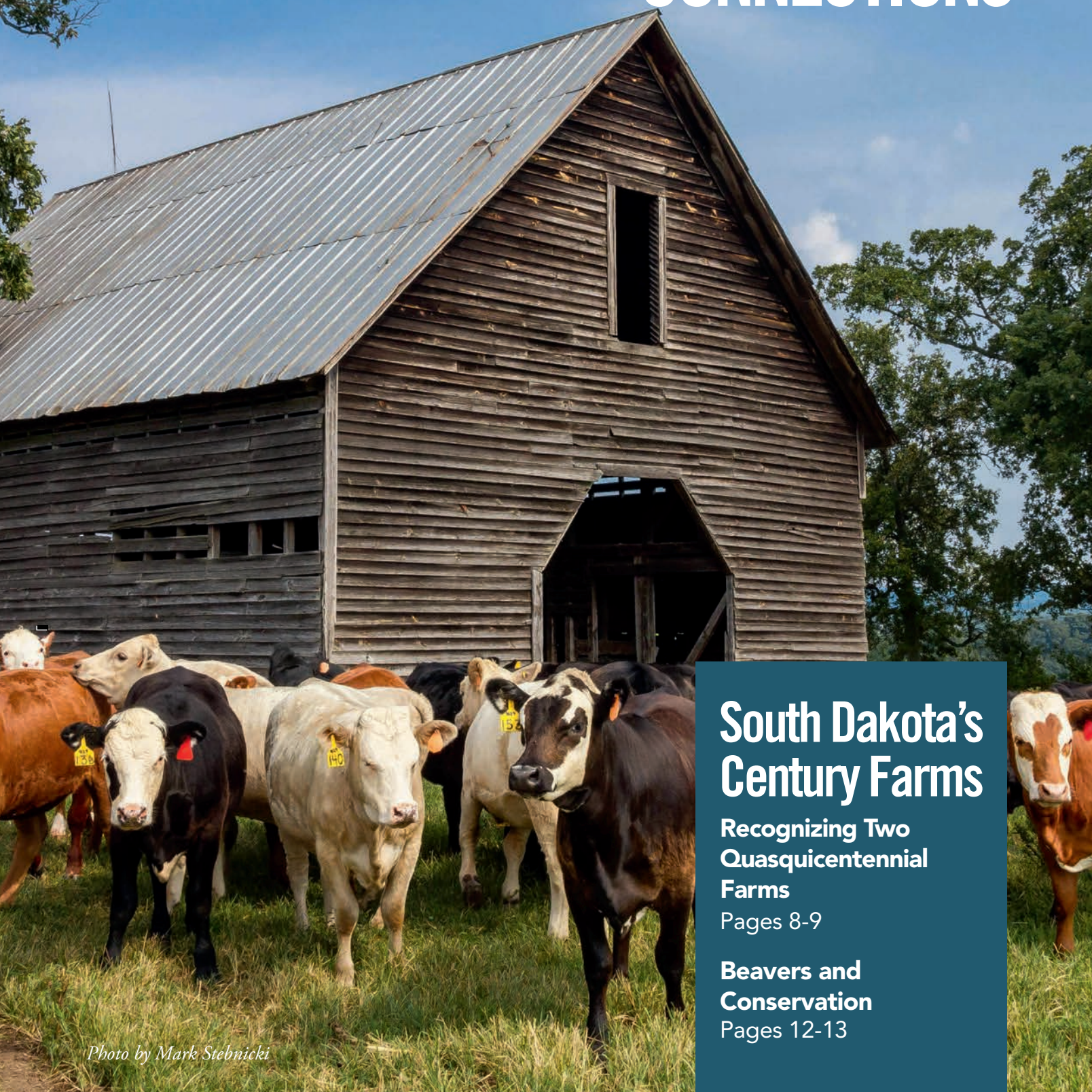


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## South Dakota's Century Farms

Recognizing Two  
Quasiquicentennial  
Farms

Pages 8-9

Beavers and  
Conservation

Pages 12-13



# PROJECTS ON THE HORIZON



**Ken Schlimgen**  
General Manager

Spring has sprung, bringing with it our district meetings, warmer temperatures and refreshing rain showers. It's that time of year when we all hope for favorable weather conditions to support our farmers in planting and nurturing their crops for a bountiful harvest.

Central Electric, like many agricultural businesses, has spent the winter months planning and preparing for a host of projects slated for 2024. Some of these

endeavors will come to fruition this year, while others may extend beyond our initial timelines.

Back in 2019, we embarked on a project to upgrade our metering infrastructure across the system, transitioning to meters utilizing cellular technology for seamless communication with our office. I'm pleased to announce the successful completion of this project earlier this year. While our original goal was to replace all meters within a few years, supply chain challenges resulted in delays, extending the project duration. Nevertheless, the new meters are performing exceptionally well, marking a significant milestone for us.

Regular readers of my column are likely aware of our plans to replace load management devices installed in our members' homes. These devices are crucial for managing peak electrical usage by controlling water heaters and air conditioners. However, similar to our metering project, we're experiencing delays in the supply chain, impacting the anticipated rollout timeline.

In addition to these technological upgrades, we're also focused on infrastructure improvements. This year, we aim to rebuild 150 electric services, replace 300 poles, and upgrade 49 miles of aging overhead lines. More than 1,500 miles of overhead power lines built in the 1940s-1960s remain in service, highlighting the continued need for modernization.

