



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Jackson Neprud, 4-H archer for Jones County, poses next to his target.

South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for
the State Competition

Pages 8-9

Wild Horses Roam at
Black Hills Sanctuary

Pages 12-13



Chad Felderman
CEO/GM

2024 was a highly successful year for Dakota Energy on many fronts. Our commitment to safety was a major highlight, with our employees continually displaying excellence in raising the bar in their service to our members. Employee training and development are progressing at a strong pace as our employees attend various industry events, providing them with opportunities to connect with leaders from across the region.

Our operations team worked diligently to enhance reliability, capacity, and the longevity of our equipment by replacing aging infrastructure and adding new assets. Capital projects included seven miles of three-phase underground, seven miles of single-phase underground, two miles of three-phase overhead, and two reactors in the Polo substation area to maintain optimal voltage levels. In addition, crews built 31 new services and rebuilt 93, updating the metering to a breaker-type disconnect, and transitioning transformers and conductors from overhead to underground. Four of our substations were outfitted with SCADA equipment in 2024, enabling us to monitor loading, voltage regulation, and breaker operations. In total, 10 of our 12 substations now have SCADA. We also tested 2,000 poles for rot and performed tree trimming and maintenance activities.

We welcomed a new Manager of Finance and Administration. The office team focused on providing exceptional service to our members, handling over 10,000 inquiries, closing 3,600 service orders, processing 27,000 payments, and managing 7,600 accounts payable invoices. They also played a key role in distributing \$553,500 in capital credit retirements to members. In July, our wholesale power suppliers informed us of cost increases in 2025, prompting our finance team to analyze the impact and recommend a rate adjustment to maintain Dakota Energy's financial health.

The member services department had a busy 2024, continuing to expand services throughout our service area and surrounding territories. The team celebrated the promotion of one of its employees to Manager of Member Services and Line Foreman. Despite material supply issues delaying some wiring projects, the team completed 641 wiring jobs, trenched

6,030 feet, plowed 4,549 feet, installed 13 Kohler generators, and completed 47 generator service calls. They were instrumental in transitioning to the new advanced metering system and maintaining the load management receivers on our system. Additionally, the team processed 67 rebates and identified and corrected nine potential hazards.

The technology department played a vital role in coordinating the transition to our advanced metering infrastructure over the past several years. In 2024, the team installed a new security monitoring system and met all compliance requirements for the payment program.

Communications efforts were robust throughout 2024, with a focus on community engagement and youth development. We provided area high school students with an opportunity to shadow line workers and electricians, with three students completing the program. We also awarded \$4,000 in scholarships, named two Touchstone Energy Scholars of the Week, and sent two students on the 2024 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. Our employees volunteered at 11 community events, including National Night Out, Parade of Lights, homecoming parades, and sporting events. I am proud of our employees' dedication to serving our communities, whether through involvement in fire departments, county commissions, coaching, or economic development initiatives. Their involvement shows the dedication and investment they have in making our communities great places to live.

We hosted five safety activities throughout 2024, culminating in a successful first responders training for 35 individuals, which was coordinated by our safety committee in partnership with SDREA and Beadle County Emergency Management. The Dakota Energy safety committee also provided safety demonstrations at youth camps and schools using high-voltage trailers and Power Town displays.

I am honored to work alongside a dedicated Board of Directors and employee team that strives to deliver top-notch service to our members. We look forward to continuing to serve you, our member-owners, in 2025.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



(USPS No. 018-949)

