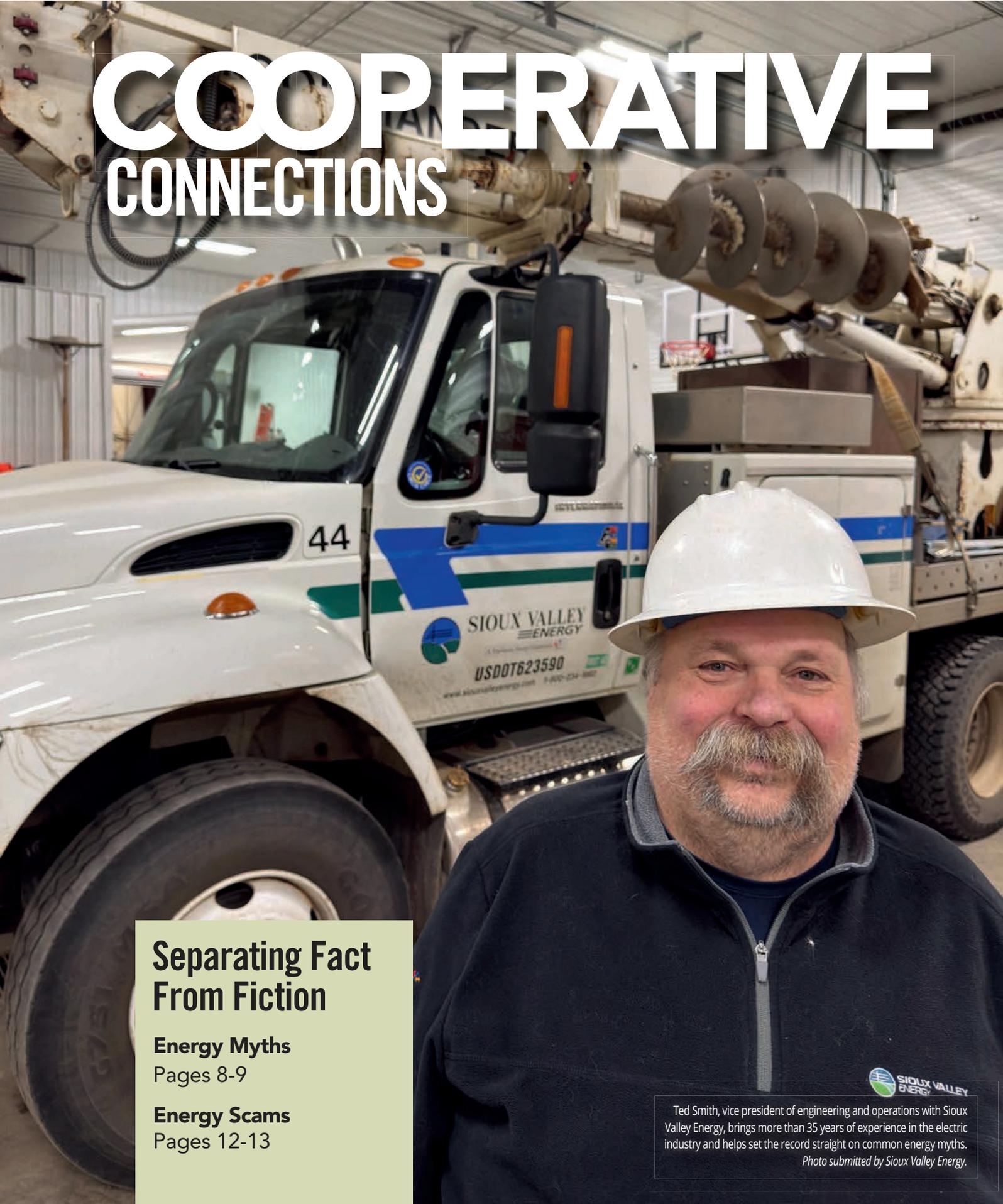


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Separating Fact From Fiction
Energy Myths
Pages 8-9
Energy Scams
Pages 12-13


Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.

