



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



DAKOTA ENERGY

JULY 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 3

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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A CAREER BUILT ON SERVICE

Area Foreman Tim Goetz retires just before 36 years with Dakota Energy.

After nearly 36 years of dedicated service, Dakota Energy Area Foreman Tim Goetz is retiring, bringing to a close a career defined by dedication, commitment, and an unmatched knowledge that helped keep the lights on for our members.

Tim began his career with Dakota Energy on July 5, 1990. At the time, he was working construction and was encouraged to apply after seeing two of his classmates and friends building careers at the cooperative. Over the next three and a half decades, Tim became a familiar face across Dakota Energy's service territory, spending many years as a Journeyman Lineman before moving into the role of Lead Lineman. On June 1, 2022, he was promoted to Area Foreman, where he continued sharing his experience and leadership with crews across the system.

Experience Through the Years

During his career, Tim witnessed tremendous changes throughout the electric utility industry. From advancements in equipment and technology to the way linework is performed, he says nearly everything has evolved. "When I first started, we'd stop at the substation every month to change the tape and read the meter so bills could be sent out to members," Tim recalled. "We also checked every irrigation meter each month. Now, so much of that is done automatically."

While the technology changed, Tim's commitment to serving members never did. When asked what he is most proud of from his career, his answer was simple: helping keep the lights on and working with the people around him.

Throughout his career, Tim helped Dakota Energy respond to some of the most challenging weather events in the cooperative's history. He especially remembers the ice storms of 1995, 2005, and 2010, when widespread outages required long days, late nights, and weeks of restoration efforts to return power to members.

More Than Just Linework

While Tim's knowledge of Dakota Energy's system was invaluable, it's the people he worked alongside that left the greatest impression on him. When news of his retirement spread, one employee summed up Tim's impact best by saying, "It's a lot of history walking out that door."

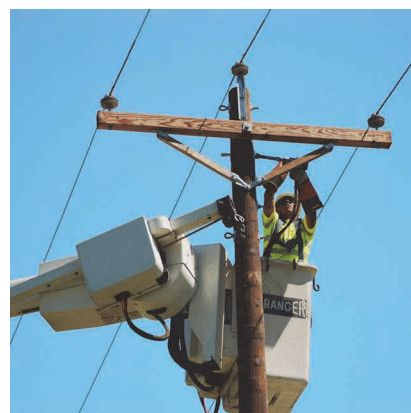
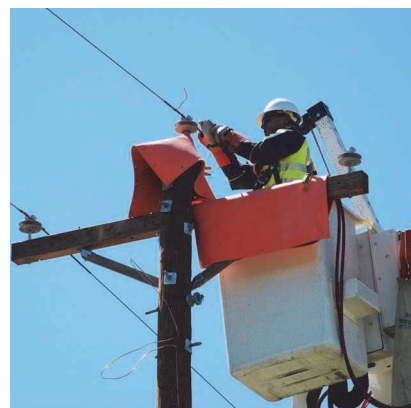
When asked what makes Dakota Energy special, Tim didn't hesitate. "The people," he said. "The employees, members, and communities." His advice to younger lineworkers is equally straightforward: "Learn as much as you can."

Like many who spend decades working alongside a close-knit crew, Tim's favorite memories aren't tied to any single project or storm. Instead, they're the countless stories, laughs, and friendships built over the years. In fact, when asked about his favorite memory, Tim laughed so hard while recalling stories from the past that it took him a while to answer.

As retirement begins, Tim is looking forward to enjoying a slower pace of life. He plans to spend more time fishing, camping, and perhaps best of all, sleeping in when a storm rolls through or temperatures dip below zero.

Reflecting on his career, Tim said he couldn't say enough good things about the people he has worked with over the years. Those relationships are what he will miss most.

While it will be difficult to see Tim go, Dakota Energy is grateful for his nearly 36 years of service, leadership, and dedication to our members and communities. We thank Tim for everything he has done for Dakota Energy and wish him and his wife, Diane, many happy years of retirement, relaxation, and time spent enjoying the outdoors.



Happy retirement, Tim, and thank you for your service!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

DAKOTA ENERGY

(USPS No. 018-949)

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WELCOME ERIC TO DAKOTA ENERGY!

