A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

DAKOTA ENERGY
OCTOBER 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pick of the Patch

Pumpkin Patches Offer Plenty of Reasons to Get Outside this Fall
Pages 8-9

Ghost Town Under Lake Oahe
Pages 12-13

BUILD A HARVEST SAFETY PLAN THAT FITS YOUR FARM

Harvest equipment changes height, width, and position throughout the day. A route that looks clear with an auger folded can become dangerous once equipment is raised.

01

WALK THE ROUTE IN DAYLIGHT

Check field entrances, lanes, grain bins, and loading areas. Note poles, guy wires, overhead lines, and uneven ground before work begins.

02

MARK WHAT IS HARD TO SEE

Use cones, reflective posts, or flags placed a safe distance from hazards. Never attach markers to utility poles, lines, or electrical equipment.

03

KNOW THE EQUIPMENT'S FULL HEIGHT

Measure equipment with augers and extensions raised and lowered. Maintain at least 10 feet of clearance from power lines in all directions.

04

IF CONTACT HAPPENS

Stay in the cab, call 911 and Dakota Energy, and warn others to stay away. If fire forces you out, jump clear without touching the equipment and ground at the same time. **Land with both feet together, then shuffle or hop away.**





POWERED BY MEMBERS

October is National Cooperative Month, a time to recognize what makes cooperatives different.

THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE

Dakota Energy is not owned by outside investors. It is owned by the members we serve. Members elect the Board of Directors, participate in cooperative decisions, and share in the cooperative's financial success through capital credits.

OWNED CLOSE TO HOME

The cooperative business model also keeps decisions close to home. Dakota Energy's directors are members who live and work throughout our service territory. They understand the farms, homes, businesses, and communities that depend on the electric system every day.

"OWNED BY MEMBERS.

GUIDED BY MEMBERS.

BUILT FOR MEMBERS."

Being a cooperative does not mean electricity can be provided without increases in power, materials, labor, and construction costs. It means those costs and the decisions surrounding them are evaluated with members in mind.

From maintaining reliable service and returning capital credits to supporting local organizations and providing timely information, Dakota Energy remains focused on serving the people who built and continue to own this cooperative.

THAT IS THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE.

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 Schaefers, Orient
Schaun Schnathorst, Huron
James Wangsness, Miller

CEO/General Manager: Chad Felderman

Manager of Operations: Matt Zomer

Manager of Finance & Administration: Eric Hasart

Marketing & Communications Specialist: Samantha Brodeen

Manager of Member Services: Jeff Gilbert

IT Administrator: Jared Rakness

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

Subscription information: Dakota Energy Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for $12 annually. USPS No. 0819-949 Periodicals Postage Paid at Huron, SD 57350. Postmaster: Please send address changes to Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections, PO Box 830, Huron, SD 57350; telephone (605) 352-8591; fax (605) 524-7064; email dakotaenergy@dakotaenergy.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.dakotaenergy.coop
Facebook @dakotaenergy
X@DakotaEC

DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.

MASTERING ELECTRIC DEMAND

IT'S NOT JUST HOW MUCH. IT'S HOW MUCH AT ONCE.



One busy 15-minute period can set your demand charge for the entire billing cycle.

Imagine dinner is cooking in the oven, clothes are tumbling in the dryer, the dishwasher is running, and the electric heat turns on. Your home may need that much power for only a short time, but if those appliances overlap during the same 15-minute period, it can create your highest electric demand for the month.

ENERGY VS DEMAND

Energy is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh) and represents the total amount of electricity used during the month. Demand is measured in kilowatts (kW) and reflects the rate at which electricity is used during your highest 15-minute period.

Dakota Energy measures demand in 15-minute intervals. The interval in which your home uses the most power becomes your monthly peak and is used to calculate the demand charge on your bill.

ONE PEAK CAN AFFECT THE ENTIRE MONTH

Your demand charge is not based on an average of all your 15-minute periods. It is based on the single highest one.

Once a peak has been recorded, using less electricity later will not reduce or erase it for that billing cycle. A higher 15-minute interval later in the month can raise your peak, but a lower interval cannot bring it back down.

That means you could carefully stagger appliances for nearly the entire month, but one 15-minute period with several high-use appliances running together could still set your demand charge.

This is why consistency matters. Managing demand is not just about having a few low-use days. It is about avoiding those short periods when several major electrical loads overlap.

