



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



DAKOTA ENERGY
OCTOBER 2025 VOL. 26 NO. 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Rural Electrification

West Central - The Last
Co-op to Incorporate
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Generational Farmers
Pages 12-13

Rural Electrification served even
the most rural communities.



Powered by Purpose: Celebrating National Co-op Month

Every October, electric cooperatives nationwide celebrate National Coop Month, a time to reflect on the unique benefits of being part of a cooperative and to thank the members who make it all possible. At Dakota Energy Cooperative, this isn't just a celebration; it's a reaffirmation of the core values that guide everything we do.

As CEO of Dakota Energy, I see purpose in action every day. Unlike investor-owned utilities, our cooperative isn't here to make profits for distant shareholders. We are here to serve you, our members, neighbors, and communities. That purpose sets us apart. It's why we were founded and what continues to guide every decision we make.

LOCALLY OWNED, LOCALLY LED

At its core, being a cooperative means we are member-owned and locally controlled. That's not just a tagline; it's the foundation of our business model. You elect board

members who live right here in our service area and understand the unique challenges and opportunities our communities face. Decisions aren't made in corporate boardrooms hundreds of miles away; they're made here at home, by people who care about the same things you do.

This local accountability allows us to stay focused on what matters most: delivering reliable, affordable electricity and providing real value to the people we serve.

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

We're dedicated to strengthening our local grid and enhancing electric service through vital infrastructure upgrades and smart technologies. We strive to control costs and keep rates as affordable as possible, understanding how rising prices impact families and small businesses in our community.

And when storms hit or outages happen, Dakota Energy crews are ready to respond quickly because we live here

too. We're not just your service provider; we're your neighbors.

PLANNING FOR TOMORROW

As electricity demand increases due to new technologies and local economic growth, we are planning ahead to build a safe and reliable system. Our members care deeply about affordability and dependability, and we are committed to delivering both.

That's the power of the cooperative difference. That's what it means to be powered by purpose.

YOU'RE MORE THAN A CUSTOMER

This National Co-op Month, we invite you to take pride in your cooperative membership. You're not just a customer; you're an owner, a stakeholder, and an essential part of a collective effort to keep our community strong, connected, and energized.

Thank you for the trust you place in us. We're proud to be your local electric cooperative.



Dakota Energy hosts a First Responders Electrical Safety Training.



Huron 7th Graders race to build a pole top during Career Day.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

**DAKOTA
ENERGY**

(USPS No. 018-949)

Board President: Darrell Raschke, Huron

Board of Directors

Nick Nemec, Holabird - Vice President
Daniel Langbehn, Huron - Secretary
Brian Bonebright, Wessington - Treasurer
Brian Baum, Alpena
JoAnn Morford, Miller
Doug Schaefer, Orient
Schaun Schnathorst, Huron
James Wangness, Miller

CEO/General Manager: Chad Felderman

Manager of Operations: Matt Zomer

Manager of Finance & Administration:
Eric Hasart

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

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

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

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KNOW THE SIGNS



Farm and Ranch Stress is REAL

Farming and ranching are stressful occupations that are associated with increased levels of anxiety and depression. Left untreated, stressors may lead to mental health issues, increased substance use or death by suicide.

IN THE U.S.:

- ✗ One person dies by suicide every 10.9 minutes.
- ✗ In 2021, suicide ranked as the 11th most frequent cause of death.
- ✗ The national suicide average is 14.1 per 100,000 people.

For farmers, ranchers and agricultural managers:

- The suicide rate is 43.7 deaths per 100,000 people.
- The suicide rate is the 6th highest among occupational groups.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- ◆ Changes in routine or social activities.
- ◆ Decreased interest in activities or events.
- ◆ Decline in care for crops, animals and the farm.
- ◆ More frequent illnesses or chronic conditions.
- ◆ Increase in accidents on the farm or ranch.
- ◆ Less care about their personal appearance.
- ◆ Decreased interest in activities or events.
- ◆ Signs of stress in family members.

FIVE ACTION STEPS

for helping someone in emotional pain:

1. ASK if they have suicidal thoughts.
2. KEEP them safe.
3. BE THERE by listening carefully.
4. HELP them connect.
5. STAY connected.