Dakota Energy is pleased to welcome Eric Klanchnik to the team. Eric joined the cooperative on April 1 and is based out of the Huron office. Originally from Huron and a graduate of Mitchell Technical Institute, Eric was hired to help support Dakota Energy's electric

motor services. He looks forward to learning the role and serving Dakota Energy members. We're excited to have Eric on board and look forward to the contributions he'll make to our members and communities.



WELCOME CARTER TO DAKOTA ENERGY!

Dakota Energy is excited to welcome Carter Williams as a lineman apprentice in our Miller office. Carter joined the cooperative on April 1 after previously completing an internship with East River Electric. Originally from Webster, Carter graduated from Mitchell Technical Institute and is beginning his career in electric utility work while learning alongside experienced crew members. We're glad to have him on the team and look forward to watching his career grow.



LET'S CONNECT!



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BEFORE THE SMOKE: PROTECT YOUR HOME BEFORE WILDFIRE SEASON

Wildfires can move quickly, especially when dry grass, high winds and hot weather come together. In rural South Dakota, where homes, farms, shelterbelts, outbuildings and open grassland share the same landscape, preparation matters.

But there is one important point to make first: fighting a wildfire is not a job for homeowners.

If a wildfire is nearby, leave firefighting to trained professionals. Follow evacuation orders, call 911 to report a fire and stay away from downed power lines, smoke-filled areas and active fire zones. Cooperative members can do their most important work in advance, taking steps that make a property harder for fire to reach and easier for responders to protect.

One of the most effective steps is creating defensible space around the home. That does not mean clearing every tree or turning a yard into bare ground. It means reducing combustible material near houses, garages, sheds and other structures, while thinking about how fire could move from brush to trees to buildings.

Start closest to the house. Embers can collect against siding, under decks, in gutters or near steps. Remove dry leaves, dead plants, stacked lumber, cardboard and other combustible materials from next to the home. Gravel, rock, concrete, pavers and other hardscaping can be better choices near walls, decks and porches.

Gutters and roofs deserve attention, too. Leaves and needles can become dry fuel. Cleaning them before fire season can reduce the chance that embers find an easy place to ignite.

From there, look at the rest of the yard. Clear dead brush, tall grass and dried weeds, especially near structures. Keep grass mowed around homes, outbuildings, propane tanks and driveways. Trim and space shrubs and trees so fire cannot easily climb from grass to brush to tree canopies. Low branches can act like ladder fuels.

Do not overlook decks, porches and crawlspaces. Dry leaves, grass clippings and other materials can collect underneath. Cleaning those areas and using screening can help keep debris from building up.

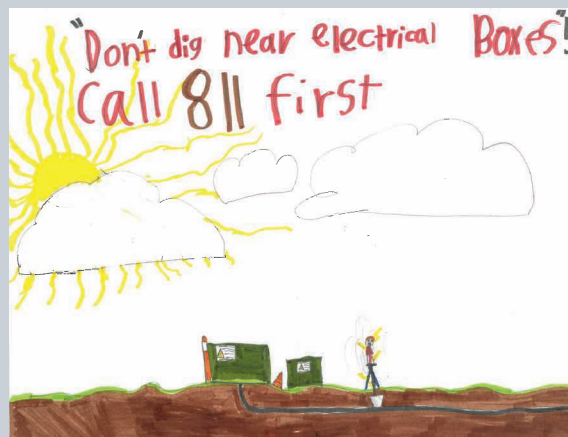
Access is part of preparation, too. Firefighters need to reach

a property quickly and safely. Keep driveways clear, make sure gates can open and trim branches that could block emergency vehicles. Clearly visible address signs can help responders find a home when visibility is poor.

Before making major landscaping changes, building fences, planting trees or adding new water lines, call 811. Underground electric, gas, water and communication lines may be closer than expected. A free locate request helps protect homeowners, utility crews and infrastructure.

Cooperative members can also make a plan. Know two ways out of the property or neighborhood. Keep important documents, medications and emergency supplies ready to go. Take photos or videos of buildings, equipment and belongings for insurance records.