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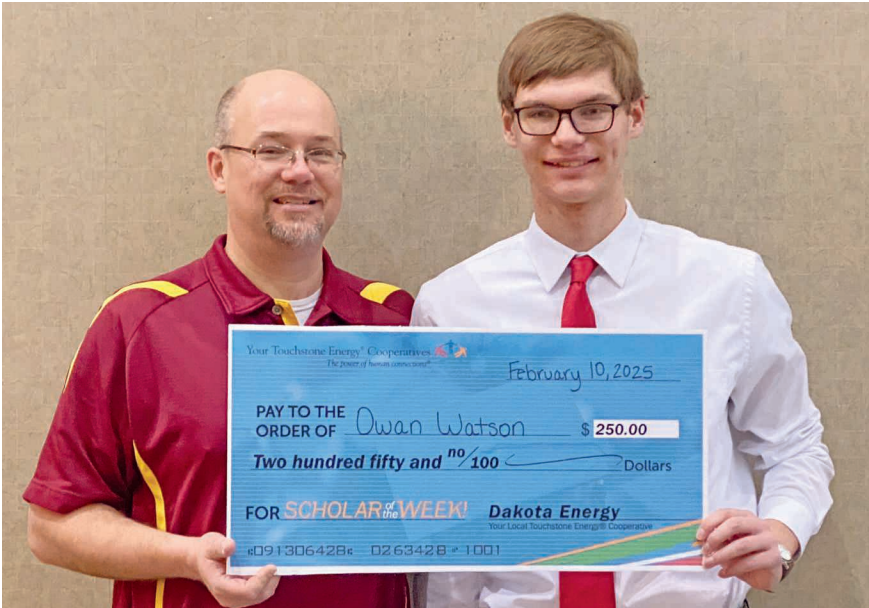
Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

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Owan Watson recieved a check for \$250 from Dakota Energy Cooperative. Also pictured is Jason Watson, Owan's Dad.

TOUCHSTONE ENERGY SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK

Sunshine Bible Academy Senior Owan Watson honored for his accomplishments.

Owan Watson, a Sunshine Bible Academy (SBA) senior, has been recognized as the second Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week from Dakota Energy's service territory for February 9 - 15, 2025. This prestigious award is a testament to Owan's academic excellence and his significant contributions to his school and community.

Owan has seen that all his hard work has finally paid off. All the long hours of studying and balancing homework, music, and sports have helped him reach his full potential.

Owan's list of achievements is nothing short of impressive. He has excelled in cross country, basketball, and track, and has actively participated in school activities such as band, chorus, and acting. His five-year membership in the All-State Chorus and four-time selection for the Wayne State College Festival of Honor Bands are commendable. His two-time recognition as the Best Actor at Region One-Act is a testament to his talent. Owan's initiative to start a podcast to recap SBA's athletic events for the week is a further testament to his dedication and leadership.

Academically, Owan is a member of the National Honor Society with a 4.0 grade point average. When he graduates, he will have earned fifteen college credits from Black Hills State University.

As Owan completes his final year of high school, he plans to further his education at Sterling College in Sterling, Kansas, to study education.

Owan's parents are Jason and Kristina Watson of Miller.

Falls Are 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, remember the following.

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned to the left.
- 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.

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't cut trees near power lines."

Remington Welsh, Age 11

Remington warns readers to not cut trees around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Remington! Remington's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh, members of Black Hills 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.

Hearty FAMILY MEALS

EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground hamburger
1 lb. cooked pasta
5 oz. spinach
1/4 cup butter
2 cups heavy cream
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method

In a large pan, brown hamburger and minced garlic. Remove any excess grease. Turn heat to low and add the butter and heavy cream. Stir and simmer for a few minutes until the butter melts and it starts to boil. Stir in the spinach and cook for about three more minutes. Stir in the parmesan and cooked pasta. Enjoy!

Lyndell Todd
Rapid City, S.D.

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef
6 oz. chili sauce
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
2 large eggs
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook and crumble bacon. In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce. Divide the mixture into eight round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves. Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for two to five minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients:

1/4 cup butter
1 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup flour
2 cups chicken stock
1 cup milk
1/2 cup apple cider
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. whole thyme leaves
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)
1 cup frozen peas
1 can (7.5 oz.) refrigerated biscuits, (10 biscuits)

Method

Preheat oven to 450°F. Melt butter in large ovenproof nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir five minutes or until softened. Sprinkle with flour. Stir with whisk until mixture is well blended. Add stock, milk, apple cider, garlic powder, cinnamon, thyme and pepper; whisk until mixture is smooth.