This past winter, we submitted an infrastructure grant application to the Department of Energy. If successful, the grant would support the replacement of approximately 150 miles of older overhead lines, among other system enhancements. We've progressed to round two of the application process, and we remain hopeful for approval, as it would significantly enhance reliability

and potentially reduce future costs for our members.

This year, we will also be involved in several highway improvement projects that require the relocation of power lines. If you have driven south of Mitchell on Highway 37, you should have seen the work on the new High Plains Processing Plant. Your cooperative will be installing high-voltage infrastructure and relocating the Mitchell substation for this project. This complex endeavor requires close collaboration with various organizations, spearheaded by Manager of Operations Brian Bultje. Brian has been our champion for planning, ordering materials and overseeing the project.

Regarding our facilities, we've been evaluating our operations in Mitchell, Howard, Wessington Springs, Kimball and Plankinton. Recognizing the challenges of the aging facilities in Plankinton and Howard, we acquired land in Howard in 2022 and are currently finalizing building plans, with construction anticipated to commence this autumn.

In summary, Central Electric remains fully engaged in multiple projects aimed at enhancing our services and infrastructure. If you have any questions or wish to learn more about these initiatives, feel free to reach out. Perhaps we will meet at your local district meeting.

Until next month, stay safe!



**CENTRAL ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

(USPS 018-963)

**Board of Directors**

Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President  
 Brule County - Bradee Pazour  
 Buffalo County - Donita Loudner, SDREA Director  
 Davison County - Jeff Gustafson  
 Hanson County - Mark Hofer - Secretary & NRECA Director  
 Jerauld County - Mark Reindl, Treasurer  
 Miner County - Robert Banks - Director  
 Sanborn County - Todd VanWalleghen, Vice President  
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**Contact Us**

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**Our Mission**

Provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction.

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**Board Meeting Summary**

The board of directors met March 18, 2024, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

**BOARD REPORT**

General Manager Schlingen updated the board of directors on the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, SDREA managers meeting, Basin Electric activities, Rural Electric Economic Development fund, district meetings, a surplus equipment inquiry and other management activities.

The board discussed a resolution adopted by the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe related to utilities. Discussion followed.

Luke Johnson with Eide Bailly shared the results of the 2023 annual audit and reviewed the auditing process with the board. Discussion followed.

IT Systems Manager Ryan Mueller gave a cybersecurity update and shared cyber safety tips.

Directors Bechen, Hofer and Reindl reported on the S.D. Rural Electric Association's Coop Day at the Capitol.

Directors Bechen, Gustafson, Hofer and Loudner reported on NRECA Power Exchange conference.

Directors Banks, Gustafson and Pazour reported on recent board training on director duties and liabilities.

Director Hofer reported on the S.D. Wind Energy Association.

Director Wolbrink reported on East River Electric happenings.

The board reviewed monthly director's expenses.

**BOARD ACTION**

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to authorize the board president and secretary to execute a labor-only non-site-specific contract with Douglas Electric Cooperative. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to continue with the existing process of selling surplus equipment on auction to the highest bidder. Motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for April 15.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE MARCH 2023	YEAR TO DATE MARCH 2024
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	95,520,344 kWh	98,085,631 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 9,339,957	\$ 10,134,677
Total Cost of Service	\$ 8,773,506	\$ 10,076,989
Operating Margins	\$ 566,451	\$ 57,688

# Prepare Your Family for Fire Emergencies

In only a matter of minutes, a small house fire can rage out of control, reaching temperatures of up to 1,500°F. In most cases, you have one to two minutes to get out safely.

We practice fire emergency drills at work and school, but don't forget to create and practice a home escape plan, as well. It is beneficial to keep your plan visible, like on the refrigerator, to help family and visitors remember what to do. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) stresses that even children as young as three years old can understand an escape plan.

### Helpful Planning Tips:

- Plan for two ways to escape from each room.
- Pick a meeting location away from your home.
- Plan for everyone in your home, including babies and others who may need help to escape.
- Teach children not to hide during a fire; they must get out and stay out.



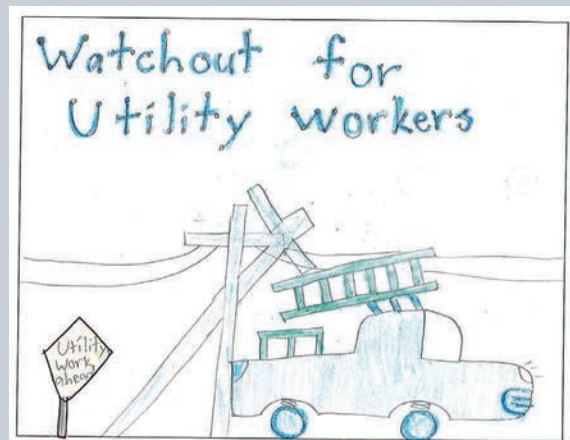
- Practice your escape drill with everyone in your family at least twice a year.

### Ways to Stay Safe:

- Clear toys, furniture and other clutter from exits.
- Check that windows open easily – fix any that stick.
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms monthly.
- Be sure that security bars on doors and windows have a quick-release latch, and everyone knows how to open them.

### Special Considerations for Apartment Buildings:

- If you live in a multi-story apartment building, map out as many escape routes as possible to get to the stairways on your floor.
- If you live in a high-rise, plan to use the stairs – never the elevator – to escape a fire.
- A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper-story windows – purchase only collapsible ladders evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Reese Rindels, Age 9

Reese Rindels cautions readers to watch out for utility workers. Reese's parents are Rochelle and Kyle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

# DELICIOUS *Dairy*

## CHOCOLATE FUDGE FROSTING

### Ingredients:

2 1/4 cups confectioners' sugar  
 1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
 1/4 tsp. cinnamon  
 6 oz. (3/4 package) cream cheese, softened  
 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened  
 8 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled slightly  
 1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Mix sugar, cocoa powder and cinnamon in medium bowl until well blended. Set aside. Beat cream cheese and butter in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Gradually beat in cocoa mixture on low speed until well blended. Gradually beat in melted chocolate then vanilla until well blended.