MANAGING YOUR DEMAND

You can not change a peak that has already occurred, however, you can avoid setting an even higher one. Each new billing cycle also gives you another opportunity to establish a lower peak.

The goal is not necessarily to use less electricity. It is to avoid using several major appliances during the same 15-minute period.

Try letting the clothes dryer finish before starting the dishwasher. Avoid preheating the oven while other major appliances are running. Delay-start settings can also help move certain tasks to a different time.

USE THE TOOLS AVAILABLE TO YOU

SmartHub can help you review your usage history and identify the times when your home uses the most electricity. If you notice a spike, think about which appliances or equipment may have been operating at that time.

Dakota Energy can also help you understand approximately how many kilowatts different appliances draw. Knowing which items create the largest loads can help you decide which ones to avoid running together.

Demand can feel difficult to navigate at first. Over time, however, checking your usage and spacing out major appliances can become part of your normal routine.

DEMAND CAN BE MANAGED

You may not control every electrical load in your home, but you have more control over demand than you might realize. By understanding your largest loads, watching for overlapping use, and building better habits, you can take an active role in managing your monthly peak.

Already created a high peak? You cannot erase it from the current billing cycle, but you can avoid raising it further and use what you learned to create a lower peak next month.

Questions about your demand or electricity use? Review your usage in SmartHub or call Dakota Energy at (605) 352-8591.

SAFETY IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Fall hunting is a core memory treasured by many in South Dakota. It's a family and friend tradition that should be kept safe. This is your caring reminder to stay safe and enjoy a great hunt this season.

Simple Safety Rules for All Hunters

- Watch for posted warning signs and stay clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land you hunt.
- Be careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be easy to see.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles; energized lines can shock or kill you.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment; they can block lines and create hazards for crews.

Pheasant hunting often takes place in open fields with hedgerows and grassy strips, while dove hunting centers on fast, aerial crossings across agricultural landscapes. In both scenarios, lines may be hidden by trees or tall grass, especially near field edges and canal banks. Staying alert in these transition zones reduces the risk of an accidental encounter with electrical infrastructure.

Practical Rules for Pheasant and Dove Hunts

- Plan ahead: Check maps or ask landowners where lines and equipment are located.
- Keep a safe distance: Stay away from overhead and buried lines near fields and edges.
- Hunt with a partner: A second person can help spot hazards.
- Speak up about hazards: If you see lines or equipment, treat it as a hazard and avoid the area.
- Follow rules: Respect any posted electrical safety warnings or access restrictions.
- Share safety: Tell fellow hunters and guests about these tips.

Why These Safety Tips Matter

Power lines conduct large amounts of electricity and contact with lines or equipment can cause serious injury or death. Maintaining distance, avoiding contact with poles or lines, and not placing gear on equipment are effective practices that protect you, your hunting partners, and the line workers who keep power on.

Your electric cooperative remains committed to safe hunting. We encourage members to stay informed about local electrical safety rules and to know line locations on the lands they hunt. If you encounter hazards, report them right away so they can be addressed. Sharing these safety practices help create a culture of safety that benefits everyone.





"Don't dig or fly kites by wires!"

Seth Raak, age 7

Seth cautions readers to not dig or fly kites around power lines. That is great advice, Seth! Thank you! Seth's parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central Electric Cooperative.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Let's Eat CAKE



Picture by Elena Veselova and Shutterstock.

SWEDISH PANCAKES

Ingredients:

1.5 cups flour, sifted
3 tbsps. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs
2 cups milk
2 tbsps. butter, melted

Method

Sift together flour, sugar and salt. Beat in 3 eggs until thick and piled softly. Beat in milk and butter until blended.
Lightly grease griddle with butter. For each pancake, spoon about 1 tbsp. of batter on skillet. Cook over medium heat until lightly brown on each side.

Lois J. Larson
Clay-Union Electric

CREAM CHEESE CUPCAKES

Ingredients:

1 box chocolate cake mix, prepared
1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1/3 cup sugar
1 egg
Dash of salt
1 (6 oz.) package chocolate chips
1 can cream cheese frosting

Method

Mix cake mix according to package directions. Fill cupcake liners 1/2 full. mix the cream cheese with the sugar. Beat in egg and salt, then add chocolate chips. Drop a teaspoonful of cream cheese mixture into each cupcake. Bake as directed on package. Frost with cream cheese frosting when cool.

