

Central Electric

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

May 2021 Vol. 22 No. 1

Cooperative Connections



AgritourismSD seeks to attract visitors from far and near

Education and Entertainment on the Farm

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College Students Deal with Change

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Planting Seeds with Faith and Future in Mind

**Ken Schlimgen**

General Manager



Spring is officially here. March featured high school basketball tournaments and a snow storm that caused outages and relatively minor damage to our system. We have celebrated Easter and I hope we have seen the last snowfall of the season. The farming community is applying fertilizer and I have heard rumor that some planting has started.

I can remember being allowed to miss school to ride in the wagon and keep the end gate seeder filled with oat seed. The seeder was powered by a chain that was connected to the hub of the wagon wheel. As long as you dressed accordingly, absorbed the bumps across the field, and kept your hands away from the moving parts it worked well. Today's technology for planting is obviously much better.

This is the time of year for planting fields, gardens and flower pots. Your electric cooperative is also planting a crop of sorts. We have almost 200 miles of electric cable in our inventory that we will plant in the ground between now and the first hard frost this fall.

Most of this cable will be used to replace overhead lines. We are being more aggressive in the replacement of overhead lines that were built in the 1950's and 1960's. We are making good progress but the cooperative has an estimated 1,670 miles remaining to be replaced. These improvements will increase the capacity to deliver electric power and improve our reliability.

It appears we will have a very busy planting season. In addition to the line replacement, we have requests to build electric service to 18 homes, and 3 Ag operations. We also have requests to rebuild 20 existing services for increased capacity. This is significantly more work than we normally see this early in the year.

The materials we ordered last fall have been arriving over the past month. We believe we have sufficient supplies for 2021 but we are being advised to consider ordering materials now for 2022. Some materials are experiencing long delivery timelines and unfortunately cost increases. If you have a project that requires a change to the electric service, please contact us early to avoid delays.

Spring is the first opportunity of 2021 for applying for Operation Round-Up grants. The grants are funded by our members who plant about \$6 per year into the fund by voluntarily rounding up their monthly bill. The grants make such a difference in our communities. May 1st is the deadline to apply but another round of applications will be accepted on November 1st.

I'm excited to say our cooperative will host our district meetings in June. The dates and locations are included in this newsletter for your reference. You will receive a postcard as the official notice as we get closer to those dates. I hope you will attend and ask a neighbor to come along. The meals are always very tasty and it will be good to see each other in person once again.

Farming and the business of delivering electricity have seen many innovations but they have always taken a lot of Faith – Faith that the seed you plant will yield a crop to benefit your family members and your community.

Until next month, stay safe!



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

(USPS 018-963)

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Office open by appointment

Office Information

M-F 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
800-477-2892 or 605-996-7516
www.centralec.coop

Mission Statement

Provide Reliable Energy & Services
with a Commitment to Safety and
Member Satisfaction

BOARD MEETING

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met Feb. 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the Howard Conference Center for the regular board meeting.

The board approved the January 2021 board meeting minutes. The board then reviewed monthly reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and the financials.

Board Report

Manager Schlimgen updated the board on the following:

- East River Advisory Committee
- Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) and Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant (REDLG) updates
- Howard outpost facility tour
- Industrial electricity usage
- Upcoming cracker barrels
- Electric Co-op Day at the Capitol
- Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) updates
- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Legislative Conference update
- Upcoming meetings, conferences and training events

Director Duane Wolbrink gave a report on the East River board meeting.

You may contact the cooperative office to request more information regarding the board meeting.

Financial Report	February 2021	Year-to-Date
kWh Sales	33,324,532 kWhs	67,649,671 kWhs
Electric Revenues	\$ 3,151,653	\$ 6,357,103
Total Cost of Service	\$ 3,151,836	\$ 6,330,557
Operating Margins	\$ (183)	\$ 26,546

Director Donita Loudner gave a report on the SDREA board meeting.

Board Action

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Motion and support to accept the January safety meeting minutes. Approved unanimously.
2. Motion and support to approve Larson Digging labor only contract. Approved unanimously.
3. Motion and support to approve Dave's Digging labor only contract. Approved unanimously.
4. Motion and support to approve Highline Construction labor only contract. Approved unanimously.
5. Motion and support to authorize general manager to work with Ciavarella Design to study outpost facility options. Approved unanimously.
6. Motion and support to finalize loan documents and other requirements necessary to issue REDLG loan to the City of Chamberlain. Approved unanimously.
7. Motion and support to approve Mitchell Technical College \$300,000 REDLG loan application. Approved unanimously.

The next board meeting was scheduled for March 15, 2021, at Central Electric's Betts Road service center.

