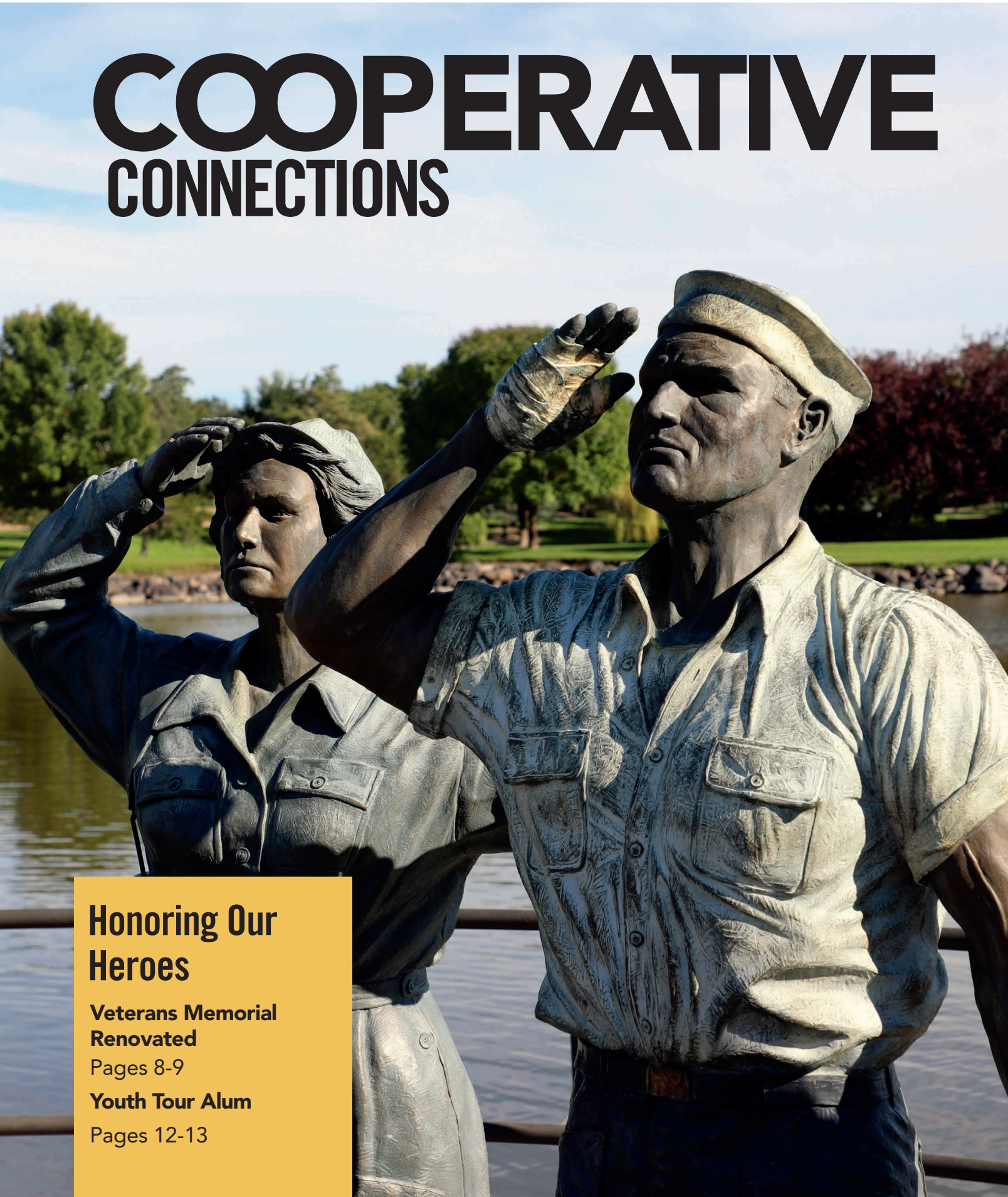
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

DAKOTA ENERGY
NOVEMBER 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Honoring Our Heroes