**NATIONAL SUICIDE AND
CRISIS LIFELINE NUMBER:**



Safe **Electricity.org**®
Learn more at:

Sources: Penn State Extension, NIMH, Nat'l Farm Bur.

Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest

Anne Prince
NRECA

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but the same impressive size, height and extensions make them particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, it's imperative that farm workers keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin with which portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used.

Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- Exercise caution near power lines. Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines. Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.

- Lower equipment extensions, portable augers or elevators before moving or transporting equipment. Do not raise equipment, such as ladders, poles or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty or dirty.
- Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path. Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- Avoid using metal poles inside bins. Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- Hire qualified electricians. Ensure that qualified electricians handle work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.



"Don't play with outlets!"

Kinzlee Klomp, Age 12

Kinzlee warns readers not to play with power outlets. Great advice, Kinzlee! Kinzlee's parents are Kaitlin and Austin Klomp from Box Elder, S.D.

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.

Fresh BREADS

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Ingredients:

3 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup oil
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon
3 cups zucchini (shredded)

Method

Cream together eggs, sugar and oil. Then add the vanilla. Mix together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, cinnamon and add to the egg mixture. Stir in zucchini. Pour into two loaf pans. Bake at 325°F for approximately one hour.

Kimberly Grimm
Southeastern Electric

GLUTEN FREE OATMEAL PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups oats
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup milk
3/4 cup applesauce
3 tsps. maple syrup
2 tsps. apple cider vinegar
2 tsps. vanilla

Method

Grind 2 1/2 cups oats in blender until turned into flour. In large bowl, whisk together oats, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Form a bowl in center, add eggs and whisk them. Then, add milk, applesauce, maple syrup, apple cider vinegar and vanilla. Stir to combine. Wait five minutes to thicken batter. Cook in oiled pan.

Jean Beauchamp
Southeastern Electric

KUNSI' FRY BREAD

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. yeast (quick rise)
2 tsps. sugar
1 qt. warm water
1 tbsp. oil/melted butter
1/2 tsp. salt
6 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsps. powdered dry milk
4 cups oil for frying

Method

Mix yeast, sugar, salt, warm water, oil/melted butter and let proof for 15 minutes. Mix flour and powdered dry milk. Make a well in the flour mixture and add yeast mixture. Gradually add warm water until dough comes together and is no longer sticky. Cover and let rise until doubled in size. Heat oil to fry dough. Separate dough into 10 to 12 baseball-size dough balls (or smaller if you want smaller pieces). Stretch dough balls and shape into oval discs or round discs approximately 1/4 inch thick. Test the oil to see if it's hot enough by dropping a small pea size piece of the dough in the oil. If it floats it's ready. Flatten the disc between your hands and stretch it again. Fry the bread until both sides are golden brown. Transfer to paper towel lined plate to drain. Continue until all the dough is fried. Enjoy with soup or a Spam and egg sandwich or taco toppings.

Sheila Ironheart
Whetstone Valley Electric

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.

Member Update: Capital Credit Retirement Option and 2026 Rate Outlook



Eric Hasart
Manager of
Finance and
Administration

NEW CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENT OPTION OFFER

Current projections indicate that the capital credit retirement cycle could go beyond our 20-year goal. To help shorten this delay, the Board is offering members the chance to receive an early, discounted payment of their capital credits from 2017. The Board approved offering members 35% of their capital credit balance. If they accept, members will receive their 2017 capital credits this December as part of the general retirement. If they decline, members will stay on the standard 20-year cycle and get the full value of their credits over time. Members will receive a letter this month with more details. Note: Generation and Transmission (G&T) capital credits, representing ownership in East River Electric and Basin Electric, are not included in this early retirement offer and will be retired separately. If you have any questions about the new retirement option, please call our office at 605-352-8591.

