



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



**DAKOTA ENERGY**  
NOVEMBER 2025 VOL. 26 NO. 7

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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Exploring Family  
Caregiving Services

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Photo Credit: PeopleImages/Shutterstock.com



## Anticipated Rate Adjustment in 2026: What Dakota Energy Members Need to Know



**Chad Felderman**  
CEO/General  
Manager

As mentioned in last month's newsletter, our wholesale power provider, Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin) will have a significant rate increase in 2026.

### SOME OF THE FACTORS DRIVING THE RATE INCREASE:

#### *Rising Energy Demand:*

Electricity usage is climbing, and meeting this demand requires major investments in new power plants and transmission infrastructure. Basin Electric anticipates investing \$10 billion to support system growth and reliability.

**Reserve Requirements:** The Southwest Power Pool (SPP), our regional transmission organization, has introduced new rules that increase the amount of reserve capacity utilities must maintain. These changes are designed to ensure grid stability during peak demand but require additional dispatchable generation resources.

**Inflation Pressures:** Higher costs for materials, labor, and equipment are making it more expensive to generate and deliver electricity. Inflation affects the cost of capital, making infrastructure projects more expensive to finance.

**Commodity Price Volatility:** Basin's Dakota Gasification Plant continues to operate at a financial deficit due to unpredictable swings in commodity markets. Fluctuating prices have made it challenging to maintain stable revenues, underscoring the plant's sensitivity to market dynamics.

Due to a combination of rising demand, inflation, reserve requirements, and market volatility, Basin Electric's financial outlook has shifted significantly. Last year's forecast called for a 2.7% rate increase, but this year's analysis identified a much larger need, an 18.7% increase. To ease the impact, Basin worked with its membership and will phase in the increase over a two-year period.

Because of Basin's 9.9% rate increase in 2026, and Western Area Power Association's rate increase of 6.1%, East River is applying a 9.4% rate increase to Dakota Energy.

### RATE STRUCTURE:

One of the rate options that is being explored for 2026 is adding a demand charge of all of the members' bill.

Demand represents the highest energy usage at any given moment. To illustrate, think of electricity as a car: the odometer tracks the total distance traveled, just as kilowatt-hours (kWh) measure overall energy consumption. The speedometer shows the car's top speed, just as demand kilowatts (kW) indicate the maximum energy used at a single point. The car's engine is built to handle its maximum speed, no matter how far it travels, which is similar to electric systems designed



for maximum demand capacity.

When demand is measured, the individual demand or kilowatts of all items consuming electricity simultaneously are combined. Demand is recorded by your electric meter and is averaged over each 15-minute interval. The highest demand recorded during the billing period is used to determine the demand reading.

Currently, the demand reading is printed on the monthly statement with no charge.

Dakota Energy values open and honest communication with our members. This rate increase will significantly affect our financial structure. We understand how any increase in electric rates can impact the members we serve. That's why the board and staff are working on our 2026 budget to review internal expenses as carefully as possible. Currently, we know an adjustment to our rates will be necessary to meet our financial needs in 2026. We'll share more specific information once the power cost projections and budget planning are finalized.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### DAKOTA ENERGY

(USPS No. 018-949)

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**Manager of Human Resources &  
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**Manager of Member Services:** Jeff Gilbert

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

# STAY SAFE OUT ON THE HUNT



Take precautions to stay  
safe on your next  
hunting expedition.



Know the signs of a heart attack or other  
life-threatening condition.



Have a way to get in touch with  
the outside world.

Always implement firearm safety techniques.



Do not lean a tree stand against a utility pole.

Do not fire at power lines, insulators  
or conductor cans.



Carry a first aid kit.



Check the weather in advance and be prepared.

Check tree stands regularly for stability.

Survey the area for potential  
electrical hazards.



Be visible: Wear blaze orange.

Learn more at:  Safe  
Electricity.org®

# Stay Safe This Holiday Season:

## Tips for a Merry and Accident-Free Celebration

The holidays bring families together with twinkling lights, festive meals and cozy traditions. But they also bring seasonal risks that can turn celebrations into emergencies if precautions aren't taken. Local safety officials are reminding residents to keep safety in mind when cooking, decorating, and entertaining this year.