McCormick.com

## RED VELVET HOT CHOCOLATE

### Ingredients:

4 cups whole milk  
 1/4 cup sugar  
 10 oz. semi-sweet baking chocolate, coarsely chopped  
 2 tsps. red food color  
 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract  
**Vanilla Whipped Cream**  
 1/2 cup heavy cream  
 2 tbsps. confectioners' sugar  
 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Place milk and granulated sugar in medium saucepan. While stirring, bring to simmer on medium heat. Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate with wire whisk until melted. Stir in food color and vanilla. Serve with marshmallows. For the vanilla whipped cream, beat heavy cream, confectioners' sugar and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form.

McCormick.com

## LEMON PUDDING DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 cup COLD butter  
 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened  
 1 8 oz. tub cool whip, divided  
 2 pkgs. (small) instant lemon pudding  
 2 cups flour  
 1 cup powdered sugar  
 3 cups COLD milk

### Method

In bowl, cut butter into flour until crumbly. Press into an ungreased 9 x 13 inch glass pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 22 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack. In mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in one cup cool whip. Spread over cooled crust. In bowl, beat milk and pudding mixes on low speed for 2 minutes. Carefully spread over cream cheese layer. Top with remaining cool whip. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or more. Yields 12 to 16 servings.

Mary Jessen  
 Holabird, S.D.

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# First Responder Training



Area first responders attended training at Central Electric Cooperative's shop west of Mitchell on the evening of Wednesday, April 24.



**Tara Miller**  
Manager of Communications

Emergency responders are usually the first to arrive on the scene of an accident or fire, so they face a greater risk of encountering electrical hazards such as damaged equipment or

downed power lines.

In an effort to protect and educate area first responders, Central Electric Cooperative offered free electrical safety training at their headquarters west of Mitchell on April 24. Attendees included firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs). The annual training event helps improve safety and bridge the gap between first responders and electric cooperative personnel.

During the training, Manager of Operations Brian Bultje showed

common examples of electrical meters and provided guidance on protocols for disconnecting power during an emergency.

“One key point to remember is that emergency personnel should try to notify the electric utility as soon as possible,” Bultje said. “When there’s a structure fire, power will typically need to be disconnected, and we don’t have the luxury of driving with lights and sirens.”

Bultje added, “Pulling the meter does not guarantee the power is off. Take that extra step and call us so we can dispatch crews and keep everyone safe.”

Electrician Rodney Weber answered questions about fires involving solar panels, and independent instructor Brian Baldwin guided participants through a hands-on bucket truck rescue. The training ended with a high-voltage safety demonstration led by Line

Superintendent Dusty Roskens to show the damage electricity can cause.

Participating organizations included the Canova Volunteer Fire Department, Carthage Ambulance, Chamberlain/Oacoma Fire Department, Crow Creek Sioux Ambulance, Fedora Volunteer Fire Department, Grass Ranch Colony Fire Department, Kimball Fire Department and Ambulance Service, Mitchell Fire Department, Plankinton Volunteer Fire Department, Rosedale Colony Fire Department, Spencer Volunteer Fire Department, Stickney Volunteer Fire Department, White Lake Ambulance and Woonsocket T&C Fire District.

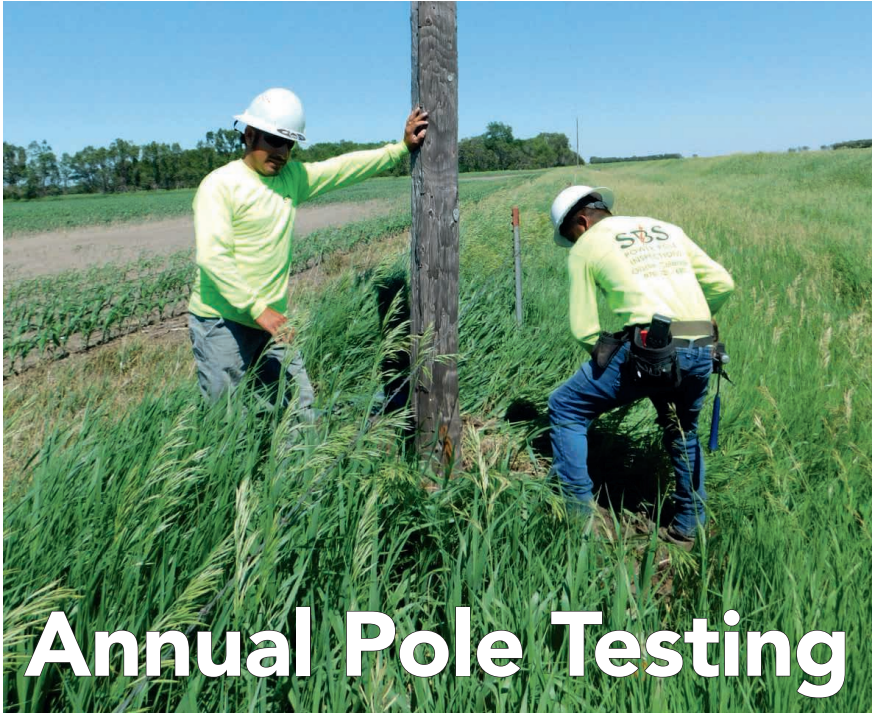
By the end of the three-hour training, attendees gained insight and knowledge to keep themselves and others safe during emergencies.