Remodeling? Keep Efficiency in Mind

Sunny days are prime time for tackling remodeling projects, upgrades and repairs around your home. If you're planning a project, make a point of adding energy efficiency features along the way. Here are a few ideas:

- Add insulation around recessed lights so heated or conditioned air doesn't leak out of them and the weather can't sneak in.
- Install programmable thermostats when you add rooms to the house. While you're at it, have the thermostats in the rest of your home upgraded to programmable models.
- Your contractor will install more insulation in any new spaces you're adding than your builder did during the original construction of your home. Consider adding insulation to already-insulated areas, like the crawlspace and attic, to meet new energy efficiency standards.
- A new kitchen means shiny new appliances. Select those rated as energy efficient by ENERGY STAR®, which use less energy than unrated models.
- If your older home still has single-pane windows, consider an upgrade. Double-pane windows are more energy efficient because they better shield your home from the outdoors - and keep your conditioned air indoors.
- Replace old lightbulbs in your most-used rooms with LEDs. They last 10 years or longer and save considerable energy when compared to incandescent bulbs.
- Work with a contractor who understands how passive solar design can affect your energy bills. Rooftop solar panels, sunrooms and skylights are popular additions.
- Add or upgrade ventilation fans in bathrooms. This can improve air quality throughout the home - not just in the bathrooms - by removing moisture from the air.
- Consider having a home energy audit conducted. Audits can help you evaluate your home for energy wasters, suggest ways to remedy inefficiencies and recommend additions that will make your house more comfortable and cheaper to heat and cool.



Generate Safely.

Never use a portable generator indoors.

Do not plug generators into standard electrical outlets.

Use heavy-duty extension cords to connect appliances into the generator.

Start the generator before connecting appliances.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



Don't Grill Too Close to the House

Mia Phillips, 5 years old

Mia is the granddaughter of Jim and Hans Moore of Rapid City. They are members of Black Hills Electric.

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



A Craving for Casseroles

Chicken and Rice

1 bag Success Brown Rice	1/2 package (4 ounces) mushrooms, sliced
1/2 cup ricotta cheese	1/4 cup white wine
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese	4 cups baby spinach leaves
1 tbsp. chopped Italian parsley	2 cups shredded, cooked chicken breast
1 tbsp. olive oil	1/2 tsp. salt
1/3 cup chopped onions	1/2 tsp. black pepper
2 garlic cloves, minced	

Prepare rice according to package directions. In small bowl, combine ricotta, Parmesan and parsley; reserve. In large skillet over medium heat, heat oil. Add onions and garlic; sauté 2 minutes. Add mushrooms and wine to skillet. Continue cooking 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add spinach and chicken. Stir until spinach is wilted and chicken is heated through, about 2 minutes. Stir in rice, salt and pepper. Serve casserole topped with dollops of reserved cheese mixture.

SuccessRice.com

Chicken Doritos Casserole

2 cups shredded cooked chicken	1 can Ro-tel tomatoes, drained (canned tomatoes with jalapeños-mild)
1 cup shredded cheese	1/2 packet taco seasoning (or more, to taste)
1 can cream of chicken soup	1 bag of regular nacho cheese Doritos
1/2 cup milk	
1/2 cup sour cream	

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients except Doritos. In a greased 2 quart baking dish, put a layer of crushed Doritos (about 2 cups), then a layer of the chicken mixture. Top with more shredded cheese, cover, and bake 30-35 minutes until bubbling hot. Enjoy!

Alana Neville, Milesville, SD

Garden Cafe Casserole

1 bag hash browns	1/2 lb. deli turkey (cut in pieces)
1 onion	1 lb. bacon (fried and cut in pieces)
1 green pepper	
1 box mushrooms	2-3 cups cheese (Monterey Jack, Colby, Cheddar)
1 tomato	

Place thawed hash browns in the bottom of a 9 x 13 pan. Sauté onion, green pepper, and mushrooms. Place the meat and tomato on top of the potatoes. Then onion, green pepper and mushrooms. Top with cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour.

Joanna Gum, Clear Lake, SD

Meat Lovers Pizza Casserole

1 lb. ground beef	2 c. (8 oz) shredded mozzarella cheese
1 medium onion, chopped	1 pkg (3 1/2 oz) sliced pepperoni, quartered
1 can (15 oz) pizza sauce	
8 oz. elbow macaroni, cooked and drained	1/2 tsp. salt

In a large skillet, cook ground beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in remaining ingredients. Transfer to a greased 2-quart baking dish. Bake uncovered at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes or until heated through. Yields 6 servings.

Gail Lee, Brookings

Please send your favorite dairy 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.