POWERING OUR COMMUNITY

People and Investment Working Together



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

As general manager of your electric cooperative, I have the privilege of seeing firsthand what it truly takes to keep the lights on for our members. Behind every switch, every warm home and every business that opens its doors is a combination of dedicated people and a complex electric system that requires constant care. Reliable electricity doesn't happen by accident. It is the result of skilled lineworkers and ongoing investment in the local grid.

On April 13, we recognize the lineworkers who are on the front lines of reliability. When storms roll through and outages occur, our crews respond. They are ready when it matters most—leaving their families and working through difficult conditions to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. That readiness comes from training, experience and a commitment to serving others.

Electric cooperatives were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and our lineworkers embody that spirit every day. Our lineworkers live and raise their families here. They understand that electricity is essential to daily life, to farms, to local businesses, to schools and to emergency services.

That commitment extends beyond our own service territory. During major outage events, cooperative crews assist neighboring co-ops—sometimes close to home and sometimes across state lines. This cooperation strengthens all electric cooperatives and ultimately benefits the members we serve.

Another important part of reliability happens long before an outage ever occurs. Much of the electric system we rely on today was built decades ago. Poles, wires, transformers and substations all have a lifespan. Routine maintenance extends that lifespan, but eventually equipment must be replaced to meet modern safety and performance standards. Proactive investments reduce the likelihood of outages, shortens restoration times and creates a stronger backbone for our community.

The demands on our electric grid are evolving. Homes and businesses use more electricity than ever before. Electric vehicles, smart appliances and new commercial facilities all add load to the distribution system. To maintain the reliability you expect, we strategically upgrade our infrastructure so it can safely meet increased demand.

These improvements require thoughtful planning and financial investment, but the return is significant. A stronger grid supports economic growth, improves service quality and enhances safety for our crews and our community. Most importantly, it ensures that the essential power you rely on is available whenever you need it.

We understand that any time the lights go out can be frustrating and possibly costly. We are grateful for your patience and encouragement during those moments. Linework is demanding, physical and if you're not careful, unforgiving. Our crews approach each job with safety and teamwork. They take pride in the trust you place in them. We are thankful for the dedication of our lineworkers and for the opportunity to invest in the infrastructure that supports their work.

Reliability is about people, preparation and working together. By supporting our lineworkers and investing in our local grid, we are building a stronger, more resilient cooperative for the future

Until next month, stay safe!

AUCTION NOTICE

Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. announces the upcoming sale of its property located at 43453 SD Highway 34, Howard, South Dakota. This follows the construction of a new building in Howard. Prospective bidders may view the property on Friday, April 24, from 12:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., or by appointment. The official auction notice and date will be published in the Miner County Pioneer. For more information, call Morgan Theeler LLP at 605-996-5588 and ask for Don Petersen or Sherry Kirby.



**CENTRAL ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President
 Brule County - Bradee Pazour, Treasurer
 Buffalo County - Donita Loudner
 Davison County - Jeff Gustafson, Vice President
 Hanson County - Mark Hofer, Secretary
 Jerauld County - Mark Reindl
 Miner County - Robert Banks
 Sanborn County - Jeremy White
 Director-At-Large - Merl Bechen



CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Central Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at www.centralelec.coop.

Subscription information: Central Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents of each monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Central Electric Cooperative, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, PO Box 850, Mitchell, SD 57301 Telephone: (605)996-7516; Fax: (605) 996-0869; e-mail: cec@centralelec.coop; website: www.centralelec.coop.

Contact Us

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 Phone: 800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516
 Website: www.centralelec.coop

Our Mission

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

Non-Discrimination Statement:

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met Jan. 19, 2026, 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 Schlimgen reported on the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Rural Electric Economic Development Fund activities, Basin Electric activities, construction of the new Howard Service Center, office security and other management activities.

The minutes of the December safety meeting were reviewed.

General Manager Schlimgen shared information regarding a service territory exception request. No action was taken.