Veterans Memorial Renovated
Pages 8-9

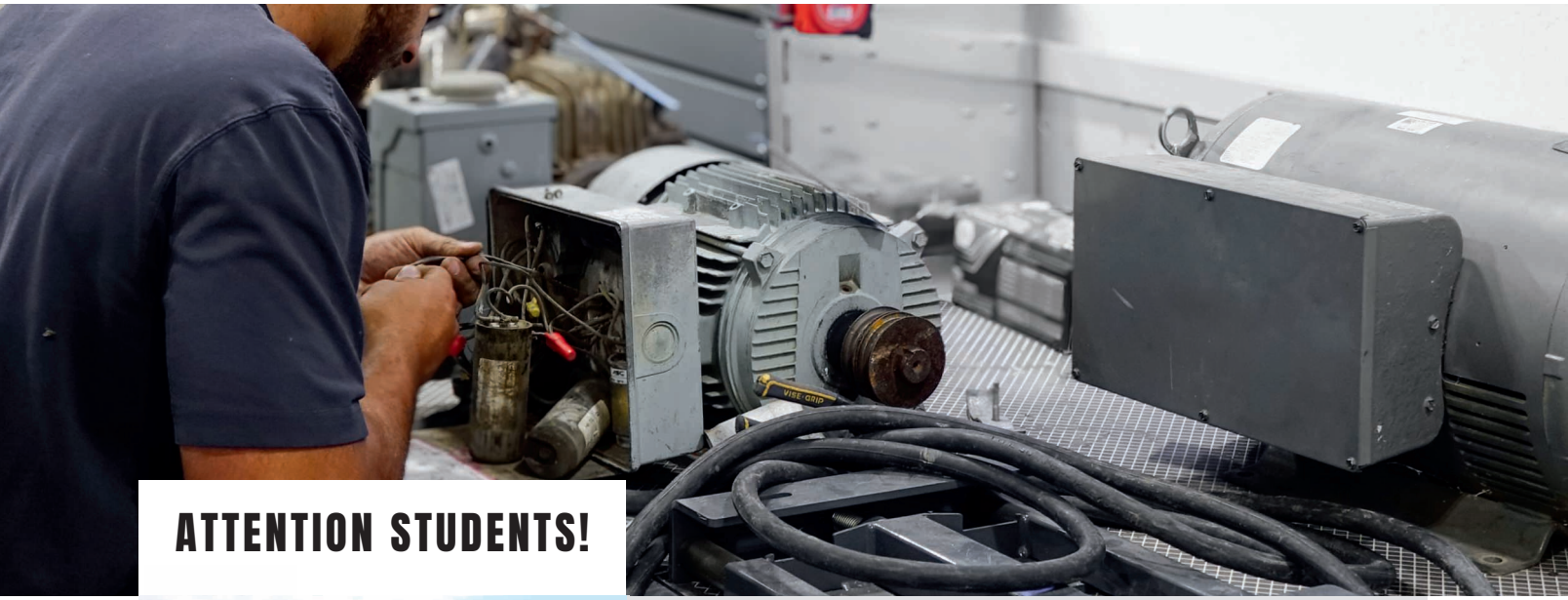
Youth Tour Alum
Pages 12-13

ELECTRIC MOTORS

Harvest is busy enough without a bin fan that won't start. With grain to dry and more loads coming in, you need equipment you can count on.

Before replacing a motor that's giving you trouble, let Dakota Energy's electricians take a look. A repair may be an option. If a replacement is needed, we can help you select the right motor for your equipment.

For help with your electric motors this harvest, call Dakota Energy at 605-352-8591.



ATTENTION STUDENTS!



Win a Trip to Washington, D.C.

Dakota Energy will once again sponsor high school juniors and seniors on an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C. Each June, more than 1,500 high school students from 44 states travel to Washington, D.C., to participate in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour.

Throughout the week, participants will explore Washington, D.C., learning about government, cooperative principles, 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's congressional delegation.

Who is Eligible?

High school juniors and seniors living in Beadle, Hand, or Hyde County. Cooperative membership is not required.

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 should bring their own spending money for snacks, souvenirs, and other personal expenses.

When is it Held?

The trip is scheduled for June 17–23, 2027.

How Do I Apply?

www.dakotaenergy.coop/your-community/youth-tour/



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

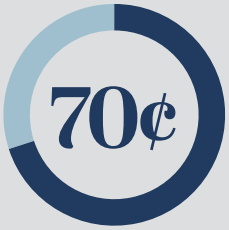
This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.dakotaenergy.coop
Facebook @dakotaenergy
X@DakotaEC

DAKOTA ENERGY
COOPERATIVE, INC.

Looking Ahead to 2027

The cost of electricity continues to rise, and the largest part of Dakota Energy's expenses is the power we purchase to serve our members.



About 70 cents of every dollar

Dakota Energy spends goes toward purchasing power.

Why Costs are Rising

When the cost of power increases, it has a significant impact on the cooperative and eventually on the rates needed to provide service.

Higher Usage

Electrical use has also changed considerably over the years. Homes, farms, and businesses use more electrical equipment than ever before, which means more power must be generated.

Investing in Reliability

Growing electric use also means we have to continue investing in poles, wire, and substations so our system can handle the electricity members need today and into the future. With a relatively small number of members supporting more than 2,500 miles of line, those costs are spread across fewer accounts.

The Cooperative Difference

As a cooperative, Dakota Energy is owned by the members and does not operate to make profits for outside investors. Any margins are allocated back to members through capital credits. Our goal is to keep service reliable and rates as affordable as possible.

The Board and staff are continuing to review costs and the 2027 budget. If an adjustment is needed, current discussions are focused on a small increase to only the kilowatt-hour charge. We will continue to keep members informed as those discussions move forward.

KEEP SAFETY AT THE HEART OF YOUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The holiday season, stretching from late November through mid-January, is widely considered the most joyous time of the year. Families gather, festive parties fill our calendars, and a spirit of generosity warms our homes. However, alongside the cheer comes a significant spike in travel, home decorating, and large-scale cooking. Consequently, preventable accidents and injuries dramatically increase during these months. To ensure your family and friends remain safe and injury-free throughout the festivities, keeping safety top of mind is crucial. Below is a comprehensive guide of tried-and-true advice to help you navigate the season securely.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared and Alert

For millions of people, the holidays mean hitting the road to visit loved ones. Unfortunately, car travel during this busy period carries the highest fatality rate of any major transportation form. Hundreds tragically lose their lives in crashes on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day alone. Alarmingly, alcohol impairment contributes to approximately one-third of these fatal incidents.