2026 RATE OUTLOOK

Preliminary discussions with our wholesale power supplier, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, indicate that Dakota Energy and its members will face a significant rate increase in 2026 due to rising power supply costs. Just one year ago, Basin was projecting a 2.7% rate increase for 2026. Today, that proposal is now approaching nearly 10%. While these rates are still awaiting approval by Basin's board, we believe in early and transparent communication with our members. Dakota Energy is actively advocating for rate mitigation strategies to help lessen the impact on our members.

A potential 10% rate increase from Basin will significantly affect Dakota Energy. The wholesale power cost makes up 70 cents of every dollar Dakota Energy collects. An additional 15 cents goes toward uncontrollable costs like taxes, interest, and depreciation. That leaves only 15 cents per dollar that Dakota Energy can control directly. Internally, we are reviewing every controllable expense to ensure we do everything possible to manage costs and minimize the rate increase. As we approach fall, we will have a clearer understanding of the full impact of the rate increase. We are dedicated to keeping you informed and will provide updates as soon as they are available.



JULY 2025

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, July 29, 2025, with Directors Baruth, Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, , and Schaefer present. Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Iverson, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- Basin Electric
- CRC Dispatch
- South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) State Fair Day
- Greater Huron Development Corporation
- Medicine Creek substation
- Basin Electric rate increase talking points and details
- Dakota Energy annual meeting
- Strategic Plan update

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports
- Budget billing true up
- Sunshine Bible Academy Federal Emergency Management Administration project update
- Cooperative Finance Corporation key ratio trend analysis
- Capital credit retirement options

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction work plan

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Installed six miles of cable south of Miller
- Pole changes
- Service rebuilds
- Wolsey substation reactors
- Reclosure power boards
- Outage report

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- Youth presentations

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- Farmer’s Union Day camp
- Job descriptions

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security News
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved changes to Policy No. 21 Attendance of Directors at Meetings adding travel time allowance
- Appointed Directors Langbehn as the voting delegate and Morford as alternate delegate for Basin Electric Annual Meeting in Bismarck, ND
- Approve an early retirement offer for the 2017 capital credits at a discounted rate of 35%
- Approved the capital credit estate retirements of \$3,450.59
- Approved a \$200 donation to the Huron Hockey Association

BOARD REPORTS

Director Nemec reported on SDREA June 2025 regular board meeting.

Director Raschke reported on East River’s July 2025 regular board meeting.

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	July-25	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,081,204.....	\$15,026,158
Cost of Power	\$1,409,318.....	\$10,381,970
Operating Expenses	\$544,582.....	\$4,393,368
Total Margins	\$197,143.....	\$1,148,684
KwH's Purchased.....	19,919,437.....	140,279,091
Services in Place		3,641
Miles of Line		2,533
Members per Mile		1.44
Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 80.49% of DEC's total cost of service.		