Stir in chicken, sweet potatoes and peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook and stir 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

Place biscuits on top of chicken mixture. Bake 10 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

The Future of Energy Management

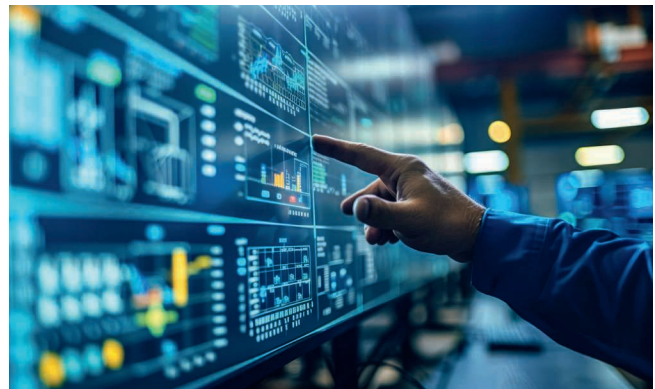
Dakota Energy’s load management system helps ensure we are efficiently utilizing electricity. It controls various consumer electric loads like water heaters, irrigation pivots, and air conditioners during peak demands. A device that communicates with control receivers to allow us to turn loads off and on to reduce peak demands. The control helps moderate wholesale power costs, improve efficiency, and help members save money.

As we embark on the journey of updating our load management system, we are committed to ensuring its reliability. Operating on the same technology since the mid-1980s, our equipment has reached its end-of-life stage. The introduction of new wireless devices will not only ensure the continuity of our program but also allow us to proactively monitor and resolve issues, thereby enhancing the efficiency and reliability of our operations.

If you are a part of our load management program, you will soon receive a notification to have your old load control receiver upgraded. We understand that this may cause some inconvenience, and we want to express our sincere gratitude for your cooperation. We will work closely with our

members to find a suitable time for the upgrade, and we appreciate your patience as we progress with this project.

Dakota Energy is stepping into the next generation with a pilot program on a SCADA device. SCADA, which stands for Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition, is a system that allows us to monitor, gather, and process real-time data. This data will be used to make informed decisions about significantly improving the reliability of service for our members.



SCADA can improve on service reliability through monitoring.

Demand Charge Added to Billing Statement

Account Number: 000000				Service Address: 00000 000TH AV				
Meter #	Billing Period		Days	Readings		Meter Multiplier	kWh Usage	Rate
	From	To		Present	Previous			
23912	01/01/25	02/01/25	31	48998	43143	1	1,015	13
24975	01/01/25	02/01/25	31	642	521	40	4,840	EH
Previous Account Activity				Current Activity				
Previous Balance				\$476.69	Facility Charge		\$60.00	
Payment Received - Thank You				-\$476.69	Energy Charge		1,015 kWh @ 0.14000	\$142.10
Balance Forward				\$0.00	Electric Heat		4,840 kWh @ 0.07000	\$338.80
					Demand Charge		22.69 kW @ 0.00	\$0.00
					Security Lights			\$6.40
					State Sales Tax			\$22.99
					Current Charges			\$570.29
Total Amount Due							\$570.29	

As we move into 2025, Dakota Energy has added a demand charge line on single phase residential bills. This demand charge line will show what your highest demand is for the month. At this time there will be no charge, but just a reading for your reference and education. Demand is measured in kilowatts (kW) versus usage which is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh). With the cooperative world moving to charging all members demand, Dakota Energy is looking into this concept for future rate structures. Having a demand reading on the bill will allow members to see how their energy usage behaviors affect their monthly demand. Demand will vary from day to day, hour to hour, and season to season.

DECEMBER 2024

The Board of Directors met on Thursday, December 19, 2024, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemeč, Raschke, Schaefer, and Wangsness 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 Electric
- TransCanada/South Bow LLC
- CRC
- GHDC
- NextGen
- Emergency Response Plan
- SBA FEMA project
- Key accounts
- Equity management presentation by CFC Regional Vice-President Kristin Dolan

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports
- NISC capital credit allocation
- Audit meeting
- Annual account write-offs
- Capital credit checks sent
- Demand reading on bills

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities

- SCADA installation in the Polo substation
- Tree trimming
- Glacial Lakes transformer
- Equipment hit by members

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- Renewable energy credit meeting with Basin

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- 2023 Group benefits summary annual report
- 2025 Youth tour
- Scholarships
- Parade of Lights

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- SCADA pilot
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Approved two donations
- Approved 2025 board meeting dates
- Approved revised rate policy

BOARD REPORTS

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

Director Nemeč reported on SDREA's December 2024 regular board meeting.