General Manager Schlimgen presented the Eide Bailly statement of work for 2025 audit preparation.

Director Gustafson reported on the SDREA board meeting and recent activities.

Director Wolbrink reported on the East River Electric board meeting and recent activities.

The board reviewed monthly expenses.

The Audit Committee reviewed 4th quarter legal fees and attorney expenses provided in the board documents.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to renew membership to the American Coalition for Ethanol. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to authorize President Wolbrink to sign the Eide Bailly audit letter on behalf of Central Electric. The motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for Feb. 16.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE JAN. 2026	YEAR TO DATE JAN. 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	39,202,433 kWh	37,715,658 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 4,519,346	\$ 4,094,723
Total Cost of Service	\$ 4,252,956	\$ 3,815,004
Operating Margins	\$ 266,390	\$ 279,719

STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling “do not disturb” modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

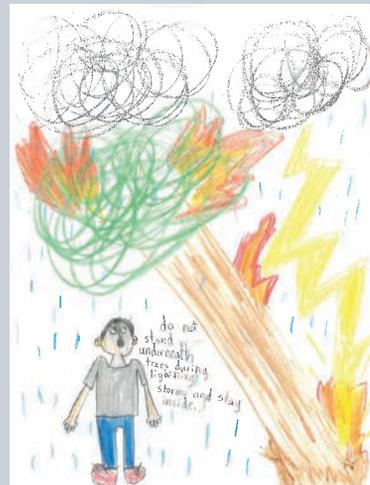
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.



"Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."



**Ramsey Faini,
Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, S.D.

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

MAIN DISHES

HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles
 Oil
 1 pkg. bacon
 3 cups whole milk
 1/2 cup butter (melted)
 5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk
 16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)
 1 tsp. salt
 Guda cheese
 Parsley (to taste)
 1 tsp. garlic powder
 1/2 tsp. black pepper

Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

Cindi Foster
 Codington-Clark Electric

CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped
 3/4 cup celery, chopped
 1/4 cup butter
 5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed
 3 cups water
 3 cups milk, divided
 4 tps. chicken bouillon granules
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/2 tsp. pepper
 1/4 cup flour
 4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

Sally Florey
 Charles Mix Electric

CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split
 1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)
 12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)
 6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)
Sauce
 1/2 cup butter
 1/4 tsp. onion powder
 2 tbsps. brown sugar
 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
 2 tps. poppy seeds
 1 1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

Sauce

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

Jerald & Virginia 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.

Picture submitted by zoryanchik via Shutterstock

ELECTION BYLAWS



**Director nominating petition due dates for Aurora County, Brule County and Buffalo County are noted with the district meeting schedule on page 7. Below are the cooperative bylaws pertaining to director elections.*

Section 4.05. Director Nominations.

A. Nominating Petitions. An individual desiring to be a nominee for a Director position for which an incumbent Director's Director term is expiring must take out a nominating petition ("Nominating Petition") no more than sixty (60) days prior to any Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors. Said member shall return the completed Nominating Petition to the Cooperative at least forty (40) days prior to the Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors. The completed Nominating Petition shall contain the following:

1. The name of the Nominating Petition Nominee;
2. The Director position for which the Nominating Petition Nominee will run; and
3. The printed names, addresses, and telephone numbers, and original signatures, of at least ten (10) Members residing in the Director District in which said nominee is seeking a directorship, or if for the Director-at-large, ten (10) Members residing in the Cooperative Service Area. After verifying that a Nominating Petition complies with this Bylaw, the Cooperative shall post the Nominating Petition nominees at the Cooperative's principal office.

B. Notice of Director Nominations. At least ten (10) days nor more than twenty-five (25) days prior to any Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors, the Cooperative shall notify Members of the:

1. Director positions for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring; and
2. Names and corresponding Director positions of all Nominating Petition Nominees;

Section 4.06. Director Elections.

Members located or residing in each Director District shall elect Directors as follows: 1. For District Director positions at the District Meeting for which the incumbent Director's term is expiring.