Elaine Rieck
Southeastern Electric

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tsps. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. espresso powder (optional)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
4 large eggs, room temperature
1/3 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt, room temperature
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups shredded zucchini (about 3 medium)
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Method

Preheat oven to 350˚F. Grease two 9x2 inch cake pans (make sure they're at least 2 inches high or one bundt pan)
Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, espresso powder (if using) and salt together in a large bowl.
In another large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer, beat the oil, granulated sugar, brown sugar, eggs, sour cream, vanilla and zucchini together until combined.
Pour dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and beat on medium speed until completely combined. Beat in chocolate chips. Batter will be thick.
Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake for around 25-32 minutes for round pans; 45 minutes for bundt pans or 9x13 pan; 18-22 minutes for cupcakes (24-30 cupcakes). To test doneness, insert a toothpick into the center of cake. If it comes out clean, it is done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

RECIPE CORRECTION
THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsp. flour

Topping
(makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups brown sugar
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder
3 cups oatmeal

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack.
Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
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.

2026 ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

YOUR CO-OP. YOUR VOICE. YOUR MEETING.



Dakota Energy's Annual Meeting is more than a yearly requirement. It is the meeting set aside for you, our member-owners, to vote, elect directors, review cooperative information, ask questions, and hear directly from your cooperative. Because Dakota Energy is owned by the people it serves, participation matters.

333 **MEMBER-OWNERS REGISTERED**
AUGUST 20
HURON | MILLER | HIGHMORE



YOUR MEETING IN REVIEW

Members cast their ballots, reviewed information about the cooperative, and had an opportunity to participate in a Question-and-Answer Session following the meeting.

We especially appreciate the members who shared comments and asked thoughtful questions. Topics such as electric rates and demand can be complex, and the Annual Meeting provides an opportunity to hear explanations, raise concerns, and take part in the conversation.

"Member ownership means having a voice in the cooperative you help build."

ABOUT THE BILL CREDIT

The $40 bill credit was provided to members who registered at one of the three Annual Meeting locations. We understand that not every member was able to attend. The credit was offered as an attendance incentive and as a thank-you to members who made time to participate. For that reason, it was limited to members who registered at the meeting.

BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

Brian Bonebright
Doug Schaefers
Brian Baum

Each director was re-elected.

COULDN'T ATTEND?

Member involvement does not end with the Annual Meeting. Contact our office, visit with your directors, follow updates on our website and Facebook page, and participate in future cooperative meetings.

Questions? Call Dakota Energy at (605) 352-8591.



JULY 2026

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, July 28, 2026, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefers, Schnathorst, and Wangsness present. Manager Felderman and Employees Brodeen, Gilbert, Picek, Rakness, Vetsch, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly kWh Sales and Revenue
- Basin Electric
- Greater Huron Development Corporation
- Dakota Metal Recycling
- FEMA Update

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- June Financial Reports
- Budget Billing Update
- CFC Loan Advance
- Annual Meeting Preparation
- CFC KRTA Ratios
- CrescoNet Metering Contract
- Early Capital Credit Retirement
- Capital Credit Requests

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, Maintenance, and Retirement Activities
- Storm Recovery
- Replaced 25 Poles
- Three phase Construction
- Workorder Inspection Complete
- CRC Update
- 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
- Electric Motor Shop Update
- Electrician Accomplishments

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Marketing/Communications Specialist Brodeen reported on the following items:

- Storm Impact – Social Media
- Annual Meeting Report and Details
- NRECA Interact Conference
- Wildfire Mitigation

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security News
- Website/Cyber Security
- Leadership Huron
- Outage Management System
- StakeOut

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports as presented.
- Approved a $200 donation to the Huron Hockey Association
- Approved revisions to Policy No. 109 – Residency Requirements for Employees Subject to On-Call/Standby Duty; Policy No. 110 – Confidentiality Policy; Policy No. 112 – Hazard Communication Program and Procedure; Policy No. 113 – Public Safety; Policy No. 115 – Physical Examinations; and Policy No. 117 – Progressive Discipline.
- Appointed Directors Schaefers as voting delegate and Langbehn as alternate delegate for Basin Electric Annual Meeting in Bismark, ND.
- Approved capital credit estate retirements totaling $5,317.74