Wildfire preparation is a seasonal habit, much like cleaning gutters, changing filters or preparing equipment for winter. The goal is not to fight the fire. That job belongs to firefighters and emergency responders. The goal is to give the home, property and responders a better chance before the fire ever starts.



**"Don't dig near electrical boxes!
Call 811 first."**

Caleb Blake, age 9

Caleb urges members to not dig near a pad-mounted transformer. Thank you for sharing your picture, Caleb! Caleb's parents are Peter and Stephanie Blake – members of West River Electric.

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.

Sweet on RHUBARB

RHUBARB CAKE

Ingredients:

White cake mix
4 cups rhubarb, diced
1 cup white sugar
2 cups heavy whipping cream

Method

Mix white cake as directed on the box. Pour in a greased 9x12 pan. Place 4 cups of diced rhubarb over the top. Pour 1 cup of white sugar over the rhubarb. Pour 2 cups of heavy whipping cream over the top. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

Jeanette Kleinsasser
Dakota Energy

RHUBARB SALAD

Ingredients:

2 cups rhubarb, chopped
4 tbsps. water
1/2 cup sugar
3 oz. red jello
3/4 cup cold water
1 apple, diced
1 banana, sliced

Method

Combine rhubarb, water and sugar. Stir and cook until mushy. Add jello and stir until dissolved. Add 3/4 cup cold water. Cool until it begins to set. Stir in diced apple and sliced banana. Chill and serve.

Leanne Eich
Central Electric

RHUBARB CHEESE CAKE

Ingredients:

Rhubarb Filling

9" pie shell, unbaked
2 1/2 cups rhubarb, chopped
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbsp. flour

Cheese Cake Filling

8 oz. cream cheese
2 eggs, added one at a time
1/2 cup sugar

Topping

3/4 cup sour cream
2 tbsps. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Method

Stir rhubarb with flour and sugar. Put in the unbaked pie shell and bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and lower temperature to 350° degrees.

Beat cream cheese, add 2 eggs one at a time, then add the sugar. Mix well and pour over hot rhubarb layer. Bake 30 minutes at 350° degrees.

Mix the topping of sour cream, sugar and vanilla well and spread over hot pie. Cool 3 hours or more before serving. The flavors blend better the longer it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

Charles Lebeda
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

SUMMER DEMAND: SMALL CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

Summer is one of the highest demand periods for Dakota Energy's system. As temperatures rise, air conditioners run longer, irrigation systems operate more often, and homes, farms, and businesses all see increased electricity use.

What matters most in summer isn't just how much electricity is used, but when and how it is used within your home or operation. Members are billed based on their own peak demand throughout the month. That means when multiple large appliances or equipment run at the same time, it can create a spike in your usage that impacts your demand charge.

These short bursts of high usage are what place the most strain on both the electric system and your bill.

By spreading out usage throughout the day and avoiding these spikes, members can better manage their individual demand. Even small changes in timing can make a noticeable difference.

Keeping demand more balanced during the hottest months helps Dakota Energy maintain reliable service while helping members manage costs.

Simple Ways to Manage Summer Demand

Be smart with your thermostat

Finding the right thermostat setting can make a big difference in both comfort and energy use. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends:

- 78°F when you're home and awake
- 82°F when you're away
- 80°F when you're sleeping

Setting your thermostat lower than necessary increases both energy use and demand. In fact, each degree below 78°F can raise cooling costs by 6–8%.

Give your AC a break when you can

Use ceiling fans, close blinds during the day, and avoid overcooling your home. These small steps help your air conditioner run more efficiently and reduce the chance of high demand spikes.

Use smart settings

Programmable or smart thermostats can automatically adjust temperatures throughout the day. For example:

- Raise the temperature when you leave home
- Pre-cool before you return
- Adjust slightly overnight

Limit heat during the day

Appliances like ovens, dryers, and dishwashers generate heat and can make your cooling system work harder. Try using them in the early morning or later in the evening when temperatures are lower.

Maintain your cooling system

Replace air filters regularly and keep outdoor units clear of debris to help your air conditioner run more efficiently.

Small changes throughout the summer can go a long way. By being mindful of how and when electricity is used, you can help manage your monthly demand, improve efficiency, and keep your home or operation running smoothly.