2. For the Director-at-large position at the Annual Meeting by all Members located or residing in the Cooperative Service Area.
3. From the Nominating Petition Nominees.
4. By Member written ballot.

At the Director District meeting by Members residing in said Director District by Member's written ballot, except for the Director-at-large who

shall be elected at the annual meeting by Members located or residing in the Cooperative Service Area by Member written ballot.

By a plurality of the votes cast by a quorum of Members present in person who are entitled to vote for the Director position. In case of a tie Director vote with only two (2) candidates running for the Director position, the Director elected shall be determined by a drawing by lot which, for purposes of these Bylaws, shall mean that a piece of paper will be marked with an "X" by a Cooperative representative/employee and placed in a receptacle along with other pieces of paper the same size, one (1) piece for each person involved with the tie. Each person involved in the tie will draw a piece of paper, and the person drawing the piece of paper with the "X" will be the winner of the election.

The persons involved in the tie will draw lots in the same order as their names appear on the ballot. In case of a tie and there are more than two (2) candidates running for the Director position, the number of Directors tying for first position will have a run-off election, and the Director receiving a plurality of the votes cast shall be elected. In the event of another tie of two (2) or more candidates, the Director elected shall be determined by a drawing by lot, the process of which is set forth above.

A quorum at any Member meetings, to include a Director District meeting and/or an Annual Meeting, shall consist of the minimum number of Members required by South Dakota law at the time of such meeting. If a quorum is not present within one (1) hour after the appointed time, no meeting shall be held. If an election of Directors is not held, a special Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors shall be held within a reasonable time.

Tellers shall be appointed to collect and count the ballots.

If only one (1) nominating petition has been turned in for a Director position for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring, no election shall be held in that District and the Nominating Petition nominee shall be deemed elected as the Director from said District.

Names of Nominating Petition nominees shall be printed on ballots in an order determined by drawing prior to the printing of the ballots.

If no petition is filed, then the board will appoint an individual to fill the open position on the board pursuant to Section 4.10 of these Bylaws.

4.07. Director Terms.

A Director's term is three (3) years ("Director term"). A Director elected at a District Meeting or at the Annual Meeting will be seated as a Director at the commencement of the first Regular Monthly Board Meeting following the Annual Member Meeting. The Cooperative shall stagger Director terms by dividing the total number of authorized Directors elected from the Director Districts into three (3) groups of three (3) Directors each. Members thereafter will annually elect one (1) Director group. Decreasing the number of Directors or length of Director terms may not shorten an incumbent Director's Director term. Despite the expiration of a Director term, the Director continues to serve until a new Director is elected, or until the number of Directors is decreased. Unless otherwise provided in these Bylaws, the Director term of a Director filling a vacant Director's position is the remaining unexpired Director Term of the vacant Director's position.



District Meeting Schedule

Eight local district meetings are planned in June. The meetings give you a chance to learn about cooperative happenings and have discussions with management and board members.

The meetings will be held in the evening, except for Buffalo County which will offer a noon meal. Registered members will receive a \$10 electric bill credit for attending.

Members residing in Aurora, Brule or Buffalo County with an interest in serving on the Board of Directors may take out a nominating petition at Central Electric Cooperative's Betts Road office west of Mitchell. See the petition filing dates provided below.

To be considered for a director position in your respective county,

completed petitions must be returned by the petition due date before the close of business at 4:30 p.m. When filed, director petitions must have the signatures of at least 10 Central Electric Cooperative members from the director district in which the candidate is seeking election. Completed petitions must be filed at least 40 days prior to the district meeting in that county.

District 1, Aurora County, is currently represented by Duane Wolbrink of Stickney who is eligible for reelection. District 2, Brule County, is currently represented by Bradee Pazour of Pukwana who is eligible for reelection. District 3, Buffalo County, is currently represented by Donita Loudner of Fort Thompson who is eligible for reelection.

Interested in Serving as a Co-op Director?