Notice of Member Capital Credit Allocations

Each spring, members receive notification of capital credits acquired the previous year. Members will not receive a refund check or bill credit for the allocation at this time. In the fall, the Board of Directors determines if a percentage of capital credits will be returned to members, and if so, what amount. The board makes the decision based on the financial condition of the cooperative.

As a member-owned cooperative, Central Electric Cooperative does not earn profits like most other businesses. After Central Electric deducts costs and upkeep for yearly operations, the net profit is reinvested into the company to provide cash flow, collateral to show stability and to obtain loans. Any net profit over those costs is allocated back to our members in the form of capital credits.

Every member of Central Electric has shares in capital credits. The more electricity you buy and the longer you use the service, the more monetary equity (allocations) you accumulate. Allocations are the total sum of annual equity accrued by the member during their prior year of service.

If the cooperative incurs additional costs for repairs due to storms, putting in underground cable, upgrading equipment or other expenses, the board may decide to forgo retiring capital credits in a given year. When the decision is made to issue refunds, active members will receive a credit on their December bill and inactive members will receive a check.

Capital Credits are one of the many benefits of being a member of Central Electric Cooperative. When you have Central Electric as your electric provider, you are part owner of the cooperative. Every time you pay your electric bill, you are investing in the equity of the cooperative.

Surplus Equipment Sale on May 6

2012 Dodge 550 bucket truck with material handler

Diesel engine, 4x4, automatic transmission, 180,000+/- miles

Attached: 2008 HR-40M TEREX bucket/material handler unit. 4,400+/- total hours. Unit was remounted and completely gone through in 2012 by TEREX and has 1,800+/- hours on it since remount.

Starting Bid Price: \$23,000

Equipment will be available to purchase at Central Electric's Betts Road office at 10:00 AM on Thursday, May 6. Interested parties must be present. If multiple interested parties are present, an auction will begin and parties can increase their bid from the listed price.

For more information, contact Brian Bultje at 1-800-477-2892.



Cole Sonne's YouTube Channel Makes Farm Life Look Like a Visit to Disneyland

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Every day on the farm is a new adventure for Cole Sonne. While many 20-somethings contemplate leaving their family homesteads in search of a more urbane and sophisticated lifestyle, Sonne has no intention of giving up the farming life.

His enthusiasm for agriculture is in his blood and in his soul. But it's also all over the internet.

There is perhaps no more effective web-based advocate for South Dakota agriculture than Sonne, as evidenced by his audience of more than 145,000 YouTube subscribers. Sonne's 250 video posts have received over 26 million views since he created his YouTube channel two years ago.

After earning a degree in agronomy from South Dakota State University, Sonne returned to the family farm near Mount



Fourth generation farmer Cole Sonne has amassed more than 145,000 YouTube subscribers.

generation farmer. "I think it's important to teach people who have never done this what farm life is really like."

The genesis of the channel came after he bought a drone and started taking aerial shots of raking hay and feeding cattle, but he didn't know what to do with the footage. He started posting his videos and then thought about capturing some of the dialogue that takes place between him and his father, Brian, and other family members. The animals, machinery, chores and weather conditions never fail to create intriguing scenarios that keep fans tuned in.

Sonne was surprised when the viewer count started to skyrocket.

"It just took off right away," he said. "I call it ag

advocacy. We just show people what we do from day to day and try to make it as fun as possible.

Much of the witty repartee is exchanged between Sonne and his often exasperated father. As Sonne had his camera rolling and capturing a farm task that wasn't going well recently, Brian grumbled, "To me this is embarrassing. To you it's good footage."

The conversation in that episode ran the gamut from Halle Berry to woodpeckers to classic Saturday Night Live skits as the



Cole and his father Brian exchange some friendly sniping on the channel.

Vernon and it wasn't long before he had a notion to let the world see how fun and adventurous farming can be.

He saw that some ag-based channels created by young farmers such as Minnesota Millennial Farmer and Farm Life SD were growing in popularity, so he figured he'd take a shot at posting videos of all the wild and sometimes wacky situations that can emerge during a typical day. "It's really informational and entertaining at the same time," said Sonne, a fourth

duo went from gathering hay to scraping manure. Sonne says the near constant laughing, joking and friendly sniping keep things light-hearted as they take care of their business.

Asked which of his videos has received the greatest amount of attention, Sonne is quick with his response.

"A video we did last April got more than one million hits," he said. "There was an approach to a field that was holding back water and we had to dig it out and release the water and put in a culvert. When we pulled the last grab of dirt that was holding a year's worth of water, the water just came gushing through. People seemed to really like seeing that large volume of water. A lot of what's going to get the attention is the thumbnail picture. If you can get the perfect thumbnail, people will click on it."