Line Superintendent Dusty Roskens (far left) discussed the dangers of high-voltage lines with area first responders as lineman Dustin Weier drew and arc of electricity.



Electrician Rodney Weber discussed the complications of fires involving solar panels.



# Annual Pole Testing

Central Electric Cooperative’s annual pole inspection program is scheduled from late May through July in the areas of western Brule County outlined below.

The cooperative contracted with SBS Pole Inspections to complete the testing. SBS will utilize a crew of three to five workers who have performed testing in our area in previous years.

Members may notice the crews digging around poles or riding ATVs

and pickups along power lines. Crews will identify themselves by using Central Electric magnets on vehicles and other possible means.

The inspection program is intended to detect poles with potential faults and prevent future unplanned outages or damages. Approximately 5,000 poles will be tested.

If you have questions or concerns, please call Central Electric Cooperative at 605-996-7516 or 800-477-2892.



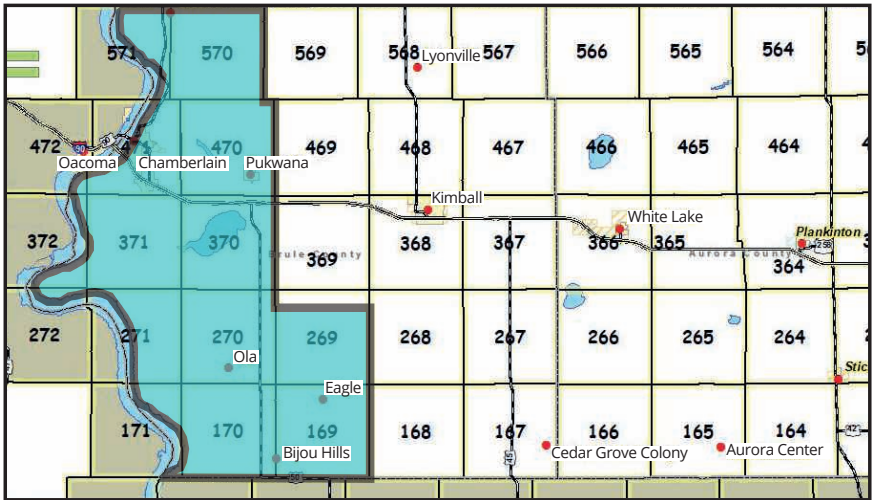
Kyle Gerlach of Mount Vernon has been named a finalist in the annual “Who Powers You” contest hosted by Central Electric Cooperative and the region’s Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

Rhonda Baker nominated Kyle, and she said he brings the community the energy to leave a legacy. He volunteers at his church and with the local economic development group. Baker shared that Kyle and his wife, Shae, are never too busy to lend a helping hand. Kyle is described as a role model and volunteer who is also involved with youth wrestling and mentoring.

During his interview on the Keloland Living television program on May 3, Kyle said, “It really comes down to just giving back to other people. I wouldn’t be where I’m at today without others who picked me up on the rough days. Being generous is built into what we do.”

A recap of the broadcast and all finalist interviews can be accessed online by visiting [WhoPowersYouContest.com](http://WhoPowersYouContest.com) and scrolling to the bottom of the page.

Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. The grand prize winner will receive \$3,000, the second place winner will receive \$1,500 and the third place winner will receive \$500. Prize recipients will be announced on Keloland Living on May 30.





# South Dakota's Century Farms

Shannon Marvel

## Soukup Homestead: Raising families and farmers for over 125 years

Nestled in the heart of southcentral South Dakota lies a cherished piece of land with a name that's been long-established in Charles Mix County – the Soukup Homestead.

Almost anyone with Wagner ties knows a Soukup.

There are even a few members of the Soukup family who are also part of South Dakota's rural electric cooperative family, including Charles Mix Electric District 1 Director Denise Soukup.

But it all had to start somewhere, and good things take time.

That was the case for the Soukup's Century Farm and the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead, a farm located near Britton that's served by Lake Region Electric.

Really, it's a common theme for Century Farm families to be located within rural electric cooperative service areas.

The South Dakota Farm Bureau and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources began the Century Farm Program in 1984 to recognize farm and ranch families who have kept the farm in the family for 100 years or more.

Farms reaching the milestone of 125 years, known as

Quasiquintennial Farms, and the venerable Sesquicentennial Farms, marking an impressive 150 years, are also given their due recognition.

With over 3,000 families honored to date, the program continues to shine a light on the enduring legacy of South Dakota's agricultural heritage. To qualify for these prestigious honors, farms must encompass at least 80 acres and provide documented proof of their original purchase date. That means a family member must have always had ownership of the land over the last 100 years, including during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

The annual award presentation is a cherished tradition held at the South Dakota State Fair.

After migrating with family from what is now known today as the Czech Republic in the late 1800s, Joseph and Mary Soukup



Tom Soukup stands beside his Farmall Red International Harvester 460 tractor. *Photo courtesy of Linda Soukup*



came to the Dakota Territory at a time when most of the land open for settlement had already been settled.

While living in Tabor with family, Joseph Soukup applied for a homestead on reservation land that was now open for settlement at the U.S. Land Office in town of Mitchell on Jan. 30, 1896.