NOTICE:
MONTHLY BOARD
MEETING DATES

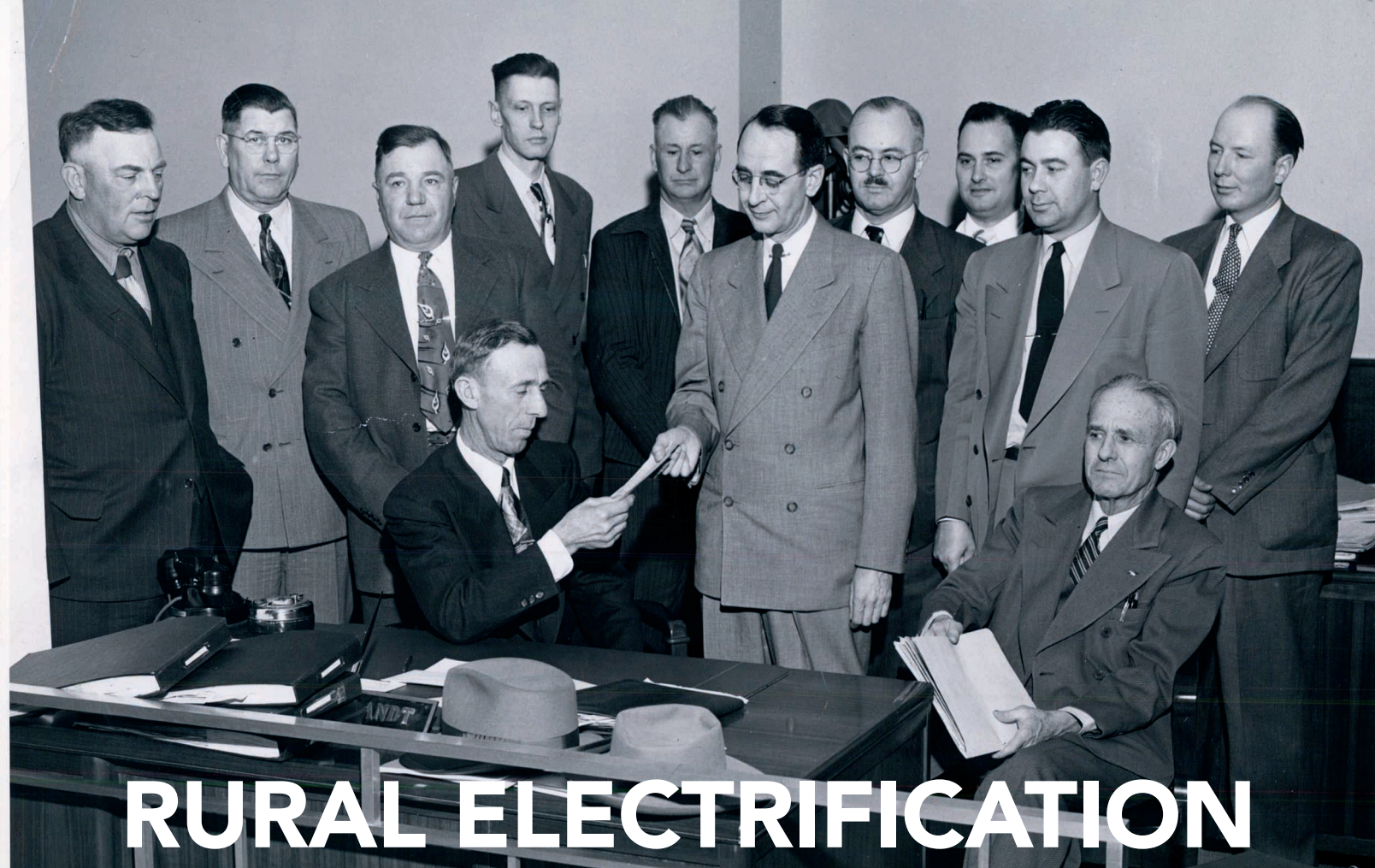
AT 10:00 AM IN HURON

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18



RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

WEST CENTRAL

Last to Incorporate, Lasting in Impact

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Before rural electrification, South Dakota's farmsteads ended the day in silence. There was no music from the radio playing in the living room or hum of an electric refrigerator in the kitchen. Over decades of work, power lines would stretch across the prairie through President Franklin Roosevelt's vision of rural electrification, carrying not only electricity but also a new way of life.

In 1935, President Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) as part of his New Deal policies to revive a nation struggling through the Great Depression and bring electricity to

America's rural communities, something that private and investor-owned utilities refused to do.

Clay-Union Electric was the first rural community in South Dakota to adopt the cooperative model in 1937, and West Central was the last in 1949. But as former West Central Electric CEO Steve Reed can attest, being the last to adopt the cooperative way didn't hinder their success. Once the path to forming a cooperative was established, the members of West Central benefitted from electricity's transformation from a luxury into a necessity with the rest of rural South Dakota.

"We couldn't rely on the power

West Central Electric board directors present a check to a representative of Central Electric and Gas in 1951, finalizing the cooperative's purchase of the private utility system. *Photo submitted by West Central Electric.*

companies to come out to serve rural South Dakota," said Reed, a 42-year cooperative veteran who joined West Central Electric as a lineman and worked his way up to CEO. "They were never going to do it at price that was affordable, so rural electric has been great for not only the members of West Central but the entire country."

So why was West Central the last to form a cooperative? According to Reed, the rural communities that organized West Central Electric in 1949 had several hurdles to clear. The first was overcoming the sheer remoteness of the territory, which then had a system that averaged 1.5 members per mile of line constructed, even including towns and

cities. Because members were few and far between, the REA needed the towns in the proposed West Central territory to become members: from Philip to Hayes and Murdo to Kennebec, where West Central Electric was incorporated.