See how it adds up

Try our online demand calculator to see how appliance use affects your demand.

[www.dakotaenergy.coop/
your-account/understanding-
demand-billing](http://www.dakotaenergy.coop/your-account/understanding-demand-billing)



APRIL 2026

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefer, Schnathorst, and Wangness present. Manager Felderman and Employees Brodeen, Gilbert, Hasart, Picsek, Rakness, Walter, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly Energy Sales and Revenue
- Basin Electric and East River
- SDREA Wage and Salary Survey
- New Service Updates

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- Financial Reports for April
- CFC Loan Advance
- 2025 Capital Credit Allocation
- SDREA Office Managers and Accountants Meeting
- City of Huron Sales Tax Payment
- Federated Server Room Claim
- Capital Credit Requests

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, Maintenance, and Retirement Activities
- Glacial Lakes Oil Sample
- Huron Substation Offline
- Regulators on the Yale Circuit
- Reactors
- Solar Project Update
- 2026 Construction Projects

- CRC
- Outage Report

MEMBER SERVICES REPORT

Manager of Member Services Gilbert reported on the following items:

- Wiring Department Workload
- Potential Hazards
- Load Control Savings
- Demand Limiter Update
- A/C Load Control Removals
- NRECA Safety Summit
- SDREA Member Services Meeting
- School Presentations

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Marketing and Communications Specialist Brodeen reported on the following items:

- Motor Shop Promotional Materials
- Youth and Community Engagement
- Payment Drop Box

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security News
- Website/Cybersecurity
- Demand Material

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports presented
- Appointed donations include: \$250 Leadership Huron and \$250 South Dakota Farmers Union Foundation.
- Approved policies include: Policy No. 029 - Reports to the Board of Directors, Policy No. 043 - Building Moves, Policy No. 049.1 - Identity Theft Red Flag Prevention, Policy No. 091 - Whistleblower Policy, Policy No. 114 - Driver Qualifications.

BOARD REPORTS

Director Nemec reported on SDREA's April 2026 regular board meeting.

Director Raschke reported on East River's May 2025 regular board meeting.

Certificates were presented to directors that completed their CCD certification.

Next monthly board meeting is June 23, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the Huron office.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	April-26	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	\$2,229,379	\$10,063,577
Cost of Power	\$1,443,616	\$6,664,159
Operating Expenses	\$678,759	\$2,884,369
Total Margins	\$179,169	\$820,503
KwH's Purchased	18,689,144	82,824,507
Services in Place		3,654
Miles of Line		2,530
Members per Mile		1.44

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 84.21% of DEC's total cost of service.





A CENTURY OF GRIT AND GLORY

The Days of '76 Rodeo

Photos by KSchurr Photography

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

In the historic gulch of Deadwood, S.D., the past isn't tucked away in books – it rides out of old wooden chutes every July at the Days of '76 Rodeo.

What began more than a century ago as a short weekend celebration has grown into a week-long rodeo and parade tradition that draws contestants and visitors from across the country. Yet, amid the growth and national recognition, the Days of '76 remains rooted in family, heritage and a deep sense of place.

Pat Roberts, longtime board member of the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "It started in 1924, and it actually wasn't a rodeo then. It was a celebration of Deadwood and its establishment in 1876 – hence where the name came from. It was started by the community just to promote the founding."

Those early celebrations featured parades, horses, fireworks and the kind of small-town pageantry that fits a frontier

community proud of its past. The full-fledged rodeo format came a few years later in the late 1920s, but the heart of the event hasn't changed: honoring Deadwood's origins and the Western way of life that built it.

Today, the Days of '76 Rodeo is marking its 104th year alongside other milestones – the 150th anniversary of Deadwood and the nation's 250th anniversary.

The rodeo boasts a total payout of roughly \$350,000 and typically draws 700 to 800 contestants, including top names like Rocker Steiner, Lisa Lockhart and rising stars such as Emily Beisel. During a week of performances, 25,000 to 30,000 spectators pack the grandstands, turning the arena into a sea of cowboy hats and hometown pride.

The events remain classic: bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and breakaway roping. No frills, no gimmicks – just the timeless contests of skill and grit that define rodeo.