Directors who attended reported on the Mid-West Annual Meeting

Next monthly board meeting is February 25, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	Dec-24	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,340,193	\$26,157,779
Cost of Power	\$1,572,388	\$18,571,551
Operating Expenses	\$680,062	\$7,460,159
Total Margins	\$969,093	\$2,283,442
KwH's Purchased.....	24,462,151	263,560,560
Services in Place		3,630
Miles of Line		2,534
Members per Mile		1.43

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for **85.9%** of DEC's total cost of service.

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HURON, SD 57350

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West Central Electric CEO Jeff Birkeland, left, is the retired archery coach, and IT Coordinator Derek Wolf, right, is a first-year rifle coach for Jones County, South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Dedicated practice is the price each marksman pays to qualify and compete at the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports state event.



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

This year, hundreds of shooters will compete on April 25-27 to showcase marksmanship. Their hard work will be on display as every shot will impact the final score. Among these competitors is a dedicated group from Jones County, South Dakota. For the past two decades, employees from West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, S.D., have dedicated their time to coaching various 4-H shooting disciplines.

“It’s the cooperative giving back to the community and promoting our youth,” said Jeff Birkeland, CEO of West Central Electric. “A few years ago, we took 41 kids to state, and we brought home 43 state trophies. I’m proud of our kids.”

Birkeland coached archery for 15 years and happily recounted the experience with his two boys during that time.

“Kids want to shoot. We have the best participation in shooting sports

than we have in anything else.”

Birkeland’s son, Jacob, competed for 10 years in shooting sports among other 4-H competitions.

“While I explored many aspects of 4-H, shooting sports became my primary focus,” Jacob said. “I began my journey in shooting sports with BB gun and was introduced to archery. Archery quickly became my main area of competition, and it has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful part of my 4-H experience.”

This experience offered him a competitive edge as well as bonding memories that Jacob vouches as life shaping.

“One of the greatest highlights of my time in 4-H has been the lasting friendships and memories I’ve built along the way,” Jacob said. “Whether it was constructing a trophy shelf with my grandpa, having archery competitions against my dad to see who had to do the chores or representing South Dakota at the national shooting sports event – each experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I would not be where I am today without it.”



Matthew Birkeland, left, stands with Hayzen Sealey, right, at the spring state competition.

Derek Wolf, IT coordinator for West Central Electric and first-year coach for Jones County 4-H, said, “We begin practicing once a week in January. We work on safety first – getting the kids comfortable with their firearms. Then, we step into practicing for competition.”

Each county competes in three matches leading up the state competition, and every participant must make a qualifying score in at least one match to qualify for state.

“We encourage every kid to enter and compete in all three matches,” Birkeland said. “It’s better to practice at it instead of getting to state and having the wheels fall off.”

The art of practicing perfectly is what brings these competitors to state. Birkeland noted that those who practice, will win. And those who overcome a disappointment may come home with the trophy.

“It teaches those kids a lot about life,” Birkeland said. “You practice and practice, you put the time in and then one thing happens – one flinch,

one mistake and it’s over. Emotionally, hopefully it strengthens them a bit. Instead of breaking down and crying, you better be able to handle it...Limit your problems. Don’t increase them with a mental meltdown.”

Wolf agreed with this sentiment and described how overcoming a bad shot and being mentally tough is sometimes more important than being a skilled shooter.

“There are a lot of kids who find success in this, so I find it rewarding to be involved as a coach,” he said.

Wolf’s daughter, Sophie, competes in .22 rifle and archery and remarked that the highlight of the competition was that it challenged her and made her a stronger competitor. She trains twice per week for several hours while preparing for the state competition.