### Extension Cords

With more lights and electronics plugged in during the holidays, extension cords are often stretched to their limits. Experts urge homeowners not to overload outlets and to replace any cords that are frayed or damaged. Only outdoor-rated cords should be used outside, especially in snowy or wet conditions.

Families should avoid running cords under rugs or across doorways where they can overheat or become tripping hazards.

### Turkey Fryers

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have grown to include deep-fried turkeys, but safety must come first. Fryers should only be used outdoors, on a flat surface and far away from buildings, garages or wooden decks. Fire officials caution that a partially frozen or wet turkey can cause oil to boil over and ignite, leading to severe burns or home fires.

A fire extinguisher rated for grease fires should always be kept nearby, and fryers should never be left unattended while in use. One distracted moment can cause a disaster.

### Ladders

From hanging lights to topping off the tree, ladders are part of the holiday routine. Falls are among the most common seasonal injuries, so ladders should be set on level ground and never leaned against unstable surfaces. Having another person hold the ladder is strongly advised.

### Candles and Fireplaces

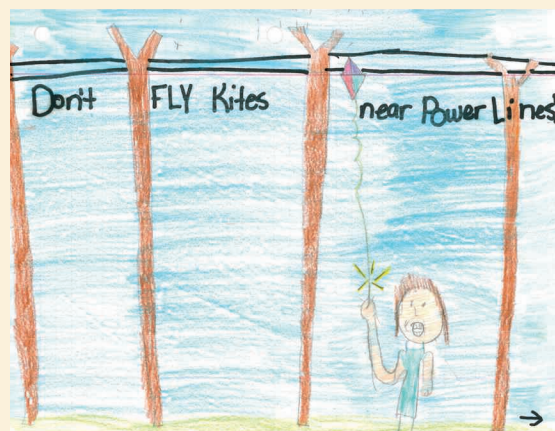
Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

46% of fires in December each year. Never leaving a flame unattended and incorporating a few safety rules can prevent a devastating fire.

### Lights and Decorations

Before hanging holiday lights, inspect strands for cracked socket, frayed wires or loose connections, and replace any damaged sets. Outdoor lights should always be weather-rated, and lights should be turned off before bedtime or when leaving the house. Timers and smart plugs can help make this easier.

Decorations should be securely fastened to prevent them from tipping or falling, especially in homes with children or pets. Heavy ornaments should be placed higher on the tree, out of reach of small hands and wagging tails. Fire officials also recommend choosing flame-resistant or non-combustible decor whenever possible and keeping all decorations away from heaters, fireplaces or open flames.



**"Don't fly kites near power lines!"**

### Kristen Vanden Berg, Age 11

Kristen cautions readers on the dangers of flying kites near power lines. Great picture, Kristen! Kristen's parents are Andy and Geraldine Vanden Berg from Corsica, 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.



# Holiday SIDE DISHES

## CORN CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

2 15 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained  
15 oz. can cream corn  
1/2 cup butter, melted  
1 box Jiffy cornbread mix  
1/2 pt. whipped cream

### Method

Combine whole kernel corn, cream corn, butter, Jiffy cornbread mix and whipping cream. Mix thoroughly. Pour into greased 8.5"x11" pan and bake at 350° F for 40-45 minutes.

**Sharon Houchin**  
Central Electric

## BETTER THAN STUFFING

### Ingredients:

1 box chicken/turkey stuffing mix  
Chicken broth  
Celery  
Carrots  
Onions  
1 stick herbed butter (or make your own)  
2 cups chicken/turkey gravy

### Method

Prepare stuffing according to directions but substitute water with broth. Dice and sauté celery, carrots (total of two cups) and onions in herbed butter. Fold into stuffing. Put into baking pan and top with gravy. Poke gravy into stuffing – just a little bit. Don't completely mix. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes and broil briefly at the end.

**Valerie Marso**  
Oahe Electric

## RAW VEGETABLE SALSA

### Ingredients:

2-4 medium cucumbers, cubed  
2-4 medium tomatoes, cubed  
1 small onion or 1/2 of a white or yellow onion sliced  
1 tsp. salt  
1 tbsp. sugar  
2 tbsps. apple cider vinegar  
Additions: black pepper to taste, chopped basil, or chopped green bell pepper.

### Method

Place cubed tomatoes and peeled cucumbers into a bowl. Add sliced onion.