Apparently, the video titles also help to attract eyeballs. Some recent titles include: "Cole got splattered with poo," "Watch out – angry calf hits Brian and Jeff," "We saved him - moments from the end."

As for the time and dedication it takes to keep content fresh for thousands of eager viewers, Sonne said he considers it just another item on a lengthy list of tasks that every farmer has.

"It usually takes a couple of hours to get the videos done," he said. "I'll farm all day, come home and start editing and work til late at night. That's what most farmers do anyway. You have to balance things out."



The AgritourismSD program blends the state's top two economic drivers: agriculture and tourism. Photos provided by SD Tourism.

AGRITOURISM

New Program Blends South Dakota's Top Two Economic Drivers

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Amy Kruse already had a baby before she actually became a mother. That baby was proudly named Circle View Guest Ranch. That's the bed and breakfast establishment in Interior run by Amy and her husband, Philip.

"Before I had three kids, this was my baby," Kruse said on a recent Thursday afternoon while taking a break from getting the nearly 3,000-acre ranch spiffed up for weekend visitors and the busy travel season. "I got out of college and we got married and we came here 18 years ago. It's a lot of work to operate the ranch and make things run to give our guests a memorable experience, but it's worth it to see them enjoy themselves and have a great time in South Dakota."

While Kruse has long been engaged in her own form of what's called agritourism, she's an enthusiastic supporter of a new initiative designed to promote the accelerated growth of more agritourism enterprises across the state.

In 2017, the South Dakota Agritourism Work Group was formed to create an intensive program aimed at providing education, training and various support services to agribusiness owners interested in expanding their operations to include recreational, entertainment, educational, hospitality, cultural, on-farm sales and other activities for the general public. As tourism and agriculture are the two most significant business sectors in the state, organizers felt it only made sense to combine the two.

Spearheaded by South Dakota State University Extension and the state Office of Tourism, other local, state and federal agencies and entities joined in the effort. A partial list of participating organizations includes the Bed and Breakfast Innkeepers of South

Dakota, Experience Sioux Falls, Southeast Technical Institute, the South Dakota Specialty Producers Association, the South Dakota Value Added Ag Development Center and others.

According to Program Coordinator Stacy Hadrick of SDSU, Agri-tourismSD kicks off this month and consists of eight two-day, in-person workshops taking place over the course of 24 months where instructors provide the basic skills and tools that have been demonstrated to help increase the chances of success. The curriculum includes field visits to venues that already have a sustained track record of running thriving agritourism businesses.

The Circle View Guest Ranch, a member of West River Electric Association, is one of those venues. During the program's second year, the facility is slated to serve as a case study on how to launch and grow an agritourism operation and participants can have direct personal conversations with operators who will offer solid advice on every aspect of their business. Kruse said she looks forward to sharing some of the approaches and strategies that she and Philip have used to keep visitors coming to the ranch. The program, which kicks off this month, is designed to educate and train those associated with the ag industry on how to start, manage and operate an agritourism enterprise.

"This is such an excellent time to do something like this because things are opening up and people are ready to travel and escape the cities, get off the interstate and explore the back roads and see the tremendous beauty of our state," Kruse said. "They're craving an authentic experience after being shut down for so long."

Kruse added that she is eager to coach and encourage the group, but she also plans to shoot straight. That means giving the partici-



pants a healthy dose of unvarnished reality so they'll have a clear understanding of the commitment required.

"I think it's a wonderful program for our state. We're going to show them how we make things work with the overnight facilities and with the animals and their interactions with our guests," she said. "The business pretty much runs our lives for seven to eight months out of the year, and if you do it right it's all-consuming. But it's also extremely rewarding to see families have a terrific time bonding with each other, bonding with the natural landscape and the animals. It can be extremely rewarding for our guests and for our family as we're always making new friends. But you have to be committed."

Amy and her husband operate 12 guest rooms and three cabins with an average of 30 guests at any given time from April through September. She explained the cattle ranch and the bed-and-breakfast are separate businesses all set on 2,800 acres of land that includes prairie terrain in addition to Badlands formations, a river valley, rock beds, rolling hills, grazing pastures and tree groves.

For more effective statewide coordination, the AgritourismSD program organizers have developed a hub system, selecting the communities of Wall, Faulkton and Timber Lake to serve as regional organization centers. Participating business owners work through these hubs and meet six times over two years to share ideas and

discuss strategies for attracting visitors to their communities.

Robin Bickel is the hub coach for the Timber Lake area. A member of Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, Bickel runs a Red Angus cattle ranch in Firesteel that has been in the family for four generations. She said her interest in getting involved was to pursue potential economic growth not only for her ranch but for the entire area as well. She also sees agritourism as an incentive to both keep and attract young families to rural communities.