To stay safe on the roads, follow these essential guidelines:

- Winterize your vehicle: Prepare for harsh weather and keep a well-stocked emergency kit in your trunk.
- Rest up: Get plenty of sleep before departing to avoid the severe dangers of drowsy driving.
- Plan ahead: Leave early and anticipate heavy traffic to eliminate the dangerous temptation to speed.
- Buckle up: Ensure every passenger is properly restrained, regardless of the trip's length.
- Eliminate distractions: Put your cell phone away; it remains the primary driving distraction today.
- Designate a driver: Always use a completely sober driver. Alcohol and medications cause severe impairment.

Decorate with Caution and Care

Decking the halls instantly puts families in a holiday mood, but hospital emergency departments treat thousands of decorating-related injuries annually. Remember these safety tips:

- Keep poisonous seasonal plants, like mistletoe and holly berries, strictly out of the reach of children.
- If utilizing an artificial tree, verify it is clearly labeled as "fire resistant."
- For live trees, cut two inches off the trunk for better water absorption. Water daily and remove it when dry.
- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- Discard and replace light sets featuring broken sockets, frayed wires, or loose electrical connections.
- Turn off all holiday lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

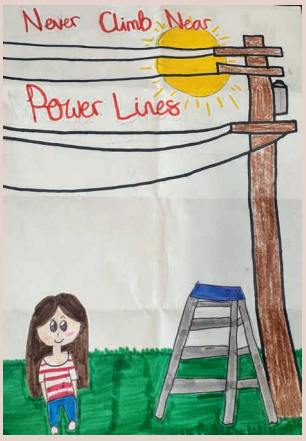
Watch Out for Holiday Fire-Starters

The glow of candles and fireplaces is a holiday staple, but combined with combustible decorations, house fire risks skyrocket. The National Fire Protection Association notes candles cause 46% of December home fires.

- Place candles in sturdy holders away from curtains and curious children.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked, high cabinet.
- Consider battery-operated flameless candles as a very safe alternative.
- Never burn pine branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces; they can cause flash fires.
- Use a protective screen for burning fires and never leave lit candles unattended.

Be highly alert to the extreme dangers of turkey fryers. Hundreds of fires and severe burns are linked to these devices. Consider using oil-less fryers or purchasing fried turkeys from professionals. If you must fry your own, strictly follow all U.S. Fire Administration guidelines.

By taking these simple, proactive steps, you can protect loved ones and ensure your holidays remain merry, bright, and safe.



"Never climb near power lines."

Penelope Poppen

Penelope warns readers to never climb near power lines. Thank you for sharing, Penelope! Penelope's parents are Brett and Megan Poppen, members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

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



THE FAMILY TABLE

ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

1 lb. hamburger
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 can (10 oz.) enchilada sauce
6 tortilla shells
1 cup shredded cheese
1 can pinto beans

Method

In a glass baking dish, put the browned hamburger, onion, pepper, beans and sauce in shells and roll up. Layer with shredded cheese on top. Bake 20 minutes in oven.
Optional: Use 1 cup of sliced black olives on top of cheese

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside.
Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing, and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted.
Makes a 9x13-inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

BEEF TERIYAKI

Ingredients:

1lb. boneless beef sirloin steak
2 tbsp. cornstarch
14 oz. beef broth
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp. brown sugar
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
3 cups broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups rice
1 2/3 cups water

Method

Cook the rice in water according to the directions on the bag.
Slice beef in very thin strips. In a large skillet, saute the beef strips until browned and the juices evaporate.
In a mixing bowl, combine cornstarch, beef broth, soy sauce, brown sugar and garlic powder. Mix thoroughly.
Add the liquid mixture and broccoli florets to the beef. Cook until mixture boils & thickens to a desired consistency, stirring frequently.
Serve over the cooked rice.

Karen Soulek
Charles-Mix 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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture from Shutterstock.

THE WORLD'S LARGEST PHEASANT

Co-op Director Recalls Fixing Up Huron Landmark

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In east-central South Dakota, a roadside monument pays homage to one of the region's largest economic drivers: the ring-necked pheasant.

Towering 40 feet above U.S. Highway 14, the "World's Largest Pheasant" has watched over Huron since 1959, when it was built to welcome pheasant hunters to the James River Valley.

In the nearly 70 years since the pheasant was first perched at the Dakota Inn, it has become a South Dakota landmark, attracting visitors from across the country.


Schaun Schnathorst

"It's iconic," explained Schaun Schnathorst, assistant engineer for the City of Huron and director for Dakota Energy Cooperative. "It's in travel guides; it's definitely a destination spot. There's always people stopping to take photos of it."

Schnathorst witnessed the bird's popularity firsthand in 2011, when he and his brother, Bob Carlson, were commissioned to restore the gargantuan fiberglass pheasant to its 1950s glory.

"The thing is 28 feet tall, and it's on top of a 12-foot-tall building, so it's 40 feet tall at the very top of the pheasant's head," Schnathorst said. "For a guy hanging out [of the basket of a bucket truck] with a paint gun trying to paint stuff, it wasn't very fun. There were times I had to open the door of the basket and pretty much lay on the bottom and paint."