Mix in remaining ingredients and stir. Marinate for several hours or overnight.


This salad keeps for 3-4 days refrigerated.

Raw Vegetable salads full of electrolytes, vitamin C and fiber.

**Laurie Wernke**  
Southeastern 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.

# 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.

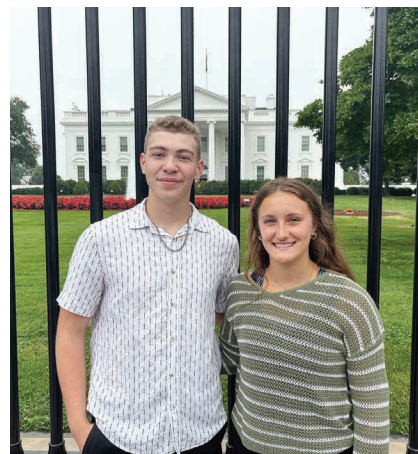
**When is It Held?** The week long trip will take place from June 14-20, 2026. Participants will meet for

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](mailto: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 2026 Youth Tour.

Scan the QR Code for information and an application.



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



# AUGUST 2025

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, August 26, 2025, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefer, Schnathorst, and Wangsness present. Attorney Burns, Manager Felderman and Employees Decker, Gilbert, Hasart, Keelin, Picek, Rakness, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly energy sales and revenue
- Basin Electric
- Dispatch services
- Greater Huron Development Corporation
- South Dakota Rural Electric Association State Fair Booth

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial reports
- Form 990
- East River sales forecast meeting
- CoBank line of credit renewal
- AT&T meeting
- 2026 Capital and construction budget progress
- Key Ratio trend analysis

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance and retirement activities
- Pole changes
- Pole testers
- SCADA has been installed in the Wolsey and Bonilla substations.
- Service rebuilds

- Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program report

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring department workload
- Potential hazards
- Load control savings
- National Night Out

HUMAN RESOURCES/ COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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

- A membership survey through survey and ballots
- Job postings
- First responders training
- Community events

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security news
- Verizon Grid-wide to become CriscoNet (USA)
- Website/Cybersecurity

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Elected new officers: President Raschke, Vice-President Nemec, Treasurer Bonebright, and Secretary Langbehn
- Appointed Standing Board Committees
- Approved moving September board meeting to Wednesday, September 17
- Accepted the reports presented
- Approved 2025 Annual Meeting minutes and survey
- Appointed Director Langbehn as the voting delegate and Director Wangsness as alternate for Cooperative Financial Corporation Annual meeting in Madison, WI
- Appointed Director Bonebright as the voting delegate for Federation Region 6 meeting in Madison, WI
- Approved revision to Policy No 21 Attendance of Directors at Meetings

BOARD REPORTS

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

Directors Bonebright, Langbehn, Schaefer, and Wangsness reported on the East River Annual Meeting in Sioux Falls, SD

Directors Langbehn, Morford, and Schaefer reported on the Board Leadership Summit in Pierre, SD

Year-to-Date Financial Report		
	Aug-25	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue .....	\$2,026,198	\$17,052,357
Cost of Power .....	\$1,410,100	\$11,792,070
Operating Expenses .....	\$700,508	\$5,093,876
Total Margins .....	\$25,036	\$1,172,777
KwH's Purchased.....	19,019,673	159,298,764
Services in Place .....		3,641
Miles of Line .....		2,533
Members per Mile .....		1.44
Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 80.03% of DEC's total cost of service.		

**NOTICE:**  
**MONTHLY BOARD**  
**MEETING DATES**  
**10:00 AM - HURON**  
**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25**  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18**



# CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

## Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

November is recognized nationally as Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor the essential role of caregivers and highlight the resources available to them and the loved ones they support.

Yet, families face a growing challenge: how to care for aging loved ones when services are often far from home. Nursing homes or assisted living centers may be located hours away, and even when they are nearby, the cost or availability of space can present real barriers.

One answer has been the Structured Family Caregiving program, launched by the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2019.

According to Heather Krzmarzick, Director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports within DHS, the program is one of many resources at DHS that are

Several resources are available for caregivers in South Dakota through the Department of Human Services.

*Photos by Homecare Services.*

available to help older adults and their caregivers. It provides training, coaching, ongoing support and even a modest stipend to those offering significant care for an older adult in the home.