"If working ranches can find ways to expand and diversify their businesses, it may present opportunities for those young people who have left to come back to the family farm and be able to generate enough revenue to sustain multiple families on one place," she said.

Aside from the potential for added revenue, Bickel said she is eager to share with the rest of the world the wonders of rural life and the rural lifestyle she experiences each day.

"I think there's an increased interest people have about where their food and fiber come from, and we need to find a way to make that connection between the producer and consumer," she said. "We have such a rich history and so many natural resources to share. It's insane how many people can't see the sky full of stars at night where they live and can't see the prairie grass waving in the wind and



rolling across a hillside. There are people interested in things we take for granted. There are people in Nebraska that have a prairie chicken dance tour where people actually pay to see the chickens. I think there are many opportunities for our state if we commit ourselves and do it right."

For more information on the program, contact Jacey Ellsworth, Industry Outreach and Development Representative, at 605-773-3301 or Jacey.Ellsworth@TravelSouthDakota.com.



Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen presents Bridgewater-Emery senior Rylee Schultz with his Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week award.

Schultz Named Scholar of the Week

Bridgewater-Emery High School senior Rylee Schultz was named the Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week for the week of March 21-27, 2021.

Schultz is the son of Lynn and Tamee Schultz of rural Emery. He has a 4.05 GPA and plans to attend Mitchell Technical College. He is an all-state football player and active with FFA, National Honors Society and the First Baptist Church youth group. He is also actively involved with his family's farming operation.

Schultz is also now eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship or one of two \$500 scholarships that will be given away at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet.

Central Electric Manager Ken Schlimgen visited Bridgewater-Emery High School to recognize Schultz and present him with the \$250 scholarship. Schultz was featured by Dakota News Now on Monday, March 22.

The Scholar of the Week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now and Touchstone Energy Cooperatives to recognize outstanding students across the state. School principals and faculty nominate students for this award based on excellence in the classroom, service in the community and extracurricular participation. Since the Scholar of the Week program began, more than \$80,000 in scholarships have been awarded to more than 530 students.

Grant Deadline Approaching Operation Round-Up

The next application deadline for Operation Round-Up grants is May 1, 2021. Because the date is on a Saturday this year, applications should be postmarked on or before May 1, or turned in at the Central Electric Betts Road Service Center by 4:30 p.m. on Friday prior to the application deadline. Funds will be awarded later in May to organizations or individuals in our local communities.

Operation Round-Up is intended to benefit people and organizations within the Central Electric service area. The funding is focused on the following categories:

- Community Service
- Environment
- Economic Development
- Disaster Relief
- Emergency Energy Assistance
- Education and Youth



Applications can be found at www.centralec.coop or by contacting our office.

Thank you to our members who participate in Operation Round-Up and make this possible. Since the program's inception in 2015, our members have invested more than \$100,000 back into local communities! Your contribution makes a direct impact by keeping money local and growing our communities. The average donation per member is approximately \$6 per year.

To sign up for Operation Round-Up or inquire about grant qualifications, please visit www.centralec.coop or contact our office.



Miner County Youth Shooting Association members and supporters gather in front of their new building on the grounds of the Epiphany Gun Club. The building was partially paid for with Operation Round-Up funds. Back row left to right: Larry Gauger, Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen, Zachery Jacobson, Tom Connor, Karsyn Feldhaus, William Rentz, Kate Connor, Lodin Albert, Jerry Winker and Bob Wingen. Front row left to right: Jayden Jaynes, Mason Jacobson, Jaxsen Jaynes and Kayla Kommes.

Employee Years of Service



Curt Guindon
Plankinton Area
Foreman
44 years — May 1



Dusty Roskens
Line Superintendent
26 years — May 8



Donn Koster
HVAC Lead
Technician
22 years — May 17



Paul Koch
Journeyman Lineman
20 years — May 21



Wade Brozik
HVAC Technician/
Installer
14 years — May 14



Dustin Weier
Journeyman Lineman
14 years — May 16



Aaron Punt
HVAC Fabricator/
Installer
11 years — May 24



Rodney Weber
Journeyman
Electrician
9 years — May 1

April 12 was Lineworker Appreciation Day!

Thanks go out to the crews that power our lives.

Lineman Hired

Presho native Dusty Cole began working as a journeyman lineman on the Mitchell crew in April.