The pheasant's survival through nearly seven decades of South Dakota weather is a testament to its construction. Its body was built with steel mesh welded to supports, while massive steel rods inside its legs extend deep into the ground to keep it upright in the wind.

"It got hit by lightning at some point in time, and when I went to restore its head, it had a giant chunk of concrete blown out of it," Schnathorst recalled.

The weeks-long restoration presented several other challenges.

"Way back in the day … people would go by during hunting season and shoot it with a shotgun when they were drunk in the middle of the night," Schnathorst continued. "There were three arrows sticking out of it."



An access door beneath the pheasant had also allowed area pigeons to shelter inside for years, turning the roadside sculpture into their own avian temple.

"The fecal matter was rotting out the bottom of the fiberglass," Schnathorst said, recalling the dismal condition inside the bird.

Luckily, the damage was repairable. Schnathorst installed a one-way door to evict the squatting pigeons and replaced several sections of fiberglass.

When it came time to paint, Schnathorst said the bird's back was the hardest area to reach from his lift, requiring constant repositioning and leaning out of the lift's basket.

"You just really couldn't get that close to it," he said. "But the scariest part is the head. When there's any kind of wind at all, it's moving and you're moving too, and it isn't always at the same pace!"

Schnathorst's work on larger-than-life animals extends beyond Huron's giant pheasant, having repainted Prostrollo Auto Mall's iconic bison statues at the dealerships in Huron and Madison.

"I had two car trailers, one statue on each trailer," he chuckled. "That was really cool living out in the country and having these two giant buffaloes in my yard. It was quite a conversation starter until we got them done!"

MORE PHEASANT FACTS

- The pheasant is 28 feet tall (on a 12-foot-tall roof) and measures 40 feet long from its beak to tail.
- The pheasant weighs more than 22 tons.
- Sculptor RF Jacobs of Gooding, Idaho, constructed the pheasant at a cost of about $23,000.
- The pheasant was dedicated October 18, 1959, and christened by South Dakota Gov. Joe Foss.
- Other South Dakota communities including Gregory, Redfield, Brookings, and Chamberlain also host their own larger-than-life pheasants.

AUGUST 2026

The Board of Directors met on Tuesday, August 23, 2026, with Directors Baum, Bonebright, Langbehn, Morford, Nemec, Raschke, Schaefers, Schnathorst, and Wangsness present. Manager Felderman and Employees Brodeen, Gilbert, Hasart, Picek, Rakness, Reber, and Zomer were present.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Felderman reported on the following items:

- Monthly kWh sales and revenue
- Basin Electric
- Border States material costs
- Greater Huron Development Corporation

OFFICE SERVICES REPORT

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

- July financial reports
- CoBank line of credit renewal
- CSR/Receptionist interviews
- CFC capital credit retirement
- 2027 capital and construction budget
- KRTA ratios

OPERATIONS REPORT

Manager of Operations Zomer reported on the following items:

- Construction, maintenance, and retirement activities
- Work order inspections
- Underground line east of Highmore
- Three-phase line north of Miller
- Construction outlook
- 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
- Electric motor shop
- DakotaFest booth
- State Fair booth
- Proposal for additional electrician in Miller

MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

Marketing/Communications Specialist Brodeen reported on the following items:

- Receptionist position
- National Night Out
- Annual Meeting
- Editor's Workshop and Regional Communicator's Meeting

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY REPORT

Information Technology Administrator Rakness reported on the following items:

- Security news
- Website and cybersecurity
- Outage Management System

BOARD ACTION

The following items were acted upon:

- Accepted the reports as presented.
- Elected President Raschke, Vice President Nemec, Treasurer Bonebright, and Secretary Langbehn.
- Approved standing committees.
- Approved Policy No. 034 – Cash Management; Policy No. 058 – Energy Conservation Program; Policy No. 065 – Rental of Tower Space; Policy No. 107 – Performance Appraisal; Policy No. 202 – Travel Expenses; and Policy No. 206 – Retirement of Security Policy.
- Approved moving the September board meeting to September 16.
- Approved the 2026 Annual Meeting minutes and survey.
- Approved hiring an additional electrician for the Miller office.
- Approved offering a bucket truck to the City of Huron for $18,000 instead of selling it at auction.

BOARD REPORTS

Director Raschke reported on East River's August 2026 regular board meeting.

Attendees reported on 2026 Basin Annual Meeting.

Year-to-Date Financial Report

	Aug-26	Year-to-Date
Total Revenue	$2,455,566	$20,008,352
Cost of Power	$1,478,301	$12,963,565
Operating Expenses	$745,655	$5,542,271
Total Margins	$303,683	$2,231,299
KwH's Purchased	20,745,032	161,924,299
Services in Place		3,653
Miles of Line		2,529
Members per Mile		1.44

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 85.05% of DEC's total cost of service.





HONORING OUR HEROES

Veterans Memorial Undergoing Revamp

The WWII memorial on Capitol Lake shows soldiers saluting the American flag after battle. Later, after the Korean and Vietnam soldier statues and walls were added beneath the flag, the WWII veterans appear to salute them too. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lee Leuning's father was about 80 when he sat in his son's sculpting studio to become the sailor at South Dakota's World War II memorial.