“I feel excitement when I compete,” Sophie said. “I love the challenge.”

In 2024, more than 1,600 participants competed in various disciplines at the spring state shooting event. These disciplines

are pistol, archery, rifle, hunting and western heritage. An additional 270 participants competed in the fall state shooting event for shotgun and muzzleloading. Each year, the top five shooters win trophies and this year’s winners may be chosen to represent at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb., on June 22-27. Last year, South Dakota tied for 2nd place with Missouri at the national event.

John Keimig, South Dakota State University Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, emphasized that the shooting program is made great by the people who volunteer.

“One of the great things about small communities in South Dakota is people who give their time to volunteer,” said Keimig. “If it wasn’t for people who volunteer, we wouldn’t have this successful program – whether it be volunteers who work full-time for an electric cooperative or farmers and ranchers. They are the backbone of this program.”



Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.



Don't let old electrical wiring pose a problem

People who love older homes usually get drawn in by their grandeur. They see an old farm home and fall in love with its history and intricate architectural features. Once they sign on the dotted line, they painstakingly restore woodwork, make sure windows are in working order and tend to other repairs. One of the top priorities on their “To Do” list should be to get the electrical system inspected by a qualified electrician.

Just because the wiring in a home is old doesn't automatically mean there's a problem, but there could be. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), many older homes that still have outdated wiring can't handle the electrical load of today's modern appliances. That's not good because old, outdated wiring could pose a fire hazard.

As electrical components age or become overloaded, the system can overheat and wear out insulation. This can lead to arcs (electrical discharge) and short circuits — the two main causes of home electrical wiring fires, according to the CPSC. In addition, old rubber wire

insulation can become brittle and easily flake, leaving wires exposed.

Older wiring called knob and tube can be found in homes built around 1950 or earlier. If your electrical system was not thoroughly inspected when you bought it, or if it was inspected but it has been several years, have it inspected by an electrician to make sure it is safe and that it adequately meets the electrical needs of your home.

If your house was built between 1965 and 1973, it could be dangerous for another reason. Aluminum is great for cans, but not for wiring since it can overheat. Unfortunately, it was used in 2 million homes that were built during that time period.

Regardless of the age of your home, be sure to get any potentially dangerous wiring issues checked out by a professional, especially if:

- Your circuit breaker keeps tripping or fuses blow often.
- You notice unusual power draws or dimming or flickering lights.
- You see discolored (dark colored) outlets or switch plates or they are warm to the touch.
- You notice unusual odors like a

Dakota Energy Employees Recognized for Years of Service in 2024



Jared Rakness

Information Technology Administrator
5 years



Amy Kempf

Member Services Assistant
5 years

burning smell but can't find a source.

- Your outlets only allow you to plug in a two-pronged plug (and not a three-pronged plug), which means they are not grounded
- You don't have ground-fault circuit interrupters near faucets or other sources of water in your home
- Your house was built more than 40 years ago

Contact our Member Services department with any questions about your home's electrical system to talk to our qualified electricians at 605-352-8591.



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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!

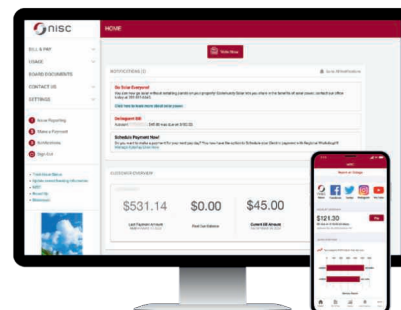
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After you register your account in SmartHub, to keep your scheduled payments on track you can set up your account for Auto Pay. Visit our SmartHub support page at dakotaenergy.smarthub.coop for instruction.

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RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In the southern Black Hills, a watchful eye will catch a rare and breathtaking sight: a herd of wild mustangs galloping freely across thousands of acres of grassland in the Cheyenne River Valley.

For the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary staff and the hundreds of rescued horses they care for, it's just another day on the ranch.