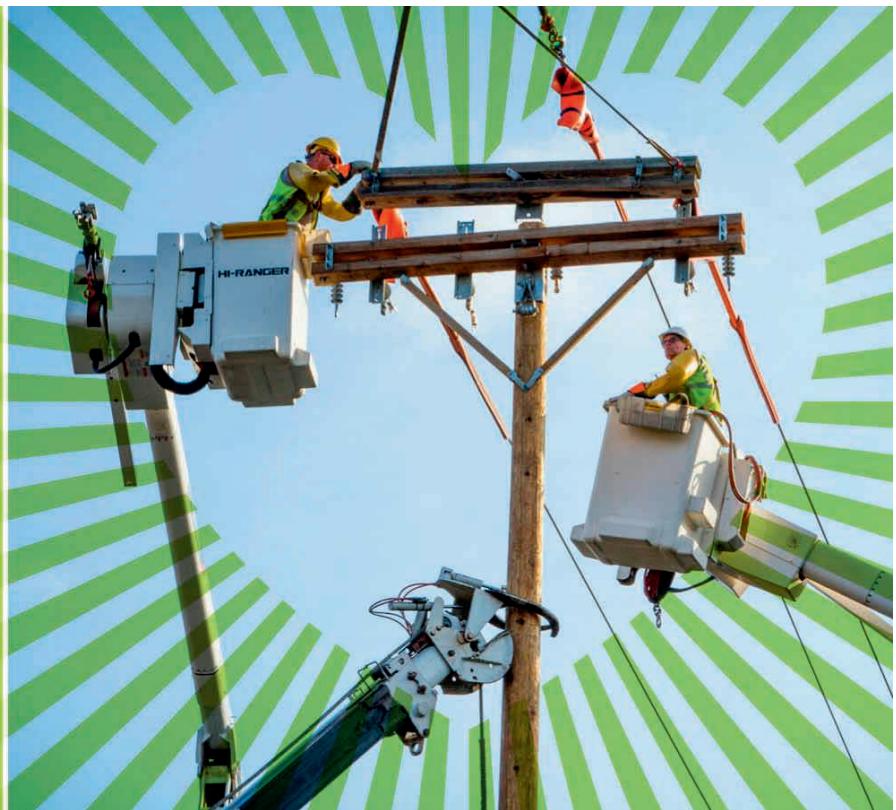


Dusty Cole

A Mitchell Tech graduate, Dusty has worked in electrical construction and as a power lineman since 2011. He previously worked at Minnesota Valley Cooperative in Montevideo, MN. He enjoys fishing and golfing in his spare time.

Dusty, his fiancée Lacey Vittitoe and their German Shepherd Riddick recently moved back to Lacey's hometown of Mitchell. Welcome to the team, Dusty!

**Build. Maintain.
Repair. Repeat.
That's how
lineworkers
power our lives.**



Rural POWER

Leadership Program Aimed at Boosting Co-op Leadership

Intentional listening is a skill Billie Sutton has honed over the course of his adult life. And as he leaned into recent conversations with electric cooperative leaders across the state, the former legislator from Burke started noticing a trend.

He picked up on a common refrain: cooperatives are having a hard time finding qualified candidates to run for positions on their governing boards.

As not-for-profit organizations, electric cooperatives don't have pockets deep enough to dangle large compensation packages in front of potential board candidates. This reality tends to narrow the field of interested parties.

After hearing this a few too many times, Sutton decided to take action and do something about it. He began working to develop a leadership program through his non-profit Billie Sutton Leadership Institute to encourage and inspire rural co-op members to consider campaigning for a board position.

The new year-long leadership development program is called "Rural POWER: Powering Opportunities While Energizing Rural." It will be held alongside the third leadership class offered by the Institute. The first program in 2019 attracted more than 100 applicants to fill 12 spots. Last year's class drew roughly 70 applicants but was hampered by the impact of the pandemic.

Sutton surmised that the high interest level in the Institute's first two programs stems from a desire to return to a more community-focused style of leadership and steer away from a brand of politics that appears to be growing more openly hostile.

His supposition comes from the comments he heard not only during his six years serving in the state senate but also from voters during his gubernatorial campaign three years ago in which he received more than 167,000 votes while losing the race to Gov. Kristi Noem.



Billie Sutton and his wife, Kelsea (foreground) are shown with the Institute's inaugural class of rural leaders.

"I think people were excited about a new style of leadership I brought to the table that's focused on service, finding common ground, overcoming adversity and getting things done on behalf of the people. I think people are tired of politics as usual," he said.

For the Institute's inaugural class, applicants ranged in age from 18 to 60 and represented a plethora of professional backgrounds: health care, teaching, education administration, local elected officials, ranchers and more. Sutton said he hopes the new program will also attract interest from a diverse set of applicants.

Rural POWER will kick off this summer and is sponsored by the South Dakota Farmers Union. Participants will engage in educational leadership training opportunities emphasizing community building and

Participants will engage in educational leadership training opportunities emphasizing community building and serving neighbors, while learning from cooperative leaders.

serving neighbors, while learning from cooperative leaders who have demonstrated their commitment to rural development. They will gain the knowledge and enthusiasm to re-imagine and re-energize rural South Dakota, Sutton said.