That led to the next problem: the towns and cities in the proposed West Central Electric's service territory were already being served by Central Electric and Gas, a private company based out of Philadelphia. This obstacle didn't stop the people who had a vision of what rural electrification could accomplish. Following lengthy discussion in 1951, West Central Electric purchased systems from Central Electric and Gas for \$850,000 using low-interest REA federal funds.

Former West Central Electric Attorney John Larson outlined the discussions in his 50th Annual Meeting Speech: "There was no choice but to buy out the private supplier, Central Electric and Gas, and that was accomplished... (Former South Dakota Governor M. Q. Sharpe, who served as West Central Electric's attorney), showed up for the meeting that morning unshaven and unkempt, with a threadbare shirt and suit. For the entire morning, he listened with his head down and eyes shut to the Philadelphia lawyer types who represented the power company. After the dinner break, however, he showed up in a new suit, shaved, and took over the meeting by dictating exactly what West Central would do and what we would pay. During an afternoon break, one of the Philadelphia types was heard to mutter, 'You want to watch that old guy. When he's got his head down and eyes shut, he's not sleeping!'"

West Central Electric's 1951 purchase included all the electrical infrastructure within the town boundaries, as well as the diesel generation system extending west from Chamberlain. Shortly after, the evolution of West Central Electric progressed with the construction of distribution systems to farms and reconstructing the systems of various

towns, including the installation of street lights.

Since that iconic moment, West Central has continued to grow with its membership, meeting more demand for electrical energy than had been previously thought possible, a reflection of just how integral electricity has

become in day-to-day living for business owners, ag producers, and rural folk alike.

"That moment modernized us," said Reed. "It just did so much for everything – and without it, where would we be?"



(Top) A West Central Electric Annual Meeting.
(Bottom) A West Central Electric Board Meeting with the REA.
Photos submitted by West Central Electric

Attention High School Juniors and Seniors Win a Trip to Washington D.C.



2026 June 14-20

YOUTH TOUR

Join students from across South Dakota for a free, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your electric cooperative. Contact Dakota Energy Cooperative for more details and application information!

Dakota Energy will once again sponsor high school (juniors and seniors) on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Each June, over 1,800 high school juniors and seniors travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Rural Electric Youth Tour. Throughout the week, participants will explore about Washington, D.C., learning about government, cooperative philosophy and rural electrification. The students are selected and

sponsored by their local rural electric cooperatives with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) coordinating the trip for South Dakota students.

Tour highlights include the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol, Ford's Theatre, Arlington National Cemetery, Mount Vernon, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Iwo Jima Statue, National Archives, U.S. Supreme Court, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial among other exciting sites. Students will also participate in a briefing with the South Dakota Congressional Delegation and a river boat cruise across the Potomac River.

Who is Eligible? All area high school juniors and seniors whose parents are members of Dakota Energy or who live in Beadle, Hand or Hyde Counties.

What Does It Cost? Dakota Energy, along with the other participating local electric cooperatives fully fund the tour. The tour covers each participant's transportation, accommodations, meals, entertainment, and sightseeing events. Students are required to provide their own spending money.

When is It Held? The week long trip will take place from June 14-20, 2026. Participants will meet for

an orientation meeting on Sunday, June 14 at the Sioux Valley Energy Office in Brandon, S.D. The group will then bus to Minneapolis and then fly the next morning to D.C. on Monday, June 15, and return to South Dakota on Saturday, June 20. A commercial bus will be used for transportation while in D.C.

How do I Qualify? Submit application, two teacher recommendations and write about what you expect to learn about in Washington D.C.

Application Deadline: Students should submit required paperwork by December 1, 2025. Email to info@dakotaenergy.coop, mail to Dakota Energy, P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350 or bring to our office in Huron or Miller to be considered for the Washington, D.C. Youth Tour.

Scan the QR Code for information and an application.



Daunte Glanzer and Jolie Palmer represented Dakota Energy on the 2025 Youth Tour.