“In the following five years he built a frame house 13 feet by 18 feet in order to establish a residence, then a grainery, a corn crib, and he also fenced in 80 acres,” said Linda Soukup, the wife of Tom Soukup. Her husband is Joseph and Mary’s grandson.

Joseph and Mary raised ten children on the very homestead that Tom and Linda raised their kids.

“There’s a lot of pride in the heritage and the legacy of, you know, having it passed down,” Linda said. A new house was built on the site of Joseph and Mary’s original home’s structure in 1952.

That’s where Tom and Linda lived and became the third generation to live on the homestead.

“When we lived here and Tom’s parents and their brothers and sisters used to all come here,” Linda said, as she started walking towards one of the farm buildings on the property referred to as “the shed.”

“And they would butcher hogs and cattle and we would process them down there. We had a meat cooler in the basement. And then one of the families owned the meat saw and one owned the sausage stuffer,” she recalled. “That was always kind of what we did until, well, families got bigger, and you couldn’t. You just couldn’t keep up, you know? We could have had a critter in there all the time,” she said.

Tom and Linda raised their children – Becky, David, Kathy and Mary – in the house as well.

Their son David works as a project engineer for Phillips Petroleum in Texas. Two of their daughters live in different towns but remain relatively close to the homestead.

Kathy Jaeger lives in Tyndall and Mary Ringling lives in Platte. In 1996, their daughter Becky and her husband, Mike

Brunsing were living in Montana when Tom and Linda decided to move into town, so in 1998 the Brunings moved back to South Dakota and began helping Tom on the farm while living in the house.

Becky raised three children of her own in the house she grew up in herself.

Becky and Mike still live on the homestead but in a more recently built home.

Now her son Dylan, 28, is raising his own family in the 1952 farmhouse.

In doing so, he became the fifth generation on the homestead.

Dylan and his wife, Keely, have two sons – a 20-month-old and an infant born in late March.

### **After 126 years, Torger Gronseth’s homestead continues to bring family together.**

It’s hard for Carol Evans to put into words how she feels when she reflects on the 126 years of history of her family’s farm in Marshall County.

“It’s so important to us,” Evans said. Then she takes pause.

“I’m sorry, it’s emotional for me,” she says, before telling her family’s – and the farm’s – origin story.

In 1872, her great grandfather, Torger Gronseth, immigrated to America from Norway at only 14 years old.

He made the trip to join his eldest brother in Minnesota. He officially “staked his claim” and homesteaded in the Pleasant Valley Township of Marshall County in 1901.

Over the next two decades, Torger and his wife, Berthe Lea, amassed over 960 acres of undeveloped land in the Coteau de Prairie of northeastern South Dakota.

To each of their six children, Torger bequeathed a quarter of land.

The pioneering couple sold a quarter to their daughter, Louise, upon her marriage to George Fiegel for \$1.

While they were building the house that Carol and Frank Evans now call home, the Fiegels welcomed their first child.

“All of them were born in that house built in 1920. The first born was born on

the actual homestead. The house was being built when my first aunt was born,” Evans said.

Louise and George owned the house and quarter of land until 1972, at which point ownership was passed onto their daughter Joyce and her husband Orvin Nelson.

“We bought the house in 2011. Last year after my mom passed, we were able to buy the entire quarter,” she recalled.

Carol and Frank then got to work refurbishing the 800-square-foot house.

The Evans live in Arizona in the fall, winter, and spring months, but spent years renovating the farmhouse over the course of several summers.

“We go back in May every year, and we’ve renovated the house from the chimney to the basement,” Evans said.

Their summer stay at the farm begins with the help of Lake Region Electric Association.

“The first thing we do when we get there is turn the power on. Then we turn the water on and then we mow,” she said.

The week over the Fourth of July holiday is especially meaningful to Carol. That’s when her grandchildren make their pilgrimage back to the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead.

“They’re always here around Fort Sisseton Days,” Evans said.

The traditional agenda for the kiddos also includes picnics at Roy Lake, routine farm work, and touching up the paint on an American Flag pallet display located at the base of Torger Gronseth’s tombstone.

“Every one of the kids has learned how to drive when they’re back in South Dakota – because it’s safe,” Evans said.

Evans ensures the next generation knows their family history.

“They know their great grandpa was only 14 years old when he left Norway. The strength of the person to do that – the longevity of our genetic background, the struggle, and the fact that we’re so fortunate – are something they’ll understand,” Evans said.

“And that it’s home. It’s never going to the farm. It’s going home.”

## Reasons to Celebrate



### June 22 is National HVAC Technician Day

Shout out our heating & cooling team for keeping us comfortable year round. HVAC services are available to members and non-members. Pictured from left to right: Wade, Aaron, Donn, Lincoln.



**June 28 is National Logistics Day**  
National Logistics Day is a time to recognize our resident warehouse logistics experts, Andrew (right) and Evan (left). They do all they can to make sure inventory is here when our teams need it. Their dedication is sincerely appreciated.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## Farewell, Donn Koster

After 25 years at Central Electric, lead heating and cooling technician Donn Koster of Armour has decided to take it easy. We send Donn and his family our best wishes as he spends time doing some of the things he couldn't do while working full-time.

General Manager Ken Schlimgen said, "Donn has always shown tremendous dedication and professionalism towards our members and our cooperative. While his departure leaves a void, we are grateful for his contributions and wish him the very best."



Donn Koster

## New Electrician Hired in Plankinton

Please welcome Kyle [redacted] Central Electric's newest journeyman electrician. Kyle joined the team in March, and he brings valuable skills and experience. He worked for Muth Electric for 14 years and more recently for Bechen Electric as a journeyman electrician.