Rural POWER aims to provide leadership training that will help re-invent and re-energize rural South Dakota.

The program has an advocate in Melissa Maher, general manager at Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake. Maher notes that while most of the state's electric co-ops qualify as "rural," that doesn't mean they are merely small-time mom-and-pop operations. For instance, Moreau-Grand Electric is a member-owned business with more than \$47 million in assets.

Maher said it's important that electric co-ops be run by managers and board members dedicated to the task at hand. Board directors are democratically elected by the members in their respective districts and charged with the responsibility of developing the policies that guide the future of the co-op. They also have certain legal, fiduciary and industry-related issues they must deal with during the course of carrying out their duties.

"These are positions of responsibility and leadership, and you need qualified people because they're making big decisions," Maher said, adding that serving on a co-op board requires considerable time and attention. "If someone is interested in being nominated, you have to be up front and honest about that fact. That's one of the first things people ask, and the honest answer is that it's a commitment."

Those who succeed in meeting their board responsibilities recognize and appreciate the fact they're contributing to the advancement of their entire service area by providing an essential commodity. Maher said it also takes a certain type of personality and temperament to be a successful board member.

"They have to learn protocol and there can be situations like dealing with personnel issues where they have to be discreet. They have to be the type of person who can agree to disagree and walk away and not let it get to them," Maher said. "They have to study up on the issues. We send out information a week ahead of time so that the board members can brush up on things and we can have a productive conversation. They need to care enough to be engaged and prepared."

Suzie Jones Pranger serves as executive director of the Institute. Today, Jones Pranger is an attorney living in rural Hartford, but she grew up on her family's farm in Burke and remembers her grandfather's involvement in her local co-op, Rosebud Electric.

"Even as a kid, I knew our power came from the local co-op, and I knew my family had a legacy of service to the co-op and our neighbors through my Grandpa's longtime position on the board," she said. "But what I never considered growing up is the need for subsequent generations to become active and continue to power our rural communities and our South Dakota way of life. Rural POWER will help build a pipeline of rural leaders ready to step up and take on leadership positions."

Kevin Mikkelsen, general manager of Rosebud Electric, is also supportive of the program and believes there is a lot of potential in the leadership program, especially when it comes to drawing some younger participants.

"I'm hoping the program sheds some light



on how cooperatives function and how they work on behalf of all the member-owners," he said. "All around the state, we really need to see some younger folks get involved and provide a new perspective and help us discover new and more effective ways to carry out our mission as co-ops, whether it's electric co-ops or ag-based co-ops."

Visit suttonleadership.org/rural-power to learn more about the program or to apply.

District Meetings & Director Election Details

Mark your calendar for local district meetings. Each member in attendance will receive a \$10 energy certificate.

Members residing in Davison County or Hanson 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 by the dates provided below. Petitions must be returned by the close of the business day at 4:30 p.m. on the petition due date.

When filed, forms must bear the names of at least ten (10) Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. members from the director district in which the candidate is seeking election. Completed petitions must be filed at least twenty-five (25) days prior to the District Meeting.

District 4, Davison County, is currently represented by Darwin "Butch" Morrison of Mitchell who is retiring when his term expires. District 5, Hanson County, is currently represented by Mark Hofer of Spencer.

District	Meeting Date	Meeting Location	Petition Available	Petition Due
Aurora County	June 7, 2021	4-H Building, Plankinton, SD	election in 2023	election in 2023
Brule County	June 21, 2021	4-H Building, Pukwana, SD	election in 2023	election in 2023
Buffalo County	June 2, 2021	Powwow Grounds, Fort Thompson, SD	election in 2023	election in 2023
Davison County	June 15, 2021	Fairgrounds, Mitchell, SD	May 3, 2021	May 21, 2021
Hanson County	June 14, 2021	St. Mary's Catholic Hall, Alexandria, SD	April 30, 2021	May 20, 2021
Jerauld County	June 8, 2021	4-H Building, Wessington Springs, SD	election in 2022	election in 2022
Miner County	June 10, 2021	4-H Building, Howard, SD	election in 2022	election in 2022
Sanborn County	June 22, 2021	4-H Building, Forestburg, SD	election in 2022	election in 2022

Director Election Bylaws

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 no more than forty-five (45) 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 twenty-five (25) days prior to the Member meeting at which Members are scheduled to elect Directors.