Are you interested in serving on the Central Electric Cooperative Board of Directors? Aurora, Brule and Buffalo County director terms expire in 2026, and petitions are available at the Mitchell office or by email. Petition timeframes are noted on the district meeting schedule to the left.

Serving on the board of directors for an electric cooperative involves committing yourself to the following standards and guidelines.

- Be a cooperative member in good standing.
 - Permanently reside in the district.
 - Be willing and able to commit to 25+ working days per year to fulfill duties.
 - Attend at least 10 out of 12 regular board meetings each year (usually the third Monday each month).
 - Pass a background check.
 - Have your primary residence served by the cooperative or meet corporate qualifications.
 - Not be a close relative of a director unless the director will stop serving within one year.
 - Not be a close relative of an existing cooperative officer, employee, agent or representative.
 - Not be employed by or materially affiliated with another director.
 - Not be affiliated with an individual or entity directly and substantially competing with the cooperative.
 - Not sell goods or services in substantial quantity to the cooperative or its members.
 - Comply with other reasonable qualifications determined by the board.
- This is a general snapshot of director eligibility guidelines. A full list of director eligibility requirements is available in the cooperative's bylaws which can be viewed online at www.centraleccoop.com.
- Please contact Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen at 605-996-7516 if you have director eligibility questions.



DISTRICT MEETINGS

<p>June 3, 2026 Brule County (District 2) Ag Building, Pukwana Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. <u>Registration closes 6:30</u> *Director nominating petitions available April 6, due April 24</p>	<p>June 10, 2026 Buffalo County (District 3) Tribal Gym, Fort Thompson Doors Open 11:45 a.m. Meal 12:00-12:30 p.m. <u>Registration closes 12:30</u> *Director nominating petitions available April 13, due May 1</p>	<p>June 16, 2026 Jerauld County (District 6) Springs Inn Cafe, Wessington Springs Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A session</p>
<p>June 4, 2026 Aurora County (District 1) Ag Building, Plankinton Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. <u>Registration closes 6:30</u> *Director nominating petitions available April 6, due April 24</p>	<p>June 11, 2026 Hanson County (District 5) Al Al's Pheasant Ranch, Emery Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A session</p>	<p>June 22, 2026 Miner County (District 7) 4-H Building, Howard Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A session</p>
	<p>June 15, 2026 Davison County (District 4) Fairgrounds, Mitchell Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A session</p>	<p>June 23, 2026 Sanborn County (District 8) 4-H Building, Forestburg Doors Open 5:45 p.m. Meal 6:00-6:30 p.m. Q&A session</p>



From left, in the Sioux Valley Energy shop: Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations; Chad Williams, manager of operations; journey lineworker Jager Rus; and journey lineworker Paul Schamber. Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electricity powers nearly every part of daily life, yet most people only think about it when the lights flicker or a bill arrives. Because the system works quietly in the background, assumptions about how it operates tend to fill the gaps.

To sort through several common misconceptions, Cooperative Connections spoke with Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy, the cooperative serving South Dakota counties of Brookings, Lake, Moody, Kingsbury, and Minnehaha and Minnesota counties of Rock and Pipestone. Smith has worked in the electric industry for 35 years, including 20 years at Sioux Valley, where he

oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

Here are several claims he regularly hears from members and how he responds.

Myth: If the lights go out, it must be a local problem.
Smith: That's definitely a myth.

An outage can begin anywhere from inside your home all the way back to a generating station two states away. The electric grid is highly interconnected. A disruption in one area can ripple outward across transmission lines that serve multiple utilities.

There have been large historical outages, especially in the eastern United States, where a single event such as a tree contacting a transmission line triggered a cascading failure across multiple states. Entire cities lost power

because one initiating fault spread across the network.

Closer to home, severe weather in one region can affect transmission lines feeding a much broader footprint. If a major transmission line trips offline, and another line is already out for maintenance, service interruptions can extend far beyond the original storm area.

“Just because your lights go out doesn't mean the problem started down the road, close to home” Smith said. “It could be much farther upstream.”