BOARD REPORTS

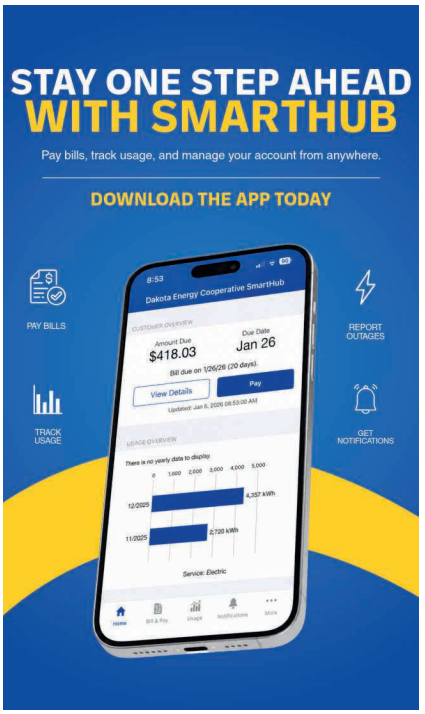
- Director Raschke reported on East River's July 2026 board meeting.
- Director Nemec reported on SDREA's July 2026 board meeting.

The next board meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2026.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	May-26	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	$2,353,606	$12,417,183
Cost of Power	$1.528,435	$8,192,593
Operating Expenses	$607,073	$3,491,442
Total Margins	$290,743	$1,111,247
KwH's Purchased	18,162,667	100,987,174
Services in Place		3,653
Miles of Line		2,529
Members per Mile		1.44

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 84.87% of DEC's total cost of service.





PICK OF THE PATCH

Lucas Hartshorn, owner of Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch, and his family opening the patch for last year's fall season.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

South Dakota Pumpkin Patches Offer Plenty of Reasons to Get Outside this Fall

Cooler air, changing leaves and the search for the perfect pumpkin all mark the arrival of the autumn season. Across South Dakota, fall weekends bring families to farms and orchards for corn mazes, apple picking and hayrides.

But putting together a few weeks of fall fun takes months of work behind the scenes.

Pumpkin patches and orchards are preparing to welcome visitors for another season of pumpkins, games and family traditions.

Country Apple Orchard – Harrisburg, S.D.

By the time visitors arrive at Country Apple Orchard near Harrisburg, owner Greg Jones and his crew have already brought in three semi loads of straw bales and about 6,000 bushels of corn.

It's all part of preparing for a fall season that lasts just a couple of months but requires work throughout the year.

"The property is kind of a full-time, year-round job," Jones said.

The orchard has been around for more than 30 years, and Jones is six years into owning the operation. Since taking over, he has expanded the pumpkin patches and added many of the attractions that now make up the orchard's fall festival.

The season opens Sept. 4 and runs through October, beginning with apple picking in September before pumpkins take center stage in October. Weekend festivities include zip lines, apple cannons, hay bale mazes, corn mazes, corn pits and, new this year, fresh-cut flowers.

Country Apple Orchard is also a member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, which helps power the operation through the busy fall season. Keeping everything running takes about 60 seasonal employees. Once the crowds disappear, that workforce drops to Jones and one other worker.

The effort appears to keep families coming back.

"They love coming out and they come out multiple times," Jones said, adding that some families with season passes



Pumpkins grow in the field at Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch near Rapid City.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

return nearly every weekend throughout the season.

Mazing Acres – Yankton, S.D.

What started as a small family project has grown into roughly 35 acres of fall festivities outside Yankton.

Scott and Molly Nedved opened Mazing Acres with their family in 2020. At the time, the idea was to create a small hobby farm that could teach their children the value of hard work while giving the community something new to enjoy.

"It's grown more than we thought it would," Molly laughed.

Today, Mazing Acres, a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, includes six acres of pumpkins, a five-acre corn maze, a flower patch and several attractions. Visitors can take a hayrack ride, watch pig races, play in the corn pit or try the apple cannons.

The corn maze, sponsored by First Dakota National Bank, changes design each year. For 2026, the design celebrates the nation's 250th anniversary.

Although the festival lasts only several weekends, planning starts almost as soon as the previous season ends. The family reviews what worked, attends industry conferences and selects the next year's pumpkin varieties in late fall. By August, Scott said preparing the farm becomes "an all-day affair every day until we open."