FARMER'S UNION DAY CAMPS



A camper put together a model of a bucket truck.



Campers put on some of the line worker's climbing gear.



Line Worker Daniel Vetsch demonstrates how to climb a pole.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT AND SOUTH DAKOTA STATE FAIR



Electrician Tre Henderson and Manager of Member Services Jeff Gilbert help at National Night Out in Huron.



Staff Assistant Becky Picek helps put on the line worker tattoo at the State Fair.

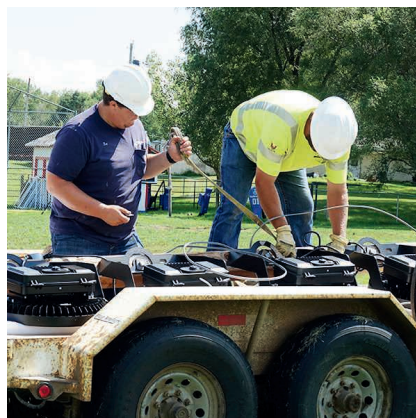


Manager of Operations Matt Zomer helps with the bucket rides at the State Fair.

TULARE FOOTBALL FIELD LIGHT REPLACEMENT



Dakota Energy employees prepare to take down the old stadium lights.



Electrician Tre Henderson and Line Worker Brennen prepare the new lights.



Line Worker Jason Keelin works on getting the new lights properly installed.



Photo submitted by JT and Luann Weber.

GENERATIONAL FARMERS

Four Generations of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Members Ranch on Lake Benton-Area Land

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Nestled amongst the rolling green pastures of western Minnesota, there's a generations-old farm worked by one family for over three quarters of a century.

From their Lincoln County property, the Weber family watched rural electrification improve the prairie, connect neighbors and bring reliability to farmsteads. Now they watch precision agriculture guide planting, bovine genetics strengthen herds, and social media and the internet connect their business to the wider world.

It all started in 1947, when John and Marie Weber moved into the old three-bedroom farmhouse from nearby

Elkton, S.D. Luckily, the move came six years after Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative energized lines in the area, so the Weber home enjoyed many of the modern amenities brought on by rural electrification, including electric lights, kitchen appliances and a washing machine.

"I know I had the best mom and dad in the world," said JT, one of John and Marie's eight children, who today helps run the ranch with his wife, Luann, their three sons and their families. "Dad was very community-oriented. He was on the school board, the elevator board and the rural water board. In fact, he was instrumental in starting rural water. He went from place to place, talking people

into getting rural water."

JT was born on the farm in 1957 during a blizzard that left his parents unable to reach the hospital in town. As a boy, he remembers collecting rainwater in a cistern and using it for cooking, cleaning and baths. Even as rural electrification began to transform the countryside, life on the farm remained far different – and often harder – than life in town.

"When I grew up, back in the 60s and 70s, if you milked 40 cows that was quite a few," JT said. "We were milking about 100 cows – we were kind of ahead of our time. But we had a big family, and us boys, we got right in there."

He continued, "We were hauling silage, hauling manure, milking cows and doing chores. But Dad never told us to do anything. He always asked us if we wanted to, and there's a difference. You wanted to work for him. He made you want to work for him, and it was never a burden."

That was a quality JT kept in mind with his own seven children on that same

ranch where he grew up. Today, JT and Luann's sons Jake, Garret, and Matt all stay involved in the ranch, now Weber Bros. Cattle.

"Growing up, I kind of always had that bug to get in the tractor, chase cows, put up fence, and do what needs to be done," explained Jake, the oldest son.

Today, they specialize in raising purebred Angus bulls and Simmental-Angus crosses, while also producing corn silage and alfalfa to help sustain the operation. While the operation may be old, it's not at all low-tech.

"Our main thing is our bull program," Jake said. "We sell about 50 registered Angus and Simmental bulls by private treaty every spring, and we also develop 50 replacement and bred heifers, and market a portion of them. We do a lot of artificial insemination and embryo transfer. Some of the more elite donor cows we can get our hands on by buying females and buying embryos. We're just trying to make good cows."