Myth: The grid can be powered entirely by renewable energy.
Smith: At times, yes. Around the clock, no.

Smith pointed to hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River as renewable generation that run continuously, but other renewable resources, such as wind and solar, simply aren't reliable sources of energy and only contribute

significantly when conditions allow.

“Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn’t always blow in South Dakota,” Smith said. “And solar only produces during daylight hours.”

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.

Smith: That’s not how it works.

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member’s own service.

“When crews see it’s a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member,” Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.

Smith: No.

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service

notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

“With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage,” Smith said. “Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations.”

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

“One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down,” he said. “When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage.”

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.

Smith: The fuel is free, but that’s the only thing that’s free.

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.

Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

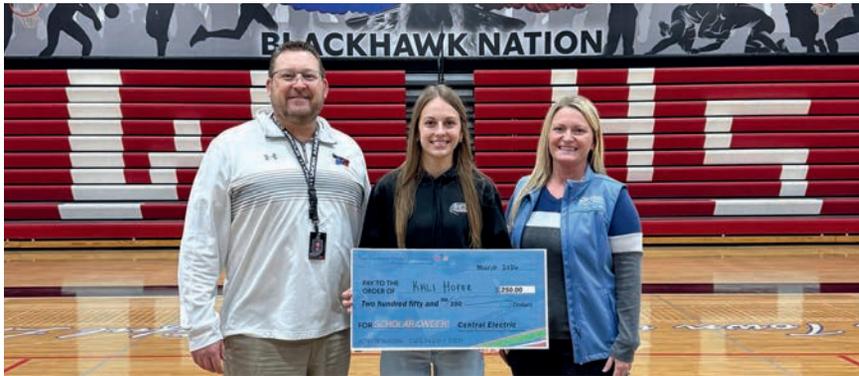
“The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line,” Smith said. “We don’t have a printing press in the basement.”

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it’s financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member’s share of the cooperative’s financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around \$220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative’s power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.



Woonsocket High School senior Kali Hofer (center) accepts the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week award from Principal Rod Weber and Tara Miller of Central Electric.

Woonsocket Senior Named Scholar of the Week

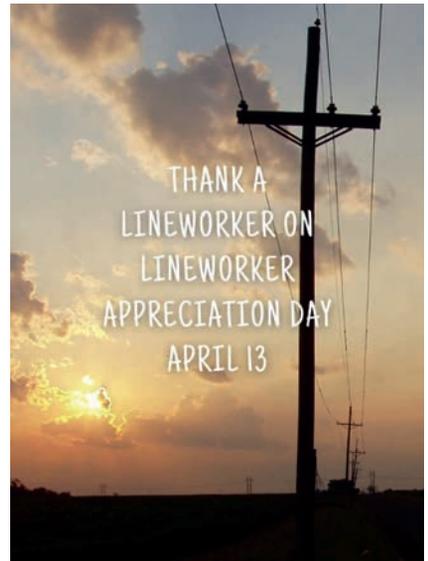
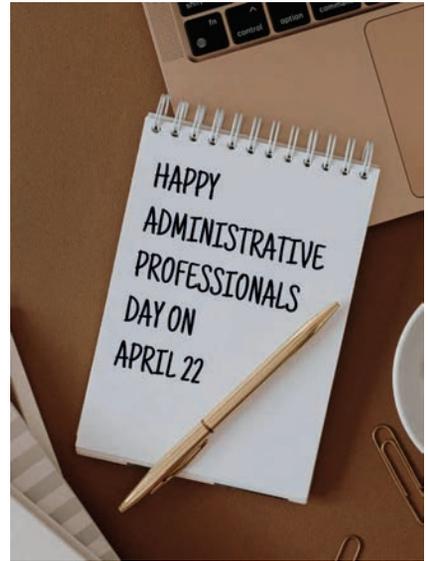
Central Electric Cooperative and Woonsocket High School are pleased to recognize Kali Hofer, the daughter of Jamie and Amy Hofer, as the Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week for March 1-7, 2026. The Scholar of the Week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now Television, Central Electric Cooperative and other local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that honors accomplished high school students.