Visitors of all ages can find something to enjoy at Mazing Acres near Yankton, including the farm's giant slides.
Photo submitted by Molly Nedved



A family poses for a photo in the giant pumpkin chair at Mazing Acres.
Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

Visitors will notice a few changes this year. Saturday hours are being extended until 8 p.m., allowing families to experience the farm after dark, and a new tiny-town area will feature themed playhouses for younger children.

Mazing Acres opens Sept. 19 and runs through Halloween.

"We want to be something for every age," Molly said. "Not just for the kids."

Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch – Rapid City, S.D.

At Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch south of Rapid City, the Hartshorn family's fall tradition started in 2013 with pumpkins planted by hand.

Since then, owner Lucas Hartshorn said the patch has grown to about 11 acres.

Hartshorn started the pumpkin patch with his parents, Lyle and Donna, after his father retired. The family wanted a way to keep farming while creating an event they could enjoy with their children.

"We were looking for something to do with the kids in the fall," Hartshorn said.

At the time, pumpkin patches were harder to find around Rapid City. After visiting one themselves, the family decided they could create a similar experience on their own farm.

Each year brought something new. Planting pumpkins by hand eventually gave way to a planter, while the patch grew to include a petting zoo, bounce houses, wagon rides, a sandbox and other activities.

Lil' Harvester's, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, also opens during the week for school field trips, where students get a closer look at agriculture. Hartshorn said demonstrations may focus on pumpkins or the differences between sweet corn, field corn and popcorn, including how each is grown. For Hartshorn, that mix of farming, education and family time remains at the heart of the patch.

"They get to come out to the farm and learn something," Hartshorn said.

Across South Dakota, there are several more pumpkin patches and fall festivities similar to those put on by Country Apple Orchard, Mazing Acres and Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch. Whether it's a small hobby farm or a dedicated agritourism operation, each one offers its own take on fall traditions that continue to draw families back year after year.



RATE PRESSURES

Wholesale increases are driving the need to review Dakota Energy's rates.

Dakota Energy is developing its 2027 budget. Current projections indicate another rate adjustment will likely be necessary beginning January 1, 2027. The Board of Directors will review the final wholesale power rates and completed budget before taking action.

The possible 2027 adjustment follows the rate change that took effect in January 2026. That adjustment was based on an independent cost-of-service study. For a typical residential household using 1,500 kilowatt-hours per month, the estimated impact was approximately $70, although the actual amount varied by usage and demand.

Unfortunately, the wholesale power costs that led to the 2026 adjustment are continuing to increase.

PURCHASED POWER IS THE PRIMARY DRIVER

Purchased power accounts for approximately 70% of Dakota Energy's total expenses. East River Electric is Dakota Energy's wholesale power supplier. Its rate includes the cost of power from Basin Electric and WAPA, along with transmission and other delivery costs.

70% OF DAKOTA ENERGY'S TOTAL EXPENSES ARE PURCHASED POWER



HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES DAKOTA ENERGY

As Basin Electric and other upstream costs increase, those costs flow through East River to Dakota Energy. Without these wholesale increases, Dakota Energy would not be considering another retail rate adjustment for 2027.

The current 2027 purchased-power estimate is already $875,725, or 4.4%, above the current 2026 projection.

BASIN ELECTRIC + WAPA → EAST RIVER ELECTRIC → DAKOTA ENERGY → YOU



CONTINUE INTO 2027

WHY WHOLESALE COSTS ARE INCREASING

Electric demand is growing faster than new generation and transmission facilities can be built.

Basin Electric plans nearly $9 billion in capital investment over the next decade to add generation, expand transmission, and maintain existing facilities.

Basin's separate Large Load Program requires extremely large users, such as data centers, to fund the facilities needed to serve them. Those costs are not shifted to existing members.

We understand that no one wants electricity prices to increase. Any change affects household, farm and business budgets. Dakota Energy's board and employees take that responsibility seriously and will continue working to control local costs while protecting the reliability and long-term strength of your cooperative.

Once the Board of Directors makes a final decision, Dakota Energy will mail a letter to every member explaining the approved changes, when they will take effect and how different services may be affected. Updates will also be shared on Dakota Energy's Facebook page and website, as well as in the newsletter.

ELECTRIC HEAT RATE BEGINS OCTOBER 1

6.5¢ PER kWh

Standard rate: 14¢ per kWh

Members with qualifying electric heat will begin receiving the reduced heat rate on October 1.

Remember to turn on your electric heating system so your system is ready when temperatures begin to drop.