"We just keep it traditional," Pat said. "Just welcome everybody to Deadwood to enjoy the best cowboys and the best bucking stock that we can get."

For a town of about 1,200 people, the Days of '76 Rodeo has earned outsized recognition.

In 2011, the Days of '76 was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, a distinction the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) had not extended to a rodeo in many years.

Chris Roberts, son of Pat Roberts and fellow board member on the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "We won the PRCA Rodeo of the Year every single year that we were in the medium category until we surpassed into large. We've been nominated many times in the large category and won it once. To our knowledge, we're the only rodeo that's won Rodeo of the Year in each and every category."

In Deadwood, legacy still rides out of wooden chutes, year after year, drawing generational athletes. Rodeo here is a family affair. The Roberts family has been involved continuously since the event began.

"There's been a Roberts at every Days of '76 celebration since it started," said Pat.

Pat attended his first Days of '76 Rodeo when he was four days old and serves on the board with his son, Chris.

"I'm fourth generation," Chris said. "My great-granddad was there from year one, and we never missed a single year. Then his son – my granddad – followed in his footsteps, my dad and now me."

A fifth generation is already helping behind the scenes, continuing a family legacy that mirrors the rodeo's own endurance through the decades.

That kind of continuity isn't unique to the Roberts alone. Many contestants

arrive with stories of parents and grandparents who once competed in Deadwood.

"From a contestant perspective, I'd be willing to bet that no matter where you grew up, if you are a rodeo family, Deadwood was one that was always on the map," Chris said. "I hear it every single year – contestants talking about how grandpa or great-grandpa, grandma or great-grandma competed in Deadwood, and they've always wanted to be here. In the rodeo world, everybody knows Deadwood."

Mackenzi Gatzke, secretary of the board of directors, says her family story is similar. She currently serves on the Days of '76 board alongside both of her parents and noted two other families who have long served on the board promoting the event.

"Our board is all made up of people who were or still are locals to Deadwood, and we're all volunteers," she said. "We really do it because we love Deadwood, and we love the Days of '76 and the tradition behind it. We actually have four different families with multiple generations on our board, and we all just work together like one big family that just loves the community."

That focus on authenticity extends beyond the arena. The Days of '76 Museum houses the largest working



collection of horse-drawn wagons in the country, along with memorabilia from across the Black Hills dating back to 1876. During rodeo week, many of those wagons leave their resting place to roll through downtown Deadwood in historic parades – matching the sight of a 19th-century streetscape.

For Pat Roberts, rodeo's relevance in modern life is still significant and comes down to identity.

"It's tradition – it's the cowboy way," he said. "These cowboys and cowgirls are athletes...and the horses are too. They're bred to buck. We're not hurting anything by doing it – that's what they want to do. Just think of Deadwood and the West. Rodeo fits right in."



STAYING PREPARED DURING WILDFIRE SEASON

From Your General Manager



As we move into the height of wildfire season here in South Dakota, we are reminded of the very real risks posed by high winds, lightning, extreme heat, and dry conditions. These factors create an environment where wildfires can quickly spread, threatening lives, property, and infrastructure.

Dakota Energy believes protecting our members and communities is our highest priority. That commitment is the driving force behind our 2026 Wildfire Mitigation Plan, our first comprehensive, formal strategy dedicated to reducing wildfire risk across our service territory.

Why This Plan Matters

Our service area spans rural portions of Beadle, Hand, and Hyde counties, along with parts of Miner, Spink, Kingsbury, Faulk, Buffalo, and Sully counties. These regions include open landscapes, agricultural activity, and weather patterns that can elevate wildfire risk. Using data developed by FEMA, the USDA Forest Service, and Wildland Urban Interface mapping, we have evaluated our system to better understand where risks are highest, allowing us to focus resources where they will have the greatest impact.