Hofer has been involved with numerous school activities, including the Student Council, FFA, Academic Festival and National Honors Society.

She has also participated in basketball, volleyball and track, and she has volunteered as a football statistician and junior high volleyball referee. Hofer has also spent time volunteering at a local daycare and volunteering at the concession stand.

After high school, Hofer plans to study Business Management at Mitchell Technical College.

Hofer receives a \$250 scholarship from Central Electric for this honor. She was featured on Dakota News Now on Monday, March 2. You can view her story online anytime at DakotaNewsNow.com by searching Scholar of the Week.



Employee Years of Service



Norton [redacted]
Kimball Area
Lineworker
20 years on March 1



Lindsey [redacted]
Customer Service
Representative
11 years on March 2



Kyle [redacted]
Journeyman
Electrician
2 years on March 18



Dustin [redacted]
Mitchell Area
Lineworker
5 years on April 1



Kelly [redacted]
IT Systems
Coordinator
4 years on April 19

Co-op Surplus Equipment For Sale

The items pictured below were declared surplus and will be sold to the highest bidder at Central Electric's Betts Road office on Tuesday, April 14. Bidding is open to the public. The vehicles and UTV tracks will be accessible for on-site viewing one hour prior to the sale at 9:00 a.m. For more information about the surplus equipment auction, contact Brian Bultje or Lincoln Feistner at 605-996-7516.

When: Tuesday, April 14, 10:00 a.m.

Where: Central Electric Cooperative, 25487 403rd Avenue, Mitchell S.D.

How to Bid: Interested parties must be present to bid or have a bidder representative present. If multiple interested parties are present, an auction will begin. Cash or check payment is required in full the day of the sale.



2011 Ford F-350 Super Duty XL Extended Cab 2-Door Pickup
 With Utility Box and 2-Ton Auto Crane
 4 Wheel Drive, 6.7 Liter Turbo V-8 Diesel Engine
 3.55 Rear End Ratio
 Miles: 229,400 / New Factory Motor at 137,100 Miles
 Opening Bid: \$11,000
 Call Brian with questions

2005 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 Crew Cab 4-Door Pickup
 4 Wheel Drive, 5.3 Liter V-8 Gas Engine
 3.73 Rear End Ratio
 Miles: 196,600 / New Tires at 186,700 Miles
 Opening Bid: \$5,800
 Call Brian with questions



2012 Camoplast UTV Tracks
 Rubber in Good Condition
 (One Track Needs Trailing Arm Repair)
 Opening Bid: \$500
 Call Brian with questions

2008 Chevrolet Express Van
 6 Liter Gas Engine, Rear Wheel Drive
 Storage, Shelves, Bulkhead, Retractable Ladder Rack
 Miles: 222,300
 Opening Bid: \$3,500
 Call Lincoln with questions

2003 Skyjack Scissor Lift
 Model: FSJ3226
 Electric, Indoor Terrain
 Hours: 2,785
 Opening Bid: \$2,500
 Call Lincoln with questions

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers

or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.

SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.





Grant Applications Due May 1

Grant applications for Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round-Up® program are due May 1, 2026. Through Operation Round-Up, funds are awarded to organizations that benefit area communities. Past projects supported through Operation Round-Up include fire department equipment upgrades, 4-H projects, youth programs, community beautification efforts and various non-profit projects.

What is Operation Round-Up?

Operation Round-Up® is a voluntary program in which members round their electric bill up to the next whole dollar each month, and the extra cents are used to fund grants. A number of cooperative employees and board members also contribute to the fund.

Since 2015, Central Electric members, employees and board members have pitched in approximately \$250,000 to support local grant projects.

Who Decides Where the Money Goes?