“Structured Family Caregiving serves caregivers who live with their family member and provide substantial care for them, including personal care, supervision, medication management and other things, such as managing finances and transportation for necessary appointments and community activities,” Krzmarzick said.

In many ways, the program echoes the electric cooperative story. Just as co-ops once brought electricity to rural areas that were otherwise overlooked, the program helps families meet a need that might otherwise go unserved. In places where nursing homes or assisted living centers are many miles away, the program gives families a practical way to continue care at home, often the place where people feel most comfortable.

“Structured Family Caregiving is important because it



supports the vital work of family caregivers, strengthens families and improves outcomes, especially in underserved or isolated regions,” she said. “The program honors South Dakota’s values of strong families, independence and community.”

In addition to expanding community-based care options to rural areas, the program allows families to potentially prevent or delay the move to a nursing home and reduce the economic burden that often comes with that transition. Krzmarzick said DHS also offers other programs for those that may need a little extra assistance to remain safely in their homes but don’t require the intensive services of a nursing facility.

“Each caregiver has unique needs and preferences,” she said. “As such, the services and supports are designed to meet the varying needs of each caregiver and help care for a person at home as long as possible.”

To be eligible for the program, the care recipient must be 65 or older or

18 or older with a qualifying disability and meet both functional and financial criteria to qualify for the program.

Since its creation, the program has grown steadily, giving more families the tools to succeed. Krzmarzick said it has allowed many older adults and adults with disabilities to remain in their homes while supporting family caregivers with knowledge, training and a small amount of financial assistance.

Agency Director Steven Novotny with Homecare Services of South Dakota, Inc., one of many in-home care providers in the state, said that few other programs reach and serve those who need care quite like the program.

“Structured Family Caregiving has the unique ability to serve consumers in every community across our state, large or small. Under this program, individuals can receive care from a trusted family member or friend, which allows them to remain independent and living in their community,” he said. “Our caring staff at Homecare Services of South Dakota have seen

firsthand the positive impact on families when we are able to provide support and training to the caregivers that are stepping into what is often a challenging role caring for a loved one.”

Krzmarzick said the Structured Family Caregiving program is just one of many support options that DHS offers individuals and their caregivers in South Dakota. Resources are available online at [dhs.sd.gov](https://dhs.sd.gov) or through Dakota at Home, South Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 1-833-663-9673.

“All caregivers, not just those utilizing the Structured Family Caregiving Program, may access free training and resources to help improve confidence in their caregiving abilities, reduce stress and prevent burnout,” Krzmarzick said. “Caregivers may also be eligible for other programs that offer respite options. Our Dakota at Home specialists are dedicated to helping you find services and supports to meet your specific needs or the needs of a family member.”



## FIRST RESPONDERS



First responders used a simulated tractor accident to learn how electricity can add another safety element to their rescue.

# FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING

Dakota Energy, hosted its second year of the First Responder training session in collaboration with Hand County Emergency Manager Arlen Gortmaker, Beadle County Emergency Manager David Jensen, and SDREA Loss Control Professional Joe Denison. This collective effort enabled the area's firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to hone their knowledge and skills in handling electrical hazards in emergency situations.

They practiced navigating two simulated accident scenarios. One involved a car overturning into an electrical transformer, and the other involved a tractor and grain auger making contact with a power line.

The attendees were given a demonstration of the high-voltage trailer, which vividly illustrated the dangers of electricity. Manager

of Operations Matt Zomer emphasized the importance of always assuming the line is live and calling the electric utility to shut off the power before approaching an incident involving electrical power. This demonstration underscored the gravity of the situation and the need for utmost caution in dealing with electrical hazards.

Dakota Energy line workers demonstrated the usual role they play in ensuring the scene's safety. After simulating shutting off the power, they instructed everyone to stay back until they gave the all-clear, allowing firefighters and EMTs to practice their rescue skills.

Operations Manager Matt Zomer and Member Services Manager Jeff Gilbert provided a comprehensive review of the various meters and disconnects, enhancing the attendees' understanding.



