

# COOPERATIVE

## CONNECTIONS



### Wall Meats Expansion

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Meatcutting in  
New Underwood  
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# Always Advocating For You



**Ken Schlimgen**  
General Manager

Electric cooperatives like ours were born out of political will and determination. Our mission was launched by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's stroke of the pen after Congress passed the Rural Electrification Act in 1936. This marked the beginning of significant improvement to our quality of life that could only be achieved with access to electricity. Since then, electric cooperatives have been working alongside our elected

leaders to ensure the sustainability of our cooperative business model and the continued ability to provide electricity at a reasonable cost.

To continue this legacy, representatives from Central Electric will visit Washington, D.C., in April to engage with South Dakota's congressional delegation. Our purpose is clear: to address the challenges and opportunities facing electric cooperatives today while advocating for policies that allow us to best serve you, our valued members.

One of the foremost topics of discussion is the vital importance of maintaining reliable and affordable electricity. Everyone expects the lights to stay on every hour of the day without causing a financial burden. As the demand for electricity rises, regulatory pressures are impacting our ability to maintain a diverse and reliable energy mix.

Renewable energy sources undoubtedly play a crucial role in our power supply, but we must also acknowledge the limitations of relying solely on intermittent sources like solar and wind. Our energy policies must strike a balance

that ensures a steady and affordable power supply around the clock.

Moreover, we will address the pressing issue of supply chain challenges affecting Central Electric and other cooperatives nationwide. Procuring essential grid components such as transformers in a timely manner has become increasingly difficult. We will advocate for sensible policies that alleviate these supply chain constraints, safeguarding the reliability of our services while keeping costs manageable for you, our members.

Additionally, we will discuss the significance of federal funding opportunities to support the replacement, improvement and construction of energy infrastructure. Infrastructure funding bills passed by Congress in recent years have provided access to loan funds needed to enhance our systems and better serve our communities. We will urge our congressional delegation to continue supporting such initiatives, ensuring that rural electric cooperatives receive the necessary resources to operate and thrive.

Furthermore, we will highlight the critical role of federal funding through programs like the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund, which has been instrumental in driving economic growth and community development in our region. By securing continued support for these programs, we can foster prosperity and opportunity within our service area.

Our commitment to political involvement remains unwavering as we advocate for policies that prioritize your needs and safeguard the affordability and reliability of your power supply.

Thank you for entrusting us with the responsibility of serving you. Together, we will continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead to achieve a brighter and more sustainable future for all.

The district meeting times and locations are on page 15 of this newsletter. Please make plans to attend your local meeting. Bring a neighbor and your questions so we can enjoy an interactive evening of discussing issues important to you. See you there.

Until next month, stay safe!

**District Meeting  
Schedule On Page 15**

**CENTRAL ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

(USPS 018-963)

**Board of Directors**

Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink, President  
 Brule County - Bradee Pazour  
 Buffalo County - Donita Loudner, SDREA Director  
 Davison County - Jeff Gustafson  
 Hanson County - Mark Hofer - Secretary & NRECA Director  
 Jerauld County - Mark Reindl, Treasurer  
 Miner County - Robert Banks - Director  
 Sanborn County - Todd VanWalleghen, Vice President  
 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](http://www.centralelec.coop).

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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](mailto:cec@centralelec.coop); website: [www.centralelec.coop](http://www.centralelec.coop).

**Contact Us**

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
 Phone: 1-800-477-2892 or 1-605-996-7516

**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, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, 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 responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. 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](http://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, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

**Board Meeting Summary**

The board of directors met Feb. 19, 2024, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management, including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

**BOARD REPORT**

General Manager Schlimgen updated the board of directors on the SDREA Managers Meeting, East River Electric Managers Advisory Committee, Basin Electric activities, commercial development activities, legislative cracker barrel meetings and other management initiatives.

Schlimgen shared the draft Request For Proposal (RFP) for architectural and engineering services for a new Howard outpost. A sub-committee will review proposals and make a recommendation.

Manager of Finance & Administration Dean Uher reviewed 2023 year-end financials, historical ratios and equity management concepts.

David Noess of Federated Insurance provided an overview of claims history and a review of Central Electric's insurance policies and coverages. Discussion followed.

Schlimgen reviewed updates to the proposed Policy 404 – Meter Tampering and Power Diversion.

Director Merl Bechen discussed NRECA's Cybersecurity Guidebook for Board Members and recommended the book to his fellow directors.

Director Todd VanWalleghen reported on South Dakota Association of Cooperative (SDAC) meeting.