Grants are awarded twice a year by a volunteer board of trustees representing Central Electric's service area. Julie Dykstra of Stickney represents Aurora County, Clarissa Glaus of Chamberlain represents Brule County, Yvette Isburg of Fort Thompson represents Buffalo County, Steven Weisz of Mitchell represents Davison County, LeAnn Moe of Alexandria represents Hanson County, Amber Kolousek of Wessington Springs represents Jerauld County, Tami Moore of Howard represents Miner County, Dawna Van Overschelde of Letcher represents Sanborn County and Merl Bechen of Mitchell represents the board of directors.

Where Can I Get More Information?

Operation Round-Up funding guidelines and a fillable application can be found online at www.centralec.coop under Member Programs. There, you can also view past grant awards and frequently asked questions.



The Salvation Army of Mitchell received a \$1,000 grant to support the utility assistance program.



Chamberlain's Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) club received a \$1,000 grant for an educational field trip.



The Woonsocket Backpack Program received a \$1,000 grant to purchase food supplies for youth weekend backpacks.



Crow Creek Homeless Shelter received a \$2,000 grant to help purchase new mattresses and shelter supplies.



Bridgewater-Emery School District received a \$1,000 grant to help purchase STEM supplies for the elementary school.

Register to Attend the Basin Electric Bus Tour

July 14-16, 2026

Participants must be at least 18 years of age and current members of Central Electric Cooperative.



Participant Name 1 (Print): _____

Participant Name 2 (Print): _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State ZIP: _____

Home or Cell Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Have you ever participated in the Basin Electric Bus Tour:

No Yes (Year: _____)

Please list any special accommodations you may require to attend:

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Emergency Contact Phone Number: _____

Seating is limited. Patrick Soukup will contact you by July 1 once attendance and trip details are finalized.

Members who have not participated in past tours will be given first opportunity to participate in the bus tour. All other members will be placed on a standby list and contacted if openings are available.

Interested members should return this form with a check for \$25 per person or \$50 per couple to submit your request to participate in the bus tour. The passenger list will be finalized by July 1.

Central Electric Cooperative
PO Box 850
Mitchell, SD 57301

Attendees will need to provide a copy of their driver's license after final confirmation that you are participating in the bus tour.



APRIL 9-11
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Festival of
 Tasting
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237
 www.schmeckfest.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.

MARCH 27-29
Special Olympics State Basketball Tournament
 DWU Avera Sports Complex
 Mitchell, SD

MARCH 28
Enhanced Concealed Permit Class
 12-6 p.m.
 Davison Shooting Club
 3260 W. Havens Ave.
 Mitchell, SD
 www.permit2carrysd.com

MARCH 28
VFW Teener Baseball Benefit Vegas Night
 Social: 4:30 p.m., Meal: 6 p.m.
 Tyndall, SD

APRIL 3
Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 4
Easter Bunny Photos
 Moose Lodge
 Mitchell, SD
 605-202-0912

APRIL 5
Easter Sunrise Service
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore

APRIL 9
McCrossan Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.mccrossan.org

APRIL 9-11
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237
 www.schmeckfest.com

APRIL 10-11
Forks Corks & Kegs Food & Wine Festival
 Deadwood, SD

APRIL 11
Women VetsConnect Retreat
 A Wellness Retreat for Women Veterans and Military Spouses
 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church
 909 W. 33rd St.
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 11-12
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
 605-332-6004

APRIL 18
Spring Ladies Day Out
 Downtown
 Mitchell, SD

APRIL 18
Brookings Quilt Show XII
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Admission: \$10
 Dakota Bank Center
 Brookings, SD
 605-690-3246

APRIL 18
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation Bugleman Chapter Big Game Banquet
 5 p.m.
 Armory
 Howard, SD
 605-480-0736

APRIL 20
The Bronx Wanderers
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 25
Screams by Night Halfway to Halloween Con
 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
 The Social
 Sioux Falls, SD

MAY 2-10
Rustic Designs & More Spring Show, Flea Market
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

JUNE 13
Journey Into Historic Pickstown
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Ft. Randall Town & Museum
 Pickstown, SD
 605-487-7299

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.