What the Wildfire Mitigation Plan Includes

Our plan is built on three core pillars:

- 1. Vegetation Management:** One of the most effective ways to prevent wildfires is by managing vegetation around power lines. Dakota Energy maintains a regular trimming cycle to keep rights of way clear, remove hazardous trees, and reduce fuel sources, especially in higher-risk areas. This work helps prevent vegetation from contacting energized lines, one of the most common causes of utility related fires.
- 2. System Inspections:** Routine inspections are critical to identifying issues before they become hazards. Our crews regularly inspect poles, overhead and underground equipment, and substations to ensure our infrastructure remains in safe working condition and reduces the likelihood of ignition.
- 3. Training & Preparedness:** Dakota Energy employees participate in ongoing safety training and annual emergency exercises with local fire departments, area fire marshals, and emergency management agencies. These efforts strengthen coordination and ensure an effective response when it matters most.

Who Benefits

This plan is designed to protect our members, emergency responders, and neighboring communities. By investing in prevention and preparedness today, we reduce the risk of devastating wildfires tomorrow.

Wildfire mitigation requires awareness, cooperation, and shared responsibility. Dakota Energy remains committed to clear communication with our members because informed communities are safer communities.

Thank you,
Chad Felderman

Electric Motor Repair

Now offering electric motor services, Dakota Energy Cooperative provides reliable repair and maintenance solutions for a wide range of applications. From diagnostics and troubleshooting to motor and bearing replacement, our experienced team is equipped to keep your equipment running efficiently. Whether it's grain bin or irrigation pivot motors, you can count on Dakota Energy for dependable service and support.

Our Services

- Electric Motor Repair
- Diagnostics & Testing
- Preventative Maintenance
- Wiring for Motor Applications
- Motor & Bearing Replacement
- General Motor Troubleshooting

Contact Us

(605) 352-8591

HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

Our offices will be closed
on Friday, July 3rd.

[illegible]

JULY 2026 | COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS 11

FORT MEADE & THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

How South Dakota Set the Stage for a National Anthem

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

This month – July of 2026 – the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the Founding Fathers declared the end of Great Britain's role as their colonial overseer.

No patriotic song captures the sacrifice and resilience of the American experiment quite like the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." However, the anthem is not from the American Revolution, nor was it immediately adopted as the nation's official song. Its story unfolded over more than a century, from a British bombardment in Baltimore to a flag-lowering ceremony on the plains of western South Dakota.

The War of 1812

The year is 1814. The United States of America is in the midst of its second war with Great Britain – The War of 1812 – and the nation is reeling from a recent attack on Washington, D.C., where British troops torched the Capitol and White House.

A Maryland lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had just boarded a British naval vessel. He was sent there on behalf of the U.S. government to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, and while his negotiation was successful, Key was not allowed to return ashore until the British forces completed their bombardment on nearby Fort McHenry for fear that Key had overheard military plans while on board.

Detained aboard the enemy ship, Key looked ashore to Baltimore as the American forces fended off the invasion. As dusk settled over the harbor, it became harder for Key to track the battle, his only illumination being the occasional glow of British rockets and exploding shells. Key watched through the night, not sure who was winning the drawn-out fight. At dawn, there was just enough illumination for Key to make out the American flag still flying over the fort. The Americans had held



Visitors to Fort Meade (1 mile west of Sturgis, S.D.) will see the very same flag pole used by Col. Caleb Carlton during the flag retirements. These once-a-day evening ceremonies were the first instance of the Star Spangled Banner serving as the United States' unofficial national anthem.

Photo submitted by Randy Bender

the fort and fended off the British from Baltimore.

Key's experience that night inspired him to write a poem he titled "The Defence of Fort M'Henry." Later, it was put to song and became known as "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Fort Meade

Fast forward to 1892, thousands of miles west on the American frontier.

Col. Caleb Carlton is the new commander of the Eighth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade, a U.S. Army post in the young state of South Dakota. About a mile west, the bustling town of Sturgis is growing along with the fort, serving as an important stop along numerous trails heading toward gold country in the streams of the Black Hills.

"Fort Meade was put in place in about 1878 to help maintain the peace in the Black Hills region between the native tribes and the settlers coming in," explained Randy Bender, a lifelong resident of Sturgis and second-generation Fort Meade Museum board member.

Carlton was eager to make his mark – not through a battle, but patriotism. He and his wife discussed how they could better instill respect for the American flag among their troops stationed at the fort. The Carltons' idea was to have the band play an official song during the evening retreat, when the flag is retired for the night.