The completed nominating petition shall contain the name of the Nominating Petition Nominee; the Director position for which the Nominating Petition Nominee will run; and 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 Nomination. 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 Director positions for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring; and 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, except for the Director-at-Large, which shall be elected by the Members of the Cooperative Service Area, as follows:

A. For District Director positions at the District Meeting for which the incumbent Director's Director term is expiring.

B. For the Director-at-Large position at the Annual Meeting by all Members located or residing in the Cooperative Service Area.

C. From the Nominating Petition Nominees.

D. 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 in the Cooperative Service

Director Eligibility Guidelines

Are you considering running for a position on the Central Electric Cooperative Board of Directors? Davison County and Hanson County director positions expire in 2021. Director nominating petition deadlines are noted in the table on page 14.

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

Central Electric Cooperative Directors Must:

- Be willing to commit to 25+ working days per year to fulfill their duties
- Attend 10 out of 12 regular board meetings each year (third Monday each month)
- Be a cooperative member in good standing
- Permanently reside in the district from which they are elected
- Have their primary residence served by Central Electric Cooperative or meet corporate qualifications
- Not be a close relative of an existing director unless the director will cease serving within 1 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
- Pass a background check that indicates no felonies within 5 years
- Obtain director certification from National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- Comply with other reasonable qualifications determined by the board

This is a basic snapshot of director eligibility guidelines. A full list of director eligibility requirements is available in the cooperative's bylaws which can be viewed at www.centralec.coop. Please contact General Manager Ken Schlimgen at 1-800-477-2892 if you have director eligibility questions.

Area by Member written ballot.

F. By a plurality of the votes cast by a quorum of Members in person who are entitled to vote for the Director position. In case of a tie Director vote, the Director elected shall be determined by a drawing by lot. 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.

G. Tellers shall be appointed to collect and count the ballots.

H. 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.

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

SECTION 4.07. Director Terms

A Director's term is three (3) years ("Director term"). A Director elected at the Annual District Meeting or at the Annual Member meeting will be seated following the adjournment of the recessed portion of the first regular monthly board meeting following the Annual Member Meeting and will terminate with the adjournment of the recessed portion of the first regular monthly board meeting following the Annual Member Meeting. The Cooperative shall stagger Director terms by dividing the total 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.

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

April 22-May 2

Beauty & the Beast, Sioux Empire Community Theatre, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-6000

April 23-24

Junkin' Market Days, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD
605-941-4958

April 24

Party for the Planet, Great Plains Zoo, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-7003

April 30-May 2, May 6-8

Radium Girls, Pierre Players Community Theatre, Pierre, SD
605-224-7826

May 8

Davis Flea Market & Artisan Fair, Main Street, Davis, SD
605-940-0069

May 8

Wells Fargo Cinco de Mayo Fiesta, Falls Park, Sioux Falls, SD
605-271-0468

May 8 NEW DATE

Winefest Renaissance, Boys & Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD
605-225-8714

May 9

Mother's Day Tours, Historic Adams House & Days of '76 Museum, Deadwood, SD
605-578-37241

May 13

Vermilion-Area Farmers Market - Plant Sale, High & Cherry Streets, Vermilion, SD
605-659-3399



State Parks Open House & Free Fishing Weekend, May 21-23, 2021

May 15

Red Dirt Music Festival featuring Casey Donahew, Ian Munsick and Randy Burghardt Mountain Grand, Deadwood, SD
605-559-0386

May 21-23

Annual Sound of Silence Tesla Rally, Downtown, Custer, SD
605-673-2244

May 21-23

State Parks Open House & Free Fishing Weekend, All State Parks & Recreation Areas, SD
605-773-3391

May 22

Frühlingsfest & Spring Market, Main Street, Rapid City, SD
605-716-7979

May 22

Take the Reins Horsemanship Clinic, Reclamation-Ranch, Mitchell, SD
605-770-2867

May 31

PPQG 25th Annual Quilt Show, Harding County REC Center, Buffalo, SD
605-641-5591

June 3-6

Wheel Jam, South Dakota State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD
605-353-7340

June 4-5

State BBQ Championships, South Dakota State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD
605-353-7354

June 4-6

Black Hills Blues Stomp & Swamp Romp, Rush No More RV Resort & Campground, Sturgis, SD
605-347-2916

June 4-6

Lake Andes Fish Days, City-wide, Lake Andes, SD
605-487-7694

June 19

Helping with Horsepower ATV/UTV/4-Wheeler Poker Run, Reclamation-Ranch, Mitchell, SD
605-770-2867

June 25-27

I-90 Scavenger's Journey - Stickney to Kadoka, I-90, SD
605-999-7287

August 21

Plankinton Pheasant Fest, Plankinton, SD

September 11-12

Fall Harvest Festival, Delmont, SD
605-928-3792

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.