Kyle is a graduate of Mitchell Technical College where he earned a degree in electrical construction and maintenance. He and his wife, Tiffany, live in Parkston. Kyle primarily works out of the Plankinton outpost.



Kyle [redacted]

## Gustafson Earns Certification

Director Jeff Gustafson of Ethan recently received the Credentialed Cooperative Director certificate from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The Credentialed Cooperative Director program requires demonstrated understanding of basic competencies in five core courses: Director Duties and Liabilities, Understanding the Electric Business, Board Operations and Process, Strategic Planning and Financial Decision Making.

Cooperative directors take a number of trainings each year to help ensure they are informed and prepared to make sound decisions for the cooperative. Gustafson's dedication to furthering his industry knowledge benefits the membership and helps ensure strong governance.



Jeff Gustafson (left) accepts his certificate from Board President Duane Wolbrink.

# Scholar of the Year Banquet Held in Brookings



East River Electric and its member cooperatives honored some of the area's most impressive high school seniors during the Annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet at McCrory Gardens on the campus of South Dakota State University in Brookings. The event, held on Saturday, April 27, honored high school seniors who were chosen each week throughout the school year as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week.

Scholars recognized from Central Electric's area were Mitchell

Christian senior Joseph Tegethoff, Woonsocket High School senior Rain Swenson and Bridgewater-Emery High School senior Quinton Berg.

SDSU President Barry Dunn was the banquet's keynote speaker and Erik Thorstenson of Dakota News Now served as the master of ceremonies.

Students in attendance were eligible to win one of three additional scholarship drawings. Montrose High School senior Kellen Kueter received a \$1,000 award.

Deuel High School senior Trey Maaland and our own Quinton Berg of Bridgewater-Emery High School each received a \$500 scholarship on top of the \$250 they already received for being named the Scholar of the Week during the school year.

For information on the Scholar of the Week program, visit [yourcooppower.com](http://yourcooppower.com).

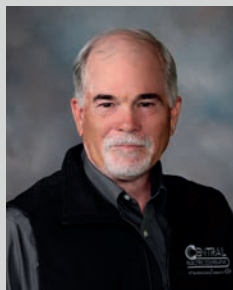


Bridgewater-Emery High School senior Quinton Berg (right) accepts a \$500 scholarship from Central Electric's Manager of Communications Tara Miller. Berg won the scholarship at the banquet.

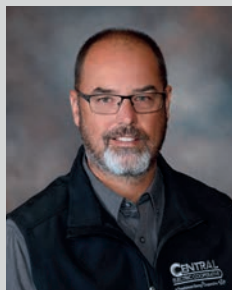
## Employee Years of Service



**Brian [redacted]**  
Manager of Operations  
38 years on June 9



**Al [redacted]**  
Howard Area  
Lineworker  
37 years on June 15



**Gene [redacted]**  
Wessington Springs  
Area Foreman  
7 years on June 12



**Daniel [redacted]**  
Kimball Area  
Lineworker  
5 years on June 10



**Gary [redacted]**  
Plankinton Area  
Lineworker  
2 years on June 16



# REBUILDING HABITATS

Beavers provide many environmental benefits including drought resilience, flood control and wildlife habitat. *Photo Credit: Richard Hamilton Smith.*

## BEAVER-INSPIRED STREAM RESTORATION

**Frank Turner**

Centuries ago, the arrival of European traders in North America marked the beginning of a multi-century hunt for furs. The pelt of the North American beaver was at the forefront of this fur trade, prized for its use in crafting felt hats. These stylish hats fueled an ever-increasing demand for beaver furs that persisted for centuries, leading to a severe decline in beaver populations. By the early 1900s, beavers had become critically endangered, nearly vanishing from the expansive wetlands across the continent.

As the beavers dwindled, so did their dams. Lazy streams and rivers, once

tamed by beaver dams, began to flow more rapidly. The disappearance of the dams caused waterways to narrow and floodplains essential to willow trees and cottonwoods to vanish. The loss of these beaver-engineered habitats set the stage for the significant erosion of precious prairie lands.

In 2020, The Nature Conservancy set out to combat these issues by launching a project in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota State University and local conservation agencies to restore stream health in western South Dakota.

“Our West River streams make up a small percentage of the total landscape – just under two percent of our total acreage is stream and valley

bottom,” said Lori Brown, riparian health program manager with The Nature Conservancy. “Yet, nearly everything in the prairie depends on these streams, including us in our rural communities.”

Prior to launching the project, The Nature Conservancy engaged local landowners in discussions to best understand their challenges and needs. During the discussions, several landowners faced similar issues: streams were eroding the land, fence lines were being washed away, and the water table was too low. Despite having effective tools for managing grasslands, landowners lacked the means to best maintain healthy streams.

“We needed to explore options

that any landowner could implement – strategies that didn't require a hydrologist to implement or an engineer to design," Brown said. "Our ranchers and landowners are some of the best stewards of the land. A lot of them are hungry for information and tools that can help them help the land."

The solution was simple, inspired by the ingenious works of an aquatic rodent: an artificial beaver dam. After all, if a beaver can engineer a dam, why can't a landowner?

Known as beaver analog devices, these simple speedbump-like structures quickly became integral to a broader strategy known as process-based restoration, a method that uses nature to help nature. Composed of locally sourced sticks, rocks and mud, beaver analog devices replicate a key natural process once performed naturally by beavers centuries ago. When established correctly, they filter water,

slow fast-flowing streams, and even recreate floodplains.