Questions? Call (605) 352-8591.



LOST BENEATH OAHE

The Rise, Fall and Disappearance of a South Dakota Ghost Town

The mouth of Swan Creek on Lake Oahe where the ghost town of LeBeau resides under the waves. *Photo by Frank Turner*

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Beneath the waves of Lake Oahe lies more than dead trees and walleye. Just below the surface near Akaska sit the remnants of LeBeau, an early 1900s railroad town once filled with immense promise and prosperity, whose story is worthy of its own Wild West feature film.

For years, Caroline Thorsen has collected the history of her great-grandfather, Antoine Le Beau, and the town that bore his name. Through Thorsen's collection and research by railroad historian Don Hofsommer in "A Promise Broken: LeBeau and the Railroad," we can dive beneath the waters of Lake Oahe and dredge up the story of LeBeau's dramatic rise and fall.

A French Fur Trader

The story of the ghost town of LeBeau begins with Antoine Le Beau Sr., a French fur trader whose journey in the mid-1800s took him from France to Quebec, Canada, then to St. Louis, Missouri and eventually up the Missouri River to what is now South Dakota.

"As I unfortunately did not know [Antoine], I hope he is remembered as being a brave gentleman who crossed the ocean from France to come to America and eventually become friends with the Native Americans, married in Native Tradition," said Thorsen, Le Beau's great-granddaughter.

The woman Antoine married was Mary Little Thunder, a member of the Two Kettle Band of Sioux. Antoine himself was later one of several Frenchmen adopted into the Sioux Tribe at a Great Sioux Council, where he was given the name "Ogless," or "Red Shirt."

Le Beau worked with the American Fur Company before establishing a trading post along the Missouri River near present-day Akaska. The post became the foundation of a small town that would eventually bear his name and become a brief, yet bright, gateway to the West.

The Railroad

By the time the railroad arrived, Antoine Le Beau Sr. was gone, but the town was quickly gaining the reputation of a small metropolis. In 1907, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL) reached LeBeau, connecting the small Missouri River settlement to Watertown and markets farther east.

"As LeBeau prospered, so did the M&StL's westernmost extension; as LeBeau withered, so did its railroad," Hofsommer writes.

Cattle companies from Texas had taken notice of both LeBeau and the grasslands west of the Missouri. Once they learned cattle thrived west of the river, they began moving large herds into the region. Through its railroad, LeBeau offered those ranchers a new route to market.

The next trick was getting the cattle across the river. On the west side of the Missouri, large holding pens could accommodate as many as 3,500 animals. From there, cattle crossed the river aboard the Scotty Philip, a steam-powered ferry. Once across, they could be loaded directly onto eastbound rail cars.

In 1908, roughly 24,000 cattle passed through LeBeau on their way to and from the West River ranges, representing about $1 million in livestock at the time. The feat helped cement the town's place as a major cattle-shipping point on the Missouri.

A Bustling Town

By the end of the season, LeBeau featured two banks, a newspaper, a drugstore, a general store and a local saloon. The growing town also boasted two lumberyards, a grain elevator and a livery, along with prominent businesses like the Idle Hour billiard and pool parlor, the Hotel LeBeau and Arcade Hotel. For entertainment, residents could even catch a show at Zimmer's Opera House.

As the town grew, M&StL officials planned to continue the rail line west of the



French fur trapper Antoine Le Beau Sr. *Photo submitted by Caroline Thorsen*

Missouri by building a bridge across the Missouri, hinting at a long expansion all the way to the West Coast. The excitement only reinforced the idea that LeBeau was destined to become the gate to the west.

The buzz captured the attention of Murdo MacKenzie, general manager of the Matador Land and Cattle Company, and his wealthy son, Dode. Described as a likable and fine young man – while sober – Dode moved to LeBeau in his early 20s to oversee Matador's South Dakota operations.

A Questionable Killing

At the end of the 1909 shipping season, Dode MacKenzie began frequenting LeBeau's saloons. On Dec. 11, he was shot and killed by Bud Stephens, who was tending the bar that morning at Phil DuFran's saloon.

Local accounts of what happened that day – and of Dode MacKenzie's character – differ greatly. One local official described MacKenzie as a stand-up individual, while another local woman said he was known to shoot behind the heels of women in the town when "spirits took him."