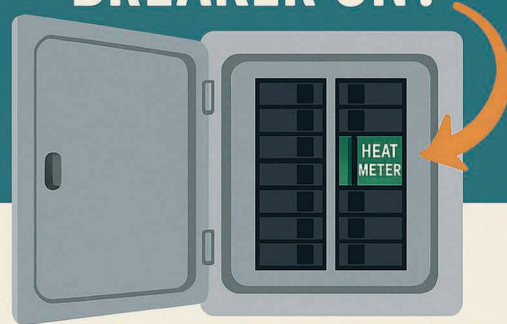
Attendees were able to refresh their skills to remove victims from a vehicle and learn that how the utility needs to be involved as a first step in that process.





DEC line worker demonstrates the danger of electricity with the high-voltage trailer.

## IT'S HEATING SEASON! IS YOUR ELECTRIC BREAKER ON?



If you are on the Cooperative's electric heat rate, you have a sub-meter for your heating source. **Check your heat meter breaker to ensure it is turned on inside your electric panel. The heat meter breaker must be on so Dakota Energy receives the readings.**

If this is off, your electric heat kilowatt-hour usage for heating will not be billed correctly at the lower electric heat rate. **Remember, the electric heat rate is in effect from October 1 through April 30.**

Call our dedicated Member Services Department to answer any questions you have at

# 605-352-8591

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\* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

PS Form 3526, July 2014 (Page 2 of 4)

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Date: 9/23/2025

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# LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmiege cut his forearm, fellow linemen Tristan Hall, Luke Koval and Brian Davis knew exactly how to respond.  
*Photo submitted by Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.*

## When a Routine Day of Trimming Trees Turned Critical, Cooperative Employees Were Prepared to Help

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmiege methodically sawed away large tree branches near overhead power lines, dropping them to the ground more than 50 feet below.

It's nothing out of the ordinary, explained the 19-year veteran lineman from Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Milbank, South Dakota. After a while, you become accustomed to the work – and its hazards.

From the bucket he was standing in, Brandon reached with

his chainsaw for one of the last few cuts he'd need to make. But as he began the cut, the chainsaw kicked up and he lost control. Steadying himself and throwing the brake on the saw, Brandon looked down at his left arm. He'd been badly cut.

"I saw quite a bit of blood right away," Brandon said. "My first thought was that I needed to get down fast."

Gathering his strength and trying his best to stay calm, Brandon maneuvered his bucket down through the tree limbs back to the ground where linemen Brian Davis, Luke Koval and Tristan Hall noticed something wasn't right.

"I think we all sensed something happened," Brian explained. "The way he was coming down like that, and he'd just fueled up the saw, so we were wondering what had happened."

Luke ran to go shut off the woodchipper, which was drowning out Brandon's yelling. As the engine died, they finally heard Brandon yell, "Call for help!"



Brian raced to the truck to radio back to the office in Milbank, calling in a “Mayday” along with the crew’s location.

With a first-aid and tourniquet kit in hand, Brian sprinted toward Brandon, where Tristan and Luke had removed Brandon’s safety harness and wrapped a towel over the wound on Brandon’s forearm and applied pressure to slow the bleeding.

As the team secured a tourniquet tightly around Brandon’s upper arm, the crew kept in touch with the office by cell phone. The office staff, having called 911 as soon as they heard ‘Mayday,’ worked together to relay the street address and details of the injury to emergency dispatchers.

Seeing the urgency of the situation, the team placed Brandon in the service pickup and Tristan began driving him to the hospital. As the linemen were driving back into town, the ambulance met them and took Brandon to the hospital in Milbank where they stabilized him and discovered he’d severed two arteries in his forearm. He was then transferred to

Sioux Falls and underwent surgery.

Luckily, Whetstone Valley Electric and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association had conducted first-aid training for linemen just several weeks before. The instruction included CPR, AEDs, tourniquets and wound care.

“Regular first-aid training and keeping first-aid supplies on hand is so important because our linemen are often out somewhere rural,” explained Joe Denison, SDREA’s loss control professional and certified paramedic for the Arlington and Lake Norden ambulances. “If we have to wait 30 minutes for an ambulance, that can be too late.”

Whetstone Valley Electric General Manager Dave Page says despite the incident, he finds it encouraging that the employees followed procedure — maintaining clear communication with each other and with 911, administering first aid on site, and knowing exactly what to do each step of the way.

“It wasn’t only the training that was provided, but it was the attention that

these guys gave to that training - where it stuck, and their response was automatic,” Dave said. “In addition, the Mayday training that we do here at Whetstone went a long way to help us all stick to the plan and see a successful outcome.”