For three days, Leuning studied his face and shaped his features. His father slowly began talking about the war. After 50 years, the experience still weighed heavy.

Today, more than 25 years later, Leuning's father stands immortalized in bronze on the shore of Capitol Lake in Pierre, representing sailors like himself who served in World War II.

He stands among five other slightly larger-than-life statues representing members of the U.S. armed forces. The display, called "Why We Fought," depicts the service members in tattered uniforms saluting toward the American flag.

"It's soldiers in each individual moment stepping out of battle and recognizing the flag and what they fought for," Leuning said.

A member of Northern Electric Cooperative, Leuning created the figures with fellow sculptor Sherri Treeby. Visitors to Pierre will find their work throughout the city, including statues along the Trail of Governors and a relief plaque commemorating the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge. At Capitol Lake, their sculptures honor veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Several of the World War II figures have family connections. Leuning used his mother's likeness for the army corps mechanic – she served as a plane mechanic in WWII – and his sons as models for the pilot and Marine. Treeby's father, an Army veteran, provided the face of the Coast Guardsman.

The WWII memorial was the first memorial unveiled, dedicated by Gov. Bill Janklow just four days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Leuning recalls being amazed by the turnout – thousands of visitors were at the Capitol for the dedication.

He remembers one Navy veteran watching the dedication parade from a hospital bed with an attendant.

"Every time a flag came by with an honor guard … that guy would have his aide get him out of the bed, and he'd snap to attention," Leuning said. "That, to me, showed this really means something to them."



Recent renovation improved water drainage. Previously, water under the granite tiles caused loosening. The tiles have since been replaced with sod grass. The stream bed was also replaced. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Subsequent dedications for the Korean and Vietnam memorials during Gov. Mike Rounds' administration attracted even more visitors. The state estimated 32,000 people attended the two-day Vietnam dedication in 2006. Some veterans watched the ceremony from pontoon bridges on Capitol Lake.

Unfortunately, years of exposure have taken a toll on the site. Trapped water beneath the granite tiles caused some to loosen and crumble, explained Leah Haugan, Special Projects Coordinator for the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration.

"Try as we might to keep it in great shape, you can't keep up with deteriorating stone," Haugan said.

Over the summer, the state began work on a renovation project for the memorials, which will bring some changes to the site.

Sections of granite have been replaced with grass. The military seals embedded in the walkway were lifted out and placed on pedestals. The stream from the Artesian well remains, but it's now bordered by a concrete curb. The granite tiles around the fountain were upgraded from ¾ inch thick tiles to 2 inch thick tiles, and the fountain enclosure was remade with concrete and granite tiles around the top.

Restoring the site is part of the state's commitment to honoring veterans and their service, Haugan said.

"Words are words, but when you build something like that that memorializes their efforts and their sacrifice, I think that shows them there's proof positive that we recognize and honor them," Haugan said.

The renovation does not bring back the Flaming Fountain's flame. Methane rising from the artesian well that feeds Capitol Lake kept the flame burning for decades, but it went out around 2015 when the flow could no longer sustain it. Haugan said a more ambitious fountain project is among the ideas for the site, depending on funding.

A separate proposal would honor Native American code talkers who served in World Wars I and II using their native languages to transmit messages that enemy forces were not able to translate. Funding for that memorial also remains unresolved.

Visiting the memorials, Leuning has seen what that recognition can mean to a family. The day after the Vietnam memorial dedication, he returned to take photos and was approached by a woman asking him to take her picture. He obliged, and the lady went up to the bronze statue and hugged it.

"She said, 'That's my Davy. It looks just like my Davy.'"

Then she pointed to her husband's name on the wall.



Leuning's Vietnam War memorial.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



Sculptor Lee Leuning with his dad, Donald Leuning, at the World War II Veterans Memorial dedication Sept. 15, 2001, in Pierre.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



An estimated 32,000 people attended the Vietnam War Memorial dedication in 2006.
U.S. Airforce Photo by 1st Lt. Carrie L. Kessler



BEFORE WINTER ARRIVES

GET AHEAD OF HEATING SEASON

As colder weather approaches, your heating system will soon become one of the hardest-working appliances in your home. A few seasonal checks can help it run efficiently and reduce the chance of a breakdown on a cold night.

Start with filters and vents

A clogged or dirty filter can restrict airflow and make your system work harder. If your system uses air filters, check them regularly and clean or replace them according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Keep furniture, curtains, rugs, and other household items clear of supply and return vents.

Give your outdoor unit room

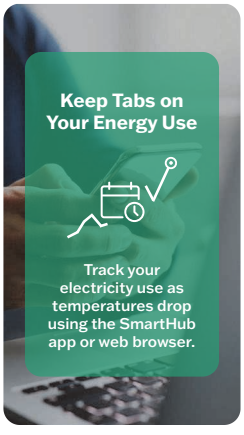
If you have a heat pump, your outdoor unit also deserves attention this time of year. Falling leaves, limbs, and other debris can restrict airflow, so keep the surrounding area clear and follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions. A traditional central air conditioner's outdoor unit is usually idle during winter, but keeping it free of debris is still good practice.