Exactly what happened on Dec. 11 will never be known, but according to the version later presented by Stephens' defense at trial, MacKenzie became furious when Stephens failed to hear him order a drink. Rebuffed, MacKenzie crossed the street to purchase what he believed were .45-caliber shells, loaded his gun, walked back, pointed it at Stephens and pulled the trigger twice. As the story goes, MacKenzie had accidentally purchased .38-caliber shells, which failed to fire and instead plopped onto the floor. It was then that Stephens reached for his gun and began firing, killing the young MacKenzie.



The paddle-wheeler Scotty Philip loads cattle at LeBeau, S.D., to be fattened on grasslands west of the Missouri River. For about three years, LeBeau was one of the Northwest's most important cattle-shipping towns.
Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society

A Dying Town

The trial resulted in Stephens' acquittal, drawing the ire of Dode MacKenzie's father and the Matador Cattle Company. The company effectively boycotted LeBeau, and no Matador cattle ever entered the town again.

Within months of the trial, a suspicious fire made matters worse. Although fires weren't uncommon in the Wild West, townsfolk discovered that the fire hose, telephone and telegraph lines had all been cut prior to the fire. No arsonist was ever caught.

The bad luck didn't stop there. A competing rail line to the north completed a bridge across the Missouri at Mobridge, undercutting LeBeau's stream of West River cattle. By 1924, M&StL abandoned the town, tearing out its segment of rail line. Within a year, the post office closed.

Beneath Lake Oahe

LeBeau had been a ghost town for decades when Lake Oahe came for what was left.

Construction of Oahe Dam near Pierre began in 1948 as part of a massive federal effort to control flooding and generate hydroelectric power along the Missouri River. In August 1958, the river was closed at the dam and the newly created reservoir began to fill.

As the water rose, it eventually covered the old LeBeau townsite near the mouth of Swan Creek. The empty foundations, cellar holes and remnants of the once-bustling railroad town disappeared beneath Lake Oahe. Unlike most ghost towns in South Dakota that faded away with time, LeBeau vanished beneath the Missouri.



A crowd gathers around a band near the railroad in LeBeau, S.D., with the depot and Missouri River visible in the distance. About a year after this photo was taken, the town installed 10-foot-wide concrete sidewalks along Main Street.
Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society.



A PRETTY SWEET IDEA

Doland Teen Finds Success as Ice Cream Entrepreneur

Eighteen-year-old Noah Felderman (right) started his own ice cream business in 2020. Noah's dad, Chad Felderman (left), is the CEO of Dakota Energy Cooperative in Huron.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Noah Felderman has long enjoyed staying at his grandparents' cabin at Lake Poinsett, north of Arlington, S.D. But during the summer of 2020, the 12-year-old faced a dilemma many kids did during the COVID-19 era.

What is there to do today?

"I was there every weekend – almost every day – and people were talking about ice cream," Noah said. "I thought, 'Hey, I could try to make something out of this.'"

After drawing up a business plan with his grandparents and borrowing their orange side-by-side, Noah drove – or, rather, had an adult drive him – around to sell ice cream bars out of a small chest freezer.

"He was 12 years old and not able to drive, so this was a family event," Noah's dad, Chad, said with a chuckle.

Driving to different campgrounds and neighborhoods around the lake, Noah's business – Feldy's Ice Cream – became a hit with residents, cabin owners, and weekend campers.

The next summer, hoping to keep the momentum going, 13-year-old Noah found and purchased a retired school bus.

"We found a really good deal – this bus needed some work just to get going and be operational so that's how we snagged it," Noah explained. The Feldermans completely overhauled the bus to turn it into a fully-equipped ice cream truck, even giving it a custom orange paint job to craft a recognizable brand and pay homage to his grandparents' orange side-by-side that started it all.

That was the summer things really started to take off for Feldy's Ice Cream.

"I called the State of South Dakota asking about tax law, and they said they didn't have time for prank calls," Noah laughed.



Feldy's Ice Cream serves stocks many flavors – vanilla, caramel, raspberry chip, Oreo, and classic mint chocolate chip, to name a few.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Covering more ground in the bus than he could with the side-by-side, the determined teenager became a familiar face and started building connections in the Lake Poinsett area.

"Someone said if I ever want to do an event, I could come cater the staff at the Madison hospital," Noah recalled. "So that's what I went out and did."

Word spread quickly. After Madison Regional Health, Noah visited Prairie Lakes Hospital in Watertown, then Huron Regional Medical Center.