Now back on the job, Brandon credits his safe outcome to the co-op’s focus on regular safety training and having first aid supplies in the vehicles.

“I don’t think the makeshift towel tourniquet would have stopped the bleeding,” Brandon said, looking down at the scar on his forearm.

Brian added, “I don’t want to think about the outcome if we didn’t have a plan in place.”

To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one, and overall encourage a culture of safety awareness.

## 3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

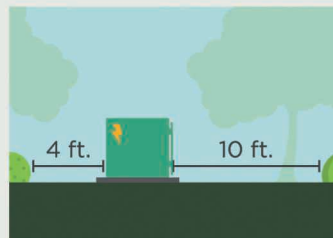
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

**Here’s how you can help:**

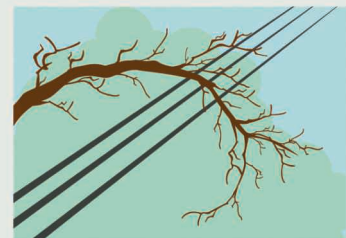
**1. Plant trees in the right place.** Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



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



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



**Trimming improves safety for all.**

**Let’s work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.**



# SUSTAINABLE SERVINGS

## Frederick-Area Family Grows, Packages Specialty Oatmeal

Jacob Boyko

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For Taylor and Cassandra Sumption, there's nothing better than waking up early and enjoying a bowl of their very own home-grown oatmeal.

Well, maybe nothing better except sharing that taste of small-town South Dakota with the world.

Living and working on their five-generation family farm in northeast South Dakota, the Northern Electric Cooperative member-family dreamed, developed and launched Anthem Oats, which they say is a farm-to-table alternative that oatmeal enjoyers can feel good about.

But Anthem Oats isn't just a locally-sourced breakfast; it's a process rooted in sustainability.

The Sumptions' small-business journey began in 2016 when Taylor decided to replace his usual wheat cover crop with oats in his corn and soybean rotation.

"I'm kind of a nerd when it comes to crop rotation," Taylor laughed. "I started working with the USDA research farm north of Brookings, and they do a lot of rotational studies ... What I saw was a tremendous increase in yield for crops following oats."

Those increased yields are a result of the oats recycling nutrients like nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus back into the soil. Oats also increase the amount of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, which the USDA says helps roots intake more nutrients and moisture, making oats an ideal

This field of oats on Taylor and Cassandra Sumptions' farm near Frederick, S.D., will soon be milled and packaged for their oatmeal brand, Anthem Oats.

*Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption*

cover crop to boost the next season's returns.

But an oat harvest doesn't bring in the same returns that corn and soybeans do – that had Taylor Sumption thinking about ways to add value to his product.

"It was Taylor's idea from the very beginning, from years and years ago, after many long hours in the tractor thinking about how to bring added value to our farm," Cassandra recalled. "And I loved his ideas. He would just kind of bounce things off me every now and then."

One day, it clicked in Taylor's head; he could add value to his oat harvest by producing a one-of-a-kind, high-quality breakfast product.

Taylor got in contact with the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Development Center (VAADC), whom he credits for helping navigate the first steps in starting the business.

Maple Pecan is one of Anthem Oats' top-selling flavors. Among other flavor options: pumpkin spice, vanilla chai, peach and cranberry, super fruit, and dark chocolate brownie.







Taylor and Cassandra Sumption sell their home-grown oatmeal in stores across the US.  
Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption

VAADC CEO Cheri Rath says Anthem Oats is one of the center's many success stories, and credits the Sumptions for coming up with a marketable idea and running a sustainable business.

"Anthem Oats takes a traditional commodity and adds value to it, helping their farm diversify and add profitability at a time when commodity prices are volatile," Rath said. "They've done an awesome job of branding themselves and getting out into the marketplace."

According to Taylor and Cassandra, feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive, with some customers noting that Anthem Oats' subtle differences have distinguished the brand from competition.

"When selecting our oat variety was we focused on nutrient density and nutritional value," Taylor explained. "Our oats mill a little tougher, but there's a little more flavor and a little more body. Consumers can tell when it's our oats."

Cassandra, now a full-time Anthem Oats employee, oversees the product from the harvest to the shelf, and everything in between. It's an around-the-clock job, and one she had to learn fast.