The sanctuary operates like most working ranches, says Susan Watt, the president and CEO of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. Staff regularly travel over 15 miles across the 10,000 acre ranch to fill water troughs and set out hay, mineral blocks and horse cake. It's a trek that takes them across picturesque grasslands, hills, bluffs and the muddy banks of the Cheyenne River. A bulwark against suburban sprawl, the land remains as nature intended.

"Wild horses have been part of North America since time immemorial," Watt explained. "We have a large population of American mustangs, Spanish mustangs, horses with blood lines that trace back to Spain and Portugal, and a small herd of Choctaw Indian ponies that were part of the Trail of Tears

– They are a very important part of American history we need to preserve."

The story of the sanctuary begins in the late 1930s with a young man named Dayton Hyde. At 13 years old, Hyde left his home in Michigan for his uncle's cattle ranch in Oregon after hearing captivating tales of the wild west's excitement and beauty.

Once he arrived, Hyde was completely enthralled by the western lifestyle. With each passing year, his connection to the land and the wildlife strengthened, shaping his identity as a cowboy, conservationist and writer.

Decades later in 1987, while on a trip to Nevada to purchase cattle, Hyde came across corrals of wild horses the federal government had rounded up using low-flying helicopters. Devastated by the idea of the free-roaming herds confined to pens, Hyde was inspired to create a refuge for wild horses where they could run free.

Hyde petitioned congress to allow him to take some of the captured horses and create a sanctuary. South Dakota Governor George Mickelson, who had learned of Hyde's ambitions and was supportive, invited Hyde to inspect a piece of land known as Chilson Canyon near Hot Springs, S.D.

For nearly 40 years now, that piece of land plus Hyde's hard work has given hundreds of wild horses another chance to roam wild. However, it's a luxury very few wild horses receive.

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

WILD HORSE SANCTUARY

rounding up over 40,000 wild horses to control herd populations, which can grow rapidly in the wild. Their fates vary; At government holding pens, they await auction where if sold they'll be rehomed with owners who agree not to sell them for slaughter outside of the U.S.

According to Watt and other wild horse advocacy groups, those assurances don't always matter.

"The horses are supposed to be protected from slaughter," she continued, "But unfortunately, you put them in a trailer and cross the border into Canada or Mexico and they don't always check to see what's in the trailer."

The horses that come to the sanctuary are generally in "emergency situations," Watt said, which means the horses are being sent to slaughter or their previous caretaker died or is unable to take care of the horses.

In addition to preserving the herds of wild horses, Hyde envisioned the sanctuary as a means to protect and preserve the land's natural beauty and rich historical legacy, which includes long-ago remnants of human activity.

"This particular tract of land was the location for ancient petroglyph writings that ancient man did on cliff walls," Watt explained. "And we're protecting the pioneer history of this land; Our buildings that we use are pioneer homesteads."

Though Dayton Hyde passed away in 2018, his legacy lives on. Today the sanctuary is home to several hundred wild horses, a herd of cattle, thousands of acres of pristine prairie

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

"He used to say every ache and pain he ever had was from a horse," Watt laughed. "What Dayton Hyde really wanted was to protect this land from subdivision, to let it be for wildlife and wild horses, and keep it safe and protected. I think South Dakota should be immensely proud of what Dayton Hyde has done."

For more information about the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, visit www.wildmustangs.com.



(Above) Dayton Hyde, founder of the sanctuary.
(Below) The sanctuary encompasses more than 10,000 acres of land along the Cheyenne River near Hot Springs, S.D.
Photos by Alvis Uptis





The Vinyl Record Club at the Custer County Library meets once each month. Photo submitted by Custer County Library

CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

Fun Awaits At Your Local Library!

Jacob Boyko

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In honor of Dr. Seuss’s birthday, March is National Reading Month – and the best place to celebrate is at your local library. Whether you are into reading or are just looking for a fun weekday activity, your local library is sure to have something that interests you and your family. Stop in at your local library to learn about fun activities like the ones below!

Custer County Library – Vinyl Record Club, Seed Library, Letterboxing

As the snow melts and the first leaves of spring begin to unfurl, the Custer County Library transforms into a hub of inspiration for community gardeners of all skill levels. With engaging seminars and resources for everyone to enjoy, Custer’s library is the perfect place for community members of all ages to cultivate a love for gardening.

