women Conference**

The Lodge of Deadwood
Deadwood, SD
SouthDakotaWomenInAg.com

AUG. 28-SEPT. 2 **South Dakota State Fair**

7 a.m.-8 p.m.
Huron, SD
www.SDStateFair.com

SEPT. 1 **Studebaker Car Show**

10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Custer, SD
605-673-2244

SEPT. 2 **Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show**

Starts at 1 p.m.
Clear Lake, SD
605-881-8405

SEPT. 6-7 **Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll**

Vermillion, SD
www.sdbbq.us

SEPT. 8 **Homesteader Day**

1-4 p.m.
Valley Springs, SD
Beaver Creek Nature Area

SEPT. 12-15 **South Dakota Film Festival**

Downtown Capitol Theatre
Aberdeen, SD
605-226-5494

SEPT. 13-14 **Black Hills Polkapalooza**

Each Night at 4-10 p.m.
Palmer Gulch
Hill City, SD
605-574-2525

SEPT. 13-14 **Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show**

Davison County Fairgrounds
Mitchell, SD
605-359-2049

SEPT. 14-15 **2024 Kuchen & Harvest Festival**

Delmont, SD
605-928-3792

SEPT. 17 **EV Expo**

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Sioux Falls, 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.