Check what you can't see

With forced-air systems, ductwork delivers heated air throughout your home. Leaky or disconnected ducts can allow warm air to escape before it reaches your rooms. If some areas never seem comfortable or energy use is unusually high, ask an HVAC professional to inspect the ductwork.

Schedule a seasonal checkup

A professional tune-up can help identify problems and check that your heating system is operating safely and efficiently. Fall is a good time to schedule service before colder weather arrives. Regular maintenance may also help extend the life of your equipment.



Match your thermostat to your system

In many furnace-heated homes, lowering the temperature while you're asleep or away can reduce energy use. A compatible programmable or smart thermostat can handle those adjustments automatically. Heat pumps may need a different approach, since large temperature setbacks can trigger backup electric heat on some systems. Ask your technician which settings are best for your equipment.

Still have questions?

Dakota Energy's Member Services team can help you understand what's happening and find ways to improve efficiency. Call 605-352-8591 to talk through your concerns. As temperatures drop, you can also use SmartHub to track your daily and monthly electricity use.

AT A GLANCE



Filter Care

CHECK REGULARLY

Clean or replace filters as the manufacturer recommends. Keep return and supply vents clear. Dust them regularly.



Outdoor Unit Care

KEEP AIRFLOW CLEAR

Keep leaves and debris away. Gently rinse dirty condenser coils with a garden hose, following your manufacturer's recommendations.



Proactive Service

BEFORE HEATING SEASON

Schedule a heating system checkup in the spring for cooling and fall for heating.

Have ductwork checked for leaks or disconnected sections, and seal leaks with mastic or foil-backed tape.



Thermostat Smarts

MATCH YOUR SYSTEM

Adjust your thermostat when you're asleep or away. In summer, set it a little higher; in winter, a little lower.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT CALL

Hands-on training for a safe emergency response.

An emergency scene is a difficult place to encounter an electrical hazard for the first time. Dakota Energy's October 5th First Responder Electrical Safety Training at the Huron office gave local emergency personnel a chance to prepare before facing those situations on a call.

Protecting others starts with knowing how to protect yourself.



Participants worked through hands-on vehicle and tractor scenarios involving utility poles and transformers. They also learned about emergency meter disconnects and watched a high-voltage trailer demonstration.

Dakota Energy employees explained the hazards and the reasoning behind each step. Attendees were able to ask questions and discuss how first responders and utility crews can work together during an electrical emergency.

First responders devote their time to helping others, often in difficult situations. Providing practical training is one way Dakota Energy supports the people who answer our communities' emergency calls.

DAKOTA ENERGY COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Statement of Ownership, Management & Circulation

PUBLICATION & OWNERSHIP

1. **Publication Title:** Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections
2. **Publication Number:** 018-949
3. **Filing Date:** 09/29/2026
4. **Issue Frequency:** Monthly
5. **Number of Issues Published:** Annually
6. **Annual Subscription Price:** $6.00/Member; $12.00/Non-Member
7. **Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication:** Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., 40294 US Hwy 14, P.O. Box 830, Beadle, Huron, SD 57350-0830
8. **Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher:** Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350-0830
9. **Publisher:** Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350-0830
   Editor: Samantha Brodeen, Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350-0830
   Managing Editor: Samantha Brodeen, Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350-0830
10. **Owner:** Dakota Energy Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 830, Huron, SD 57350-0830
11. **Known Bondholders/Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding One Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities:** National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, 20701 Cooperative Way, Dulles, VA 20166
12. **Tax Status:** Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
13. **Publication Title:** Dakota Energy Cooperative Connections
14. **Issue Date for Circulation:** October 2026

CIRCULATION		Average No. Copies During Preceding 12 months	No. Copies of Most Recent Single Issue Published
15a.	Total Number of Copies	0	0
15b(1).	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541	2,282	2,274
15b(2).	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541	0	0
15b(3).	Paid Distribution Outside the Mail	0	0
15b(4).	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS	0	0
15c.	Total Paid Distribution	2,282	2,274
15d(1).	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	36	36
15d(2).	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541	0	0
15d(3).	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS	0	0
15d(4).	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail	0	0
15e.	Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution	36	36
15f.	Total Distribution	2,318	2,310
15g.	Copies not Distributed	0	0
15h.	Total	2,318	2,310
15i.	Percent Paid	98	98
ELECTRONIC COPIES		**Average No. Copies During Preceding 12 months**	**No. Copies of Most Recent Single Issue Published**
16a.	Paid Electronic Copies		
16b.	Total Paid Print Copies	0	0
16c.	Total Print Distribution	0	0
16d.	Percent Paid		

17. **Statement Publication Issue:** November 2026
18. **I certify that all information is true and complete.** Samantha Brodeen, Editor • 9/29/2026



How a Youth Tour Friendship Changed Marty Larsen's Life

The 1969 South Dakota Youth Tour group. Marty Larsen is pictured in the top row, seventh from the right. John Nordlie is pictured in the top row, fifth from the left. *Photo courtesy from the SDREA Archives*

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When Marty Larsen earned a spot on the 1969 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., through Turner-Hutchinson Electric Cooperative, he had every reason to believe dairy farming would remain at the center of his life. Turner-Hutchinson, a predecessor of today's Southeastern Electric Cooperative, served the area around his family's dairy farm seven miles west of Hurley.