One of the library’s most beloved initiatives is the seed library, made possible by the contributions of the Custer Mile

High Garden Club. This unique resource invites visitors to explore a collection of seeds that they can use whether they’re growing vegetables in their garden or flowers on the kitchen counter.

Seeds are sorted by type, Myers explained, with sections dedicated to seeds you start indoors, seeds you start outdoors, root vegetables, leafy greens, flowers, herbs and so on.

The library also hosts educational seminars covering topics including hydroponics and sowing seeds in the wintertime.

“Master gardeners come to talk on related topics and we’ll have free plant clippings and free seed packets available for people to pick up,” Myers explained. “It just kind of kicks off our gardening season.”

Gardening isn’t the only thing bringing people together at the Custer County Library. The Vinyl Record Club transforms the library into a relaxing lounge where community members connect over their shared love of music.

“Everyone brings their favorite albums,

and you can play a song or two to share,” Librarian Sarah Myers explained. “We just saw it as a potential to bring people together and capture that interest of vinyl. It’s kind of fun to see different generations of people interacting together.”

Myers also promotes outdoor opportunities through a scavenger hunt activity called letterboxing.

Similar to geocaching – just without the coordinates – letterboxing requires players follow hints and clues about their surroundings. Myers prepares clues in a similar fashion to the one below that guides players to a cache on the Mickelson Trail.

“Park near search and rescue, ready for a quest. Walk toward Hill City, following the rest. From the little stop sign, take 220 steps on track. Search high and low for a quartz throne, no looking back. If you see the football field sign, you’ve gone too far. Take a seat on the throne, reach down, and there’s your star.”

From under benches to tucked between rocks, players scour the area for the hidden stamp to ink their logbooks and continue to the next step of their adventure.

“We love getting people outside,” Myers continued. “This was a way for families to have little mini adventures. Libraries

are more than just books – they’re a place where you can build community and find community.”

Madison Public Library – Chess Club, Trivia Night

In Madison, Librarian Lisa Martin keeps her community sharp with brain-building activities and clubs for people of all ages.

The library’s reach extends beyond its rows of books and walls; On Thursday nights, The Office Bar & Grill in downtown Madison transforms into a bustling trivia hotspot where the community tests their knowledge on an array of topics to lead their team to victory.

The library hosts five rounds of trivia. Participants can count on a round focused on current events, but the rest remain a surprise to keep everyone on their toes.

“Sometimes we do a theme to go along with a month,” Martin explained. “Last January, we decided to do “Dry January” where you try and go without drinking, but it was really just an excuse to have trivia about soda pop!”

The night’s winner receives a gift card to The Office Bar & Grill, but at the end of the year, the team with the most points walks away with a trophy.

The library also hosts a chess club, which Martin says attracts community members of all ages.

“It’s hard to get the boys in sometimes because they might not want to sit through things,” Martin said. “Chess club attracts that crowd, and we’ll have 10 guys sitting here anywhere from sixth grade to retirement talking to each other and teaching each other – sometimes smash talking – and it’s a lot of fun.”

Martin strives to offer something for everyone. Whether it’s inviting Lake Herman State Park rangers to demonstrate outdoor skills, holding puzzle competitions or hosting talented musicians, Madison Public Library will have something to get you involved.

Gregory Public Library – STEAM Club

At the Gregory Public Library, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Club, is working to spark children’s imaginations and show them opportunities for new

hobbies, or even future careers.

The after-school club focuses on hands-on lessons where students often have an active role in the experiment.

“We started off by inviting Sanford in and the kids were able to do an experiment where they extracted DNA from strawberries,” Librarian Tara Engel said of the early days of the club. “We’ve also used our LEGOs to introduce engineering, we’ve used a lot of art supplies, we’ll do chemistry experiments with microscopes – Our STEAM Club is really getting kids thinking and doing things in a different manner.”