Jake, like his dad, graduated from South Dakota State University with an animal science degree, and was excited to return to the ranch to incorporate some of his new skills into the operation.

"When I got back from school, we really amped up our embryo transfer program with different ideas and stuff I learned about genetics from contacts and producers we've met over the years," Jake continued. "We went from selling 10 bulls per year to selling close to 50 bulls."

Jake's younger brother and fellow SDSU animal science graduate, Garret, keeps involved on the family's ranch as well. Though he works full time as swine genetic company Hypor's US Sales Manager, he helps out with the operation and finds the time to run Weber Bros. Cattle's social media pages, which he says has successfully expanded their presence in the market.

"Whether it's Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or our company website, we're able to hit such a broad spectrum of people, and it's a great way to tell the story of our operation, what we're doing year-in and year-out and advertise the



JT and Luann Weber with their adult children, Jake, Garret, Matt and Sara Weber, Liz Mergen, and Maria Opheim, and families.

Back, from left: Garret Weber, Levi Weber, Kailey Weber, Jake Weber, Amanda Weber, Sara Weber, Cade Opheim, Maria Opheim, Tawnee Opheim, JT Weber, Luann Weber, Brent Mergen, Liz Mergen, Davie Fiedler, Matt Weber, Racheal Krog.
Front, from left: Adam Weber, Chisum Weber, Abeline Weber, Vidalia Fiedler.
Not pictured: Talon Weber

genetics of the cattle that we're showing and selling," Garret explained. "We're able to have a much greater touch point of individuals that we can reach out to and market our livestock."

JT, Jake and Garret all credit their spouses and families for supporting them as they work to grow the operation.

"It took a long time and a lot of support for us to get established and get to where we are today," JT said.

Looking toward the future – and the next generation, their goals are to make an already successful operation even better.

"We'll keep working with the cow herd, continue to make improvements and make better genetics every year," Jake said. "I want this opportunity to be available to my kids, so that if they want to be able to do this, they'll have the same chance we did."

Garret added, "It's something that I hope my sons can do someday if we're able to continue to grow the operation. I hope it's something they're going to be able to share and cherish with their own kids, because those are the memories that stick with you forever."



Photo submitted by JT and Luanne Weber.



A purebred Angus Heifer.
Photo by Garret Weber



CYBERSECURITY THINK BEFORE YOU CLICK

Frank Turner

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This October marks the 22nd National Cybersecurity Awareness Month, first established in 2004 by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the National Cybersecurity Alliance. The annual observance was created to highlight the importance of cybersecurity and safe online practices.

This year's theme, "Stay Safe Online," emphasizes the small but important steps individuals can take to reduce online risks, especially during an age when it seems a new data breach makes headlines every single day. While big companies often make headlines when they are hacked, everyday people are just as likely to be targeted through scams, phishing attempts, or weak passwords.

Jacob Steeg, IT Administrator at Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, says there are many easy-to-implement strategies and tips people can use to reduce the likelihood of hacks and personal data breaches. Steeg has worked in the information technology field for more than 16 years and has spent the past three with Rushmore Electric Cooperative.

The first step is staying vigilant. Steeg compares cybersecurity to a bank: even if the vault – or in this case, technology – is impenetrable, a human can still be tricked into opening it. That's how phishing works. Hackers send fraudulent, attention-grabbing emails or messages designed to trick users into clicking a link or giving away personal information.

"If you convince the guard of your bank to give you the code to the safe, it

doesn't matter how secure the vault is," Steeg said. "That's what phishing does. Bad actors are trying to bait you into giving up the information they need to break in."

"These messages may all look different, but they tend to follow the same script," he added. "They try to heighten your emotions with money, fear, or urgency so that you stop thinking clearly and hand over information you normally wouldn't."

Steeg also recommends users enable two-factor authentication. This extra layer of security requires not just a password, but a second step, such as entering a code sent to your phone or approving a login through an authentication app. Even if hackers steal your password, they won't be able to access your account without that second piece of verification. Steeg says this extra step may feel inconvenient at first, but it's one of the simplest and most effective tools for keeping accounts safe.