"I didn't have a clue – this was all so new to me," Cassandra laughed, thinking back to when she first jumped into the role. "I did manage a grocery store in Frederick here for a short time, so that kind of helped me with the logistics of shipping and freight and different things like that."

Today, after more than four years on the market and a continuously growing presence in grocery stores, the Sumption family has unofficially put Frederick on the map as the oatmeal capital of South Dakota.

Cassandra and Taylor also credit their five children, Trevor, Tristan, Preston, Miranda and Marissa for taking time out of their busy lives to help out when they're able, as the family works to build a brand that resonates with consumers in South Dakota and beyond.

"I get to answer all the emails, like all of the consumers' questions, and sometimes there's a complaint, but overall everybody is very kind and sweet in their messages," Cassandra said. "It helps make your day a little brighter, knowing that you're doing something that people actually really appreciate and love, and it just makes you feel good at the end of the day and keeps you going."



## What Is the Value-Added Agriculture Development Center?

VAADC is a nonprofit that provides resources for the establishment and success of value-added agricultural businesses.

## What Does Value-Added Mean?

When farmers add value to their product, it means they are taking a raw commodity and processing, marketing or otherwise enhancing so it can be sold at a higher price. The Sumption family adds value to their oat harvest by milling, packaging and distributing their product.

## What Does VAADC Offer to Start-ups?

VAADC can assist start-ups with feasibility assessments, business plans, grant and funding opportunities, strategic planning and networking. VAADC has assisted more than 300 projects since its founding in 1999.

## Who Is VAADC?

VAADC was started by agriculture industry supporters to support producers. VAADC is governed by a board of directors representing the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, East River Electric, Farm Credit Services of America, S.D. Association of Cooperatives, S.D. Bankers Association, S.D. Farmers Union, S.D. Soybean Research & Promotion Council, and the S.D. Wheat Commission.



### NOV 22, 26, 28-29

#### Christmas Tree Sales

Nov. 22: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Nov. 26: 5-8 p.m.

Nov. 28-29: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

6B Seed And Supplies

Alpena, SD

[www.6Bseedandsupplies.com](http://www.6Bseedandsupplies.com)

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.

### 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

### NOV. 1

#### Fairburn Community Center Bazaar

5:30 p.m.

Linn St.

Fairburn, SD

### NOV. 1-2

#### The Black Market/Formerly Benson's Flea Market

Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m..

Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.

Sioux Falls, SD

### NOV. 3

#### American Legion Pancake Breakfast

8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

1600 W. Russell St.

Sioux Falls, SD

605-336-3470

### NOV. 7-9

#### Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend

Information on Facebook Page

Hill City, SD

### NOV. 8

#### TNT's Gifts & Goodies Galore

10 a.m.-2 p.m.

510 S. Main St..

Dimock, SD

### NOV. 8

#### Lutefisk Supper

4:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m., 7 p.m.

Call for Reservations

Lake Campbell Lutheran Church

Volga, SD

605-690-4868 - Cheryl

605-693-4325 - Charlotte

### NOV. 8

#### More Than a Meal Gala

5:30 p.m.

Aberdeen, SD

Tickets: 605-229-4741

### NOV. 14-15

#### Junkin' Market Days

Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Ramkota Exhibit Hall

Sioux Falls, SD

### NOV. 15

#### Club 14 Craft + Vendor Fair

9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Hendricks Public School

Hendricks, MN

605-690-5586

### NOV. 15

#### Dueling Pianos

#### Playing for Permanency

5:30 p.m.

Holiday Inn & Convention Center

Spearfish, SD

605-722-4558

### NOV. 16

#### An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving

2 p.m.

Gayville Music Hall

Gayville, SD

605-760-5799

### NOV. 16

#### FEZtival of Trees

Mon.-Fri. 4-7 p.m.

Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

802 S. Main St.

Aberdeen, SD

605-225-4841

### NOV. 22

#### Lille Norge Fest

8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Canyon Lake Activity Center

Viking Hall

2900 Canyon Lake Dr.

Rapid City, SD

### NOV. 28

#### Snacks With Santa

2-4 p.m.

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD

### NOV. 29

#### Gregory Mid-Winter Fair

9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Gregory Memorial Auditorium

Gregory, SD

605-295-4345

**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.**