One of the most popular initiatives has been the bridge construction lab, where students use recycled materials like cardboard tubes to construct different bridges and learn basic engineering concepts.

“We use some of our bridge and construction books in our nonfiction section as examples,” Engel explained. “Then we have them use cardboard, construction paper, straws and strings to try and hold their bridge up.”

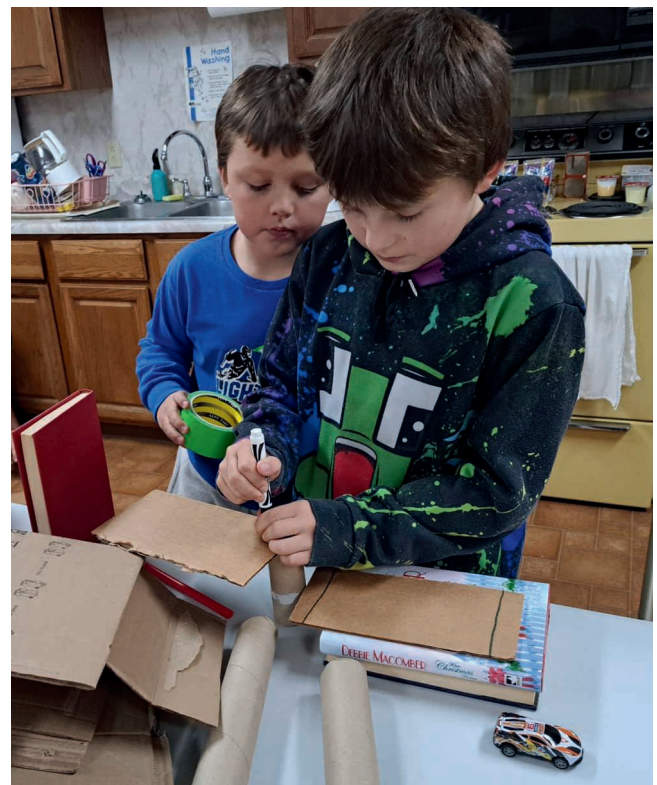
The moment of truth comes when the bridge’s structural soundness is tested by the weight of a Matchbox car driving across the deck.

The library also makes use of challenge cards for LEGOs, where students draw a card with a creation challenge and students ranging from making the tallest tower to building a musical instrument that makes a sound.

“It’s fun to see how the students come together to form teams and work together,” Engel said.



(Above) Trivia Night winners in Madison.
Photo submitted by Madison Public Library



(Right) Gregory students work on a cardboard bridge.
Photo submitted by Gregory Public Library



MARCH 14-15
St. Patrick's Day
Weekened
Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

FEB. 28-MARCH 1
Mardi Gras Weekend
 8 p.m. Fri.-10 p.m. Sat.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

MARCH 6
SD Jazz Festival Concert
 Aberdeen Community Concert
 Association
 7:30 p.m.
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD
 Tickets Available at Concert

MARCH 8-9
Philip Area Annual Gun Show
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 American Legion Hall
 Philip, SD
 605-859-2135

MARCH 8
Epiphany Sausage Sale
 10 a.m. until gone
 Parish Hall
 Epiphany, SD

MARCH 8
Minnehaha County
Pheasants Forever Banquet
 5 p.m.
 El Riad Shrine
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-376-8219

MARCH 14-15
Badlands Quilter Weekend
Getaway
 Fri. 5 p.m.
 Sat. 8 a.m.
 Community Center
 Wall, SD
 605-685-5718

MARCH 15
VFW Teener Baseball Bingo
Benefit
 5 p.m.
 Tyndall Auditorium
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 22
Annual Banquet & Bash
 Britton Area Chamber of
 Commerce
 5:30 p.m.
 Britton, SD
 605-448-8130

MARCH 26
Hill City Garden Club
Trip to Central Asia
 1 p.m.
 Kathryn Cleveland
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 29
Ready. Set. Grow!
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners
 Codrington CTY Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 605-838-7098

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S Main St.
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
 Mighty Corson Art Players
 Corson, SD
 www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-4p.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4195

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring
Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.junkinmarketdays.com

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