After settling on a solution, The Nature Conservancy set out to implement the idea in the real world, working with 10 landowners to help build and record the effects of the simulated beaver dams.

"Every day that I go out to one of these sites and I see that the beaver dams that we have built aren't totally washed out, it absolutely amazes me," Brown said. "I've read the manuals and I know how it's supposed to work, but I'm always in awe at what we are able to accomplish with the right building blocks in place."

After four years of the project, Brown said there is a lot to be excited about as the benefits of the project are evident. Signs of stream restoration are well underway. Sediment is accumulating rather than eroding, and revitalized floodplains are sprouting new willow trees.

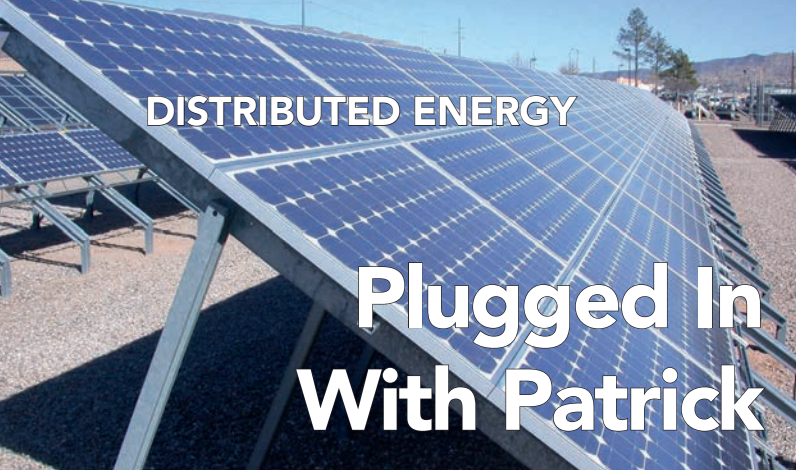
"Without any planting on our part, woody species are now returning to these stream channels," Brown said. "The next step will be to lean into the success of this project. We want to act as a support for our conservation partners and other interested landowners that want to see their stream condition improve on their properties."

Others have been inspired by demonstrations led by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations in the state to take action to slow down and hold water.

"We are just starting to see some of the effects from our outreach and education side of this project," said Brown. "The most rewarding part of this effort has been hearing the stories from local ranchers and landowners and hearing them get excited about the project."



A rock structure installed to help prevent headcuts from eroding upstream reaches. *Photo Credit: Joe Dickie, Generation Photography, Inc.*



**DISTRIBUTED ENERGY**

**Plugged In  
With Patrick**



**Patrick Soukup**  
Manager of Member  
Services & Marketing

**NEW PORTAL LAUNCHED  
FOR WIND, SOLAR  
AND BATTERY PROJECTS**

What is new at Central Electric Cooperative? The Nova Power Portal is a web-based application for Central Electric members who are considering projects involving wind, solar, battery storage or any power source connected back to the grid.

While these projects present exciting opportunities, they also bring unique challenges.

**ARE YOU READY FOR  
DISTRIBUTED ENERGY RESOURCES?**

Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) include all types of generation and energy resources that can be interconnected to the electric distribution system. DER technologies include photovoltaic solar systems, wind turbines, storage batteries, electric vehicles and fossil fuel generators. It is not limited to renewable energy technologies.



When considering Distributed Energy Resources (DER), you should be aware of several key factors:

- **Integration:** Ensuring seamless integration of DER into the grid to maintain reliability and stability.
- **Regulatory Environment:** Stay informed on regulations and policies that may impact DER deployment and operation.
- **Cybersecurity:** Implementing robust security measures to protect DER assets from cyber threats.
- **Interconnection:** Addressing challenges related to DER interconnection to the grid.
- **Economic Viability:** Evaluating the cost-effectiveness and the return on investment of DER installations.
- **Grid Resilience:** Enhancing the grid's resilience using DER for backup power or grid support.
- **Energy management:** Optimizing the control and operation of DER assets for maximum efficiency and benefits.
- **Environmental Impact:** Considering the environmental implications of DER deployment and ensuring sustainability practices.

By addressing these concerns, you can effectively navigate the landscape and make informed decisions. When considering wind, solar or battery projects, please give us a call at 605-996-7516 to confirm the appropriate size of equipment needed. It is wise to review your energy usage before starting on the project.

ATTEND YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT MEETING

<p><b>Davison County</b> May 20, 2024 Fairgrounds Building, Mitchell Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Jerauld County</b> May 29, 2024 Springs Inn Café, Wessington Springs Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Sanborn County</b> June 3, 2024 4-H Building, Forestburg Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Buffalo County</b> June 6, 2024 Powwow Grounds, Fort Thompson Meal @ Noon</p>
<p><b>Hanson County</b> May 23, 2024 A1 Al's Pheasant Ranch, Emery Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Miner County</b> May 30, 2024 4-H Building, Howard Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Brule County</b> June 5, 2024 Ag Building, Pukwana Meal @ 6:30pm</p>	<p><b>Aurora County</b> June 10, 2024 Ag Building, Plankinton Meal @ 6:30pm</p>

# Reliable Energy is in Jeopardy



**Jim Matheson**

CEO, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



**Steve Barnett**

GM, South Dakota Rural Electric Association

South Dakota's families and businesses rightfully expect their lights to stay on at a price they can afford. Our national energy policies should support our cooperative mission, which is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to our member-owners.

Unfortunately, our country is now confronted with a harsh reality – we are quickly approaching a point where there won't be enough electricity to go around.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is the nation's grid watchdog. For years, the organization has issued a string of increasingly dire reports warning that threats to grid reliability are mounting, and more frequent rolling blackouts could soon become the norm. NERC's recent assessment predicts more than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation, enough to power about 35 million homes, will retire through 2033. And all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions over the next five years.