But of all the tips mentioned, Steeg says the most important step to staying secure online is to use different



Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative's information technology team, from left: Jacob Steeg, MarcCharles Zuatke and Jordan Kunkel.
Photo submitted by Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative.

passwords for different websites.

"By using different passwords, you are reducing your attack surface," he said. "Let's assume that someone was able to hack into a small forum tied to a specific interest you had 15 years ago. The person who built that forum likely isn't a cybersecurity expert – and these small forums are exactly what are getting breached. If you're using the same email and password across every site, hackers suddenly have access to your bank account, social media and more."

Instead of trying to remember 100 different passwords for 100 different websites, Steeg advises using a password manager, which securely stores your password information and can generate strong passwords for each account. He also recommends using a password that is at least 14 characters long.

"A password manager's whole job is to store your passwords safely," said Steeg. "It's not impossible that it gets breached, but your information is a lot safer there."

Steeg says it's also important to share these basic online safety practices with those around you, especially older relatives, who are often the most vulnerable to scams.

"Please reach out to the less tech-savvy people around you, like the elderly," he said. "The world has changed so much around them, and they might just not know. Just tell them what's out there and what is coming. Try to help them be aware that you aren't just valuable for the money that's in your pocket; you are also valuable for the data you store online, and somebody wants it."

At the end of the day, Steeg says one of the best ways to stay safe online is to "remember the stuff your parents taught you as a kid."

"If it's too good to be true, it's probably not," he said. "Nobody is reaching out to you via email to give you a gift or free money. Just because the medium has changed, doesn't mean that the scam is any different."

An Important Message About Cybersecurity

The IRS will never contact you directly by email, text message or social media to ask for personal or financial information. If you receive a message claiming to be from the IRS, it's a scam.

The agency communicates primarily through official letters sent by mail. If you're unsure whether a message is legitimate, do not click links or provide information. Instead, contact the IRS directly through its official website or phone number.



OCT. 10-12
Black Hills Powwow
 Rapid City, SD
 605-341-0925

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.

UNTIL OCT. 31
Wallace Dow, Prairie Architect
Traveling Exhibit
 Lake County Museum
 Madison, SD
 605-256-5308

OCT. 3
DSU Architecture Walking Tour
 3-4 p.m.
 Lake County Museum
 Madison, SD

OCT. 3-5
Black Hills Film Festival
 Journey Museum
 Rapid City, SD
 605-574-9454

OCT. 4
Pumpkin Train, Vendor
Showcase
 Prairie Village
 Madison, SD

OCT. 4-5
Sioux Falls Quilt Guild
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 11 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sioux Falls Convention Center
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-951-2034

OCT. 10-11
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest
& Vendor Show
 Fri. 12 p.m.-6 p.m.
 Sat. 10 a.m.-6 p.m.,
 Philip, SD
 605-441-1060

OCT. 11
A Celebration of Classic Hits
 7 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

OCT. 11
Howard Fall Festival
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Miner County 4-H Grounds
 Howard, SD

OCT. 18
Arts & Crafts Festival
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Faulkton, SD

OCT. 18
Northern Prairie Arts
Barn Quilt Class
 Highland Conference Center
 Register by Oct. 6
 Watertown, SD
 605-882-1780

OCT. 18-19
Heartland Quilting Stars Show
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-1551

OCT. 19
Helping With Horsepower
Year-End Horse Show
 10 a.m.
 Reclamation Ranch
 Mitchell, SD

OCT. 24
Humor for Heroes
Comedy Night Fundraiser
 Comedians, Silent Auction
 Tickets \$15, two for \$25
 1600 W. Russell St.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-336-3470

OCT. 25
The Greats of Country
 7 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

OCT. 31-NOV. 2
Haunted Trail at
Reclamation Ranch
 7-10 p.m.
 Reclamation Ranch
 Mitchell, SD

NOV. 1
Reliance Christmas Carousel
 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Reliance, SD
 605-730-1462

NOV. 1
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Dakota Christian School
 Corsica, SD
 605-366-7940

NOV. 1
Black Hills Meat Fest
 2-4 p.m.
 Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
 Rapid City, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.