"Carlton issued orders that all within hearing distance were to stand at attention, and all men not under arms were to remove their hats as a sign of respect to the flag," Bender said.

That song, chosen at the urging of Mrs. Carlton, was the Star Spangled Banner.

"We selected the Star Spangled Banner as it was written under very unusual circumstances," Carlton later wrote in a 1914 letter.

Carlton's daughter, Mabel, recalled the first ceremony in her journal.

"As the final notes of the song faded away, the flag landed gently in the arms of the waiting troops," she wrote. "If it had been practiced, it could not have been done more perfectly."

From Fort Meade, the practice began to spread as other officers and government officials visited and observed the ceremony.

"The New York Times referred to the fact that (I) was trying to establish a national anthem," Carlton wrote. "This attracted the attention of Col. Cook in command of the recruiting depot at David's Island, who wrote me that he was having recruits taught to sing our national air. I suggested he concentrate his instruction on the Star Spangled Banner."

Carlton also wrote that later, during a meeting in Harrisburg with Pennsylvania Gov. Daniel H. Hastings, that the governor promised he would initiate the playing of the Star Spangled Banner among the state's militia.

The most decisive support came during a meeting between Carlton and Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, with the two speaking about the custom. Before long,



Above: Officers of the 8th Cavalry in Fort Meade, S.D. in 1892. Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society

Right: A photograph of Fort Meade with Bear Butte in the distance. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Lamont ordered that the Star Spangled Banner be played during evening retreats across the nation.

Nearly 40 years after Fort Meade's first Star Spangled Banner rendition, Congress in 1931 declared it the national anthem.

Today, visitors to Fort Meade can stand near the place where that custom began. A historical marker near the parade ground bears the words "It Started Here," connecting the South Dakota fort to the story of the national anthem.

"That flagpole that they lowered the flag down from for that event is still standing at Fort Meade, and still used," Bender said.

For Bender, who grew up at Fort Meade while his father worked at the

VA hospital and mother served on the museum board, the historic post still carries the feel of another era.

"When you visit Fort Meade, it's like stepping back in time," Bender said.

Many visitors are surprised to learn about Fort Meade's place in the anthem's history.

"It's one of those things we just take for granted that we have a national anthem," Bender said, "We never stopped to think about how these things came to be. But every one of those stories had to start at some point, and the national anthem story got its start in Fort Meade, South Dakota."

The Fort Meade museum is open from mid-May through the end of September 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday.



STILL ROLLING

Cody Denne, third-generation owner of Ron's Bike Shop, holds an e-bike available at his shop in Mitchell, S.D.
Photo by Frank Turner

Three Generations Later, Ron's Bike Shop Embraces E-Bikes

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For nearly 70 years, Ron's Bike Shop has helped keep Mitchell, S.D., moving.

The family-owned business has served generations of riders from the same location since 1958, when Cody Denne's grandfather, Ron, bought a local repair shop, renamed it and moved his family to South Dakota. Today, Denne is the third generation to run the business, carrying forward a name that has become familiar to local riders.

"I really just love the bike industry and trying to keep more people on a bike," Denne said.

The story traces back to St. Cloud, Minn., where Denne's grandfather, Ron, had been working at a bike shop when he told a bicycle sales representative he wanted to own a shop of his own.

The representative knew of one for sale in Mitchell: Harvey's Fix It Shop. Ron purchased the business in 1958, gave it the

name it still carries today, beginning a family connection that has lasted nearly seven decades.

"My grandpa owned it for about 20 or 25 years," Denne said. "My dad, Mike, owned it for 40, and I'm going on year six since my dad passed away."

The shop has changed with each generation. Old photos from the 1960s show that Ron's Bike Shop once sold Cushman scooters and BSA motorcycles.

Today, the newest shift is electric. About 12 years ago, Denne added his first e-bike to the shop's inventory after a customer came in looking for one. At the time, he said, he did not know much about them. But he ordered the bike, the customer bought it and the sale became an early sign of where the industry was headed.

The trend took time to build, but over the past few years, e-bikes have become a major part of the showroom.

"I'd say three years ago was the big year where I started investing, putting more on my showroom floor than regular bikes," Denne said. "And last year, they took off. I think I sold, give or take, like 60 electric bikes last year."