Youth Tour gives high school students sponsored by their local electric cooperatives the chance to spend a week in Washington, D.C., visiting historic sites, learning about government and electric cooperatives and meeting students from across the country. South Dakota began sending students on the trip in 1963. Larsen went just six years later.

Back then, Turner-Hutchinson Electric selected its Youth Tour delegates through 4-H, rewarding young people for their accomplishments. In 1969,

Larsen placed eighth at the national 4-H dairy judging competition in Ohio. The accomplishment earned him the cooperative's Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

But before Larsen could make the trip, an Army recruiter threw a wrench in his plans, warning him that he was likely to be called for service soon. Rather than wait to be drafted, Larsen chose to enlist, expecting to head to basic training and then Vietnam.

Not long after, Larsen received an induction notice, but first he had to complete a military physical. Larsen, who is hard of hearing, failed the hearing test and was disqualified from service. Had he passed, he said he would have left for basic training about a week before the 1969 Youth Tour departed.

"Somebody upstairs was looking out for me," he said.

With the Army no longer standing in the way, Larsen was going on the trip. To prepare, his mother bought him new clothes and a new pair of shoes. Even still, he returned home with the soles nearly worn through. At the Washington Monument, he and a small group of students climbed 897 steps rather than wait in the long elevator line, then rode the elevator back down.

Near the end of the trip, the group ate at a seafood restaurant along the Potomac River. Larsen persuaded the chaperones that the students ought to try lobster, something many of them had never eaten before. When the waitress brought lobster bibs to the table, Larsen passed his around and asked everyone to sign it.

His mother later saved the bib in the scrapbook she kept of his childhood, alongside years of 4-H ribbons, judging cards and other keepsakes. Larsen still has the scrapbook today.

The students took an evening cruise on a multilevel paddlewheel-style boat on the Potomac, complete with live music. South Dakota Youth Tour students continue the tradition of a river cruise today aboard the Cherry Blossom.

For Larsen, though, the most important part of Youth Tour was the people he met. One of them was John Nordlie of Sioux Falls, a young photographer who worked with the Argus Leader and later attended Augustana College.

The two became friends during the trip and stayed in contact after returning home.

"We stayed friends after we got back," he said. "I was in his wedding party when he got married. He was in my wedding party when I got married."

For the next several years, Larsen stayed close to the life he knew, working in dairy and welding. Nordlie, meanwhile, developed an interest in pipe organs. In 1983, he called Larsen and asked if he wanted to come work for him building organs for cathedrals and music halls.

Larsen agreed, bringing his experience as a welder, machinist and mechanical problem-solver into a trade he had never expected to enter. He spent the next 20 years working with Nordlie and became deeply involved in the mechanics of organ construction.

His work eventually went far beyond basic fabrication. Larsen built components, developed specialty tools and designed machinery for organ builders. One machine he created transformed a wire-bending process that had taken workers several minutes per piece, allowing them to produce several pieces per minute. Other tools he built ended up with organ companies elsewhere in the United States and overseas.

The work also took Larsen far beyond southeastern South Dakota. Over the years, he traveled throughout the country and to Japan, worked on historic instruments and helped construct and restore pipe organs in churches, museums and other settings. More than four decades after entering the trade, he is still involved in restoration work.

Looking back, Larsen can draw a direct line from the Youth Tour trip to the career that followed. Without the trip, he may never have met Nordlie. Without that friendship, the call inviting him into organ building may never have come.

"It meant a lot to me to be able to go on that trip," Larsen said. "It changed me from a dairy farmer to a pipe organ builder."

More than 50 years later, Larsen still has the scrapbook his mother kept from the trip, along with the signed lobster bib awnd other reminders of that week in Washington. But the most lasting thing he brought home was the friendship that, years later, opened the door to a life he never could have planned.



Marty Larsen and his wife, Barbara.
Photo by Frank Turner

Interested in attending Youth Tour?
Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about the application process.



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Volunteers cook hundreds of meals for community members in Marshall, Minn.
Photo submitted by Teri Hively

Thanksgiving Meals Bring Neighbors Together in Marshall and Murdo

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Across the Midwest, Thanksgiving has a way of becoming a community project. By late November, church kitchens, senior centers and fellowship halls fill with volunteers roasting turkeys with all the fixings for neighbors who need a meal or simply somewhere to spend the holiday. Nearly every town seems to have its own version. In Marshall, Minn., and Murdo, S.D., community Thanksgiving meals have lasted for decades.

Marshall, Minnesota

In Marshall, a community Thanksgiving dinner has grown from 35 meals served out of crockpots into an annual event that reached more than 900 people last year. Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative member Teri Hively of Balaton, Minn., has been involved from the beginning and now leads the meal through Grace Life Church in Marshall.

The dinner started 35 years ago when Hively's late mother-in-law, inspired by God's vision, began to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the community. Her idea came with a standard that still guides volunteers today: serve great food for a great community.



Kelly Deutz, left, and Teri Hively coordinate the Thanksgiving community meal in Marshall, Minn.
Photo submitted by Teri Hively

That standard means real turkey, real potatoes and a home-cooked meal served on glass plates with real silverware.

"I want it to be a home-cooked meal," Hively said. "I want it to feel like you're at home."