Keeping the lights on is not a partisan issue. Yet, politics and energy policy have had an outsized impact on how we got here. The current state of our nation's energy policy related to electricity can be summed up simply: Do more with less.

That's just not sustainable. From data centers to EVs, from home heating and cooling to the way we run America's farms, our nation is increasingly reliant

on electricity to power the economy. As technology and energy demands advance, a recipe for rolling brownouts and blackouts is brewing.

Opposite that increasing demand for electricity is an alarming reduction in supply as our country shutter's existing always-available power plants to comply with various federal and state regulations.

South Dakota experiences extreme weather conditions throughout the year with temperatures rising above 100 degrees in the summer and falling far below zero in the winter. When the sun is not shining and when the wind is not blowing, renewable energy sources do not fit the bill for reliability. We simply cannot fully retire power plants that still have a useful life ahead of them.

The final challenge to meeting our nation's energy needs is the arcane set of rules and regulations required to build anything in this country. The process for siting, permitting and building infrastructure – everything from solar farms, to pipelines to transmission lines – is mired in red tape and years of litigation.

These trends are not going to get any better in the coming years.

On April 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized four new rules to regulate power plants. The path outlined by the EPA is unrealistic, unachievable, and unlawful – exceeding the EPA's authority and disregarding Supreme Court rulings. It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid.

The American economy can't succeed without reliable electricity. Smart energy policy recognizes this fundamental truth, while keeping the lights on. This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future.

EPA finalized its rule against a backdrop of daunting threats to reliability, as electricity demand surges at the same time

supply is decreasing. This will lead directly to more blackouts, higher costs, and uncertainty for America. That's a dangerous approach to regulation.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit challenging the EPA over its unlawful power plant rule on May 9. This suit points out that the rule goes far beyond what Congress has authorized the agency to do, violates the Clean Air Act and disregards recent Supreme Court rulings. We also highlight that the rule hinges on the widespread adoption of carbon capture and storage – a promising technology that is simply not ready for prime time.

South Dakota's Attorney General is also one of several dozen that have filed suit against the EPA for similar reasons.

Policymakers cannot overlook the laws of physics or the reality of the current situation. Adding more renewable resources to the nation's energy portfolio can be part of the solution; however, since the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine, our country also needs a robust supply of readily available energy resources to call on at a moment's notice.

Any long-term solution requires policymakers to recognize the need for time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure. These are essential ingredients for an energy future that prioritizes reliable electricity for all consumers.

Electricity powers industries, businesses, and technology. It fosters economic development vital for medical facilities, ensuring the functioning of life-saving equipment. Reliable power is essential for emergency services, law enforcement, and disaster response efforts. It also fuels innovation by supporting research, development, and deployment of new technologies. Keeping the lights on is vital to South Dakota's economy. The stakes are too high to get this wrong.

**JUNE 12-JULY 20, 2024**  
**Prairie Repertory Theatre**  
**Summer Season**  
Oscar Larson Performing  
Arts Center  
Brookings, SD  
605-688-6045



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.

**MAY 29**  
**Central Electric Jerauld County District Meeting**  
Registration at 6 p.m.  
Springs Inn Cafe  
Wessington Springs, SD

**MAY 30**  
**Central Electric Miner County District Meeting**  
Registration at 6 p.m.  
4-H Building  
Howard, SD

**JUNE 1**  
**Mud Races**  
4:30 p.m.  
Canova, SD

**JUNE 3**  
**Central Electric Sanborn County District Meeting**  
Registration at 6 p.m.  
4-H Building  
Forestburg, SD

**JUNE 5**  
**Central Electric Brule County District Meeting**  
Registration at 6 p.m.  
Ag Building  
Pukwana, SD

**JUNE 6**  
**Central Electric Buffalo County District Meeting**  
Registration at 11:30 a.m.  
Powwow Grounds  
Fort Thompson, SD

**JUNE 10**  
**Central Electric Aurora County District Meeting Meal**  
Registration at 6 p.m.  
Ag Building  
Plankinton, SD

**JUNE 13**  
**IHS Health Fair**  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Fort Thompson, SD

**JUNE 14**  
**Junior Achievement Golf Scramble**  
Chamberlain Country Club  
Oacoma, SD  
605-734-4451

**JUNE 15**  
**Branding Party & Brisket Feed**  
6 p.m.  
Future Site of Kyle Evans  
Western Heritage Center  
102 Dakota Ave.  
Wessington Springs, SD

**JUNE 15**  
**1st Annual CheeseFest**  
10 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Farm Life Creamery  
Ethan, SD

**JUNE 21-23**  
**Scavenger's Journey**  
Yard sales, farmer's markets & specialty shops  
Wall to Wagner  
[www.scavengersjourney.com](http://www.scavengersjourney.com)

**JUNE 22**  
**Alexandria Car Show**  
Sponsored by Alexandria Fire District  
Find us on Facebook  
Alexandria, SD

**JUNE 28-30**  
**Donnie Days**  
Stickney, SD

**JULY 4**  
**Rock the Bluffs Fireworks**  
10 a.m. - 7 p.m.  
Chamberlain, SD  
695-234-4416

**JULY 5-6**  
**21st Annual Foothills Rodeo**  
Wessington Springs, SD

**JULY 20**  
**1st Annual John Zens Memorial Parade**  
Epiphany, SD

**Note: Please make sure to call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**