Denne said the demand for e-bikes is something that would

have been hard for his grandfather, Ron, to imagine when he purchased the shop in 1958.

“He probably never would have thought electric bikes would ever exist,” Cody said.

For some riders, the appeal is simple. An e-bike can make hills easier, make longer rides more realistic and give people confidence to ride farther than they otherwise would. Denne said the technology has opened cycling to customers who might have stopped riding or never considered buying a bike at all.

“E-bikes are getting more people riding who wouldn’t have ridden before – people who are tired of riding their regular bike and need a little assist to climb hills,” he said.

One couple from Huron helped Denne see what that could mean. About three years ago, the two came into the shop looking at electric bikes. Denne sent them out for a short test ride to a nearby bike path. After about 45 minutes, he started to worry.

“I was just getting in my van to go find them,” he said.

But then they returned to the shop, smiling.

“They were so happy,” Denne said. “They both took an e-bike home, and I think that first year they put like 1,500 miles on them.”

That added distance is also where e-bikes can become a tool for accessibility. For riders who need a little help because of age, hills, wind, endurance or confidence, electric assist can lower the barrier without taking away the activity. Denne said some riders who may have gone only 3 or 4 miles on a regular bike are now riding closer to 12.

“They’re seeing more,” he said. “They’re adding more adventure to their ride.”

As e-bikes become more common, Denne spends more time answering questions about motors, batteries, charging and what type of e-bike makes sense for each rider. He also pushes back on the idea that e-bikes do all the work.

“People think if you get an electric bike, it’s just going to do all the assist for you,” Denne said. “No, you’ve still got to pedal.”

Safety has become part of that education. Denne encourages riders to understand the class of e-bike they are buying, know where that type of e-bike is allowed and respect the added speed that comes with electric assist. Helmets, working brakes, proper lights and basic awareness still matter, especially as riders travel farther and faster than they might on a traditional bicycle.

But regardless of the technology, Ron’s Bike Shop continues to do what it has done for nearly 70 years: help people ride.

“Electric bikes are the thing right now,” Denne said. “It’s only getting bigger and better every year.”

Only now, more of those bikes plug in before they hit the trail.



The Denne family purchased Harvey's Fix It Shop in 1958.
Photo submitted by Ron's Bicycle Shop



By 1963, Ron's Bicycle Shop was selling more than bicycles, with Cushman scooters and BSA motorcycles also part of the business.
Photo submitted by Ron's Bicycle Shop

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Free Admission
Wylie Park
Aberdeen, SD
605-626-7015

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JULY 2-4
USA 250th Celebration
at Mount Rushmore
Rapid City, SD
www.nps.gov

JULY 8
Tracy Area Gardens & Quilts Tour
2-7:30 p.m.
Lakes Area – Shetek, Sarah, Gavin
Rain Date: July 9
Tracy, MN
507-629-3252
tracy.area.garden.quilts@gmail.com

JULY 10-12
Rooted: A Prairie Arts Weekend
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

JULY 11
40th Annual Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon & 5K
Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD
End: City Park, Spearfish, SD
Register: www.nhcaso.org

JULY 15-19
Danish Days
Viborg, SD
danishdays.org

JULY 18
A Celebration of Johnny Cash
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, SD

JULY 18
Forever Simon & Garfunkel
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 18-19
10th Annual Charles Mix Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

JULY 24-26
Bruce Honey Days
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

JULY 24-26
Winner Elks 57th Annual Rodeo to Benefit LifeScape
7 p.m.
Tripp County Fairgrounds
Winner, SD

JULY 25
Planes, Trains & Automobiles
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 25
Disability Awareness & Accessibility Committees Resource Fair (DAAC)
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD

JULY 30
Spurs Grand Classic Equestrian Competition
9 a.m.
Aberdeen, SD
605-226-1099

AUG. 1-2
51st Annual Pioneer Power Threshing Show
MN Machinery Museum
Hanley Falls, MN
507-828-5437

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8-a.m.-4 p.m.
Gilfillan Estate
28269 MN Hwy. 67
Morgan, MN
ideagroup.com/farmfest

AUG. 7-9
Fur Trader Days
NEW Art in the Park
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

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.