The Thanksgiving dinner requires months of planning and a network of volunteers. Hively and Kelly Deutz begin organizing in August, lining up cooks, servers, donations and the smaller jobs that need to be finished before Thanksgiving Day. Deutz helps organize all the volunteers and delivery routes.

The cooking begins days before anyone sits down to eat. Volunteers arrive at the start of the week to peel fresh potatoes while another group handles setup the day before Thanksgiving. When the big day arrives, even more volunteers fill the kitchen to set up serving lines, dessert tables and a proper dining area.

Some volunteers cook turkeys at home. Others donate pies or pans of bars, while local businesses and private donors provide ingredients and money. Hively estimates that more than 200 people contribute to the dinner each year.

"I could never do it alone," Deutz said. "It takes many hands to make that happen. I just happen to be the piece that helps drive it forward."

Luckily, feeding a crowd is familiar work for Hively, who spent more than 12 years working in catering.

Service is familiar to Hively, too. She has been an EMT for 37 years and a firefighter for 32 years, including volunteer service with the Balaton Fire Department, Balaton Ambulance and Tyler Ambulance.

In 2014, Hively's mother-in-law told her she was ready to step back and pass leadership of the dinner to Teri. Soon after, Hively's mother-in-law passed away unexpectedly, and Hively took over the following year in her memory.

"I took the lead role, not knowing I was going to be in charge without her," Hively said. "But I wasn't worried because I had been there every step along the way, so I knew what the meal entailed from beginning to end."

Today, the meal remains open to anyone, regardless of income or circumstance, and volunteers also deliver meals to older residents and those who are homebound. Some people need the food, Hively explained, while others simply need somewhere to spend Thanksgiving.

Hively's children grew up helping with the dinner, and now her grandchildren are taking part. She finds jobs for families with young children so they can help, too.

"Be the hands and feet of Jesus," said Hively.

Murdo, South Dakota

In Murdo, the Thanksgiving dinner began about 20 years ago with Joe Connot, who worked at West Central. When Connot retired, the Murdo Lions Club took over and continued serving the meal at the local senior center.

The club sponsors the dinner, and members cook the turkeys and help serve. The senior center provides the space and prepares the rest of the meal. Murdo Lions Club President Travis Van Dam said about 75 people usually attend, not including those who receive deliveries.

Van Dam joined the Lions Club after watching his father volunteer with the organization and wanting to do the same for Murdo.

"There's not a lot to do in our little town, so it's just something that we can do to provide for the community," said Van Dam.

The dinner is meant for people who do not want to cook, cannot cook or may not have family nearby. Volunteers also deliver meals around Murdo, including to employees at businesses that remain open on Thanksgiving.

Last year, Van Dam used Facebook to collect meal requests and organize deliveries.

"Just helping – it just feels good to help somebody and give them a meal," he said.

Freewill donations collected at the dinner help fund local service projects. Much of the club's fundraising supports Caring and Sharing, which helps people facing illness pay for travel, medical care, food and hotel stays.

Club members also help with community cleanup, sponsor a movie day for students, collect eyeglasses and volunteer at school sporting events.

"As long as we keep getting the turnout and people appreciate it, we'll keep doing it," he said.

In Marshall and Murdo, volunteers keep showing up to cook, serve and make sure their neighbors have a place around the Thanksgiving table.



Bruce Vennard (left) and other volunteers with the Murdo Lions Club serve a Thanksgiving meal for their local community.
Submitted Photo

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. 7
Wine, Cheese & Chocolate Stroll
Deadwood, SD
www.deadwood.com/events/

NOV. 1
Kadoka Holiday Festival
10 a.m.-4 p.m. (MST)
Lunch 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

NOV. 6-8
Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend
Hill City, SD

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

NOV. 7
Black Hills Meat Fest
Free Admission
Central States Fairgrounds
Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
Rapid City, SD
Facebook.com/BlackHillsMeatFest

NOV. 7-15
Rustic Designs & More Christmas Country Show
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

NOV. 8
32nd Annual Lutefisk, Meatball & Lefse Supper
4-7 p.m.
Trinity Lutheran Church
Chamberlain, SD
605-730-0553

NOV. 12
The Satin Dollz
Patriotic Female Vocal & Dance Quintet
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

NOV. 14
Kick-Off to Christmas & Santa Shop
10 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
7 p.m. Parade
Eureka, SD
605-230-1777

NOV. 14
Lake Campbell Lutheran Church Lutefisk Supper
Seatings: 4:30, 5:45, 7 p.m.
Volga, SD
Reservations: 605-690-4868

NOV. 14
Club 14 Craft & Vendor Fair
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hendricks Public School
Hendricks, MN
605-690-5586

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

NOV. 16-21
Yelduz Shrine Festival of Trees
Mon.-Fri. 4-7 p.m.
Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
802 S. Main St.
Aberdeen, SD
605-225-4841
Yelduz.com

NOV. 20
Aberdeen University Civic Symphony Concert
7:30 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

NOV. 21
Lille Norge Fest
8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Canyon Lake Activity Center
2900 Canyon Lake Dr.
Rapid City, SD
borgundlodge.org

NOV. 27-28
Sip, Shop & Stroll
Viborg, SD

NOV. 28
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory Memorial Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 4-5
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Civic Center
Hot Springs, SD
951-591-2335

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.