He continued, "Once we were there, we served staff that were having their own private events, like weddings, so then they'd reach out to us and see if we'd want to cater their wedding. It just kind of kept growing."

As demand for ice cream grew, Noah purchased a small building at Lake Poinsett to open a permanent ice cream shop and also allow them the space to expand their offerings, serving Saturday morning waffle breakfasts and statewide favorites like Black Hills Bagels and Flyboy Donuts.

Six years since starting the business, Feldy's Ice Cream has become a seven-days-per-week summer commitment for Noah. Today, the 18-year-old operates an ice cream truck, ice cream trailer and the Lake Poinsett location.

For staffing, Noah turned to area high schools.

"We hit hard at the local schools – Castlewood, Estelline, Arlington, Hamlin, Watertown, Brookings," Noah recalled. "We'd go to the school, give them some free ice cream coupons, and encourage them to apply for a summer job."

Noah currently employs 17 part-time summer workers.

"I never imagined that (the business) would grow into what I'm doing now on a day-to-day basis," he reflected. "I've learned that you can have a plan, and the plan's not always going to go how you want. A machine will break down, and then you're sitting there fixing it and figuring out how you're going to get to this event on time. You learn to take things as they come."

After graduating this past spring, Noah enrolled at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown to pursue training in law enforcement. He hopes to pair that training with a pilot's license and pursue a career in aviation law enforcement.

But that doesn't mean he's finished with ice cream.

"I'll take it year by year," Noah said. "I don't have any plans to shut down or slow down operation. It's definitely something I'm going to continue doing."

Noah's dad, Chad Felderman, who also serves as CEO at Dakota Energy Cooperative, praised his son's work ethic and thanked the surrounding communities for supporting the business.

"You can't not be proud of Noah," Chad said. "With all of the connections he's made in different communities and businesses, when I introduce myself, I don't introduce myself as Chad – I introduce myself as Noah's dad or Feldy's Ice Cream's dad."



Spink County Sheriff's Deputy Wyatt Anderson visits Feldy's Ice Cream at a stop at the Spink County Courthouse in Redfield.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Chad assists Noah as he prepares a large order of ice cream cups at Eastern Star retirement home in Redfield.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Twelve-year-old Noah started his business at Lake Poinsett.
Photo submitted by Chad Felderman



OCT. 31
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
Yankton, SD
www.harvesthalloween.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.

OCT. 2-3
Public Ghost Investigation
Fort Sisseton State Park
Langford, SD
605-910-4465

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

OCT. 3
Fall Harvest Farmers Market
9 a.m.
Centennial Park
Hot Springs, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD

OCT. 4
St. Anthony's Fall Bazaar
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Swiss Steak 12-1:30 p.m.
Hoven, SD

OCT. 4
Grace Lutheran Church & Little Brown Church Fundraiser
Meal: 12-1:30 p.m. CDT
Auction: 2 p.m. CDT
Grace Lutheran Church
Hayes, SD
605-567-3559

OCT. 9-11
S.D. Showdown Truck Show
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Viborg, SD
605-940-0087

OCT. 14
Soup & Pie Day & Country Store
4 p.m.-7 p.m.
First Baptist Church
105 N. State St.
Viborg, SD

OCT. 17
Faulkton Area Arts Council Craft Fair
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Faulkton School
Faulkton, SD
605-380-8444

OCT. 17
Fabricadabra
11 a.m.-4 p.m.
Dakota Prairie Quilt Guild
NFAA Easton Yankton Archery Center
Yankton, SD
605-660-1612

OCT. 23
Monster Mash
5-8 p.m.
Box Elder Events Center
Free Event
Box Elder, SD
605-390-9341

OCT. 23
A Night of Laughter & Music
6 p.m.
American Legion Post 15
Sioux Falls, SD
Tickets & Info: 605-336-3470

OCT. 24
Women of Today Craft Fair
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
West Central Becker Center
Hartford, SD
605-359-2049

OCT. 24
United Church of Christ's Annual Soup & Sweets Dinner
4-7 p.m.
105 N 2nd St.
Hermosa, SD
605-503-0843

OCT. 31
Treat Street
Main Street
Milbank, SD

NOV. 7
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Dakota Christian School
Corsica, SD

NOV. 14-15
Zonta Holiday Craft & Vendor Show
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Ramkota Hotel
Pierre, 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.