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

Director Wolbrink reported on the East River Electric board meeting.

**BOARD ACTION**

The board considered or acted on the following items:

- A motion was made and seconded to authorize the board president and secretary to execute labor-only contract for Larson Digging, Inc. on behalf of Central Electric. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to authorize the board president and secretary to execute labor-only contract for Dave's Construction on behalf of Central Electric. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to authorize the board president and secretary to execute labor-only contract for Ivan's Boring on behalf of Central Electric. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to adopt Policy 404 – Meter Tampering and Power Diversion. Motion carried.

There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting. The next board meeting was scheduled for March 18.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE FEB. 2023	YEAR TO DATE FEB. 2024
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	63,458,460 kWh	67,446,393 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 6,250,813	\$ 6,913,634
Total Cost of Service	\$ 5,875,179	\$ 6,907,403
Operating Margins	\$ 375,634	\$ 6,232

# Your Safety Matters

## Prevent home electrical fires

Eight out of 10 fire-related deaths occur at home – the place that embodies comfort and security. That’s why it’s important to take steps to keep everyone safe.

Faulty or deteriorating electrical cords are a top cause of fires at home. Cords that become frayed or cracked can send sparks to flammable surfaces. Check your cords to ensure that they are in good shape, and replace any that are worn.

In addition, make sure you are not overloading circuits. If you’ve been in your home for more than 10 years, have your circuit breaker box inspected by a licensed electrician to tighten loose connections and check for overloaded circuits.



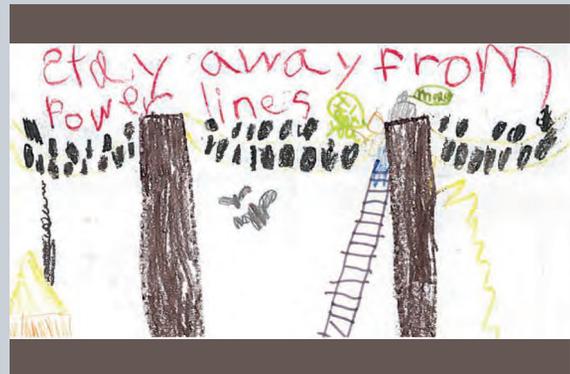
Homes with copper wiring need to be inspected every 20 years, and homes with aluminum wiring should be inspected every five years.

Check all Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets several times each year by pushing the test/reset button to be sure they are working properly.

If breakers are continually tripping or if fuses are blowing frequently, that’s a sign of potential trouble. The cause could be old wiring unable to handle the load demand of today’s modern appliances. If needed, ask a licensed electrician to install additional circuits for safety.

Use surge protectors and power bars to help prevent overloading an electrical outlet, plugging no more than three cords into the strip.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. We urge you to take the time and steps needed to lower the risks of electrical fires. Keep your family safe.



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Weston Koistinen, Age 6

Weston Koistinen warns readers to be safe by staying away from power lines. Weston’s parents are Dion and Stephanie Koistinen, members of H-D Electric Cooperative.

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

# SUMMER CASSEROLES

## BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 5 oz. package croutons, any flavor
- 2 cup sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 lb. sausage, fried and drained
- 9 eggs
- 1 can evaporated milk
- 1 tbsp. mustard

### Method

Spray 9x13 pan with vegetable oil. Arrange croutons on bottom. Sprinkle cheese over croutons and put sausage over cheese. Combine eggs, milk and mustard. Beat to blend and pour into pan. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Janet Ochsner  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CHICKEN CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 package Chicken Stove Top Stuffing mix
- 3 cups cooked cut up chicken
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups chicken broth

### Method

Grease a 9x13 pan and put 1/2 of the stuffing mix in the pan. Cover with chicken. Combine soups and milk and spoon over chicken. Spread other 1/2 of stuffing over the top. Pour 2 cups of chicken broth over all and spread with beaten eggs. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Gail Lee  
Brookings, S.D.

## TACO CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 can (16 oz.) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce
- 1 can (11 oz.) whole kernel corn, drained
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup coarsely crushed tortilla chips

### Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brown meat in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Stir in seasoning mix, beans, tomato sauce and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Spoon into 2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and tortilla chips. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with assorted toppings, if desired.

McCormick

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# Plugged In With Patrick



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

## ELECTRIC VEHICLE UPDATE

As you may know, Central Electric owns a 2022 Ford F-150 Lightning electric vehicle (EV) and an electric Polaris Ranger Kinetic side-by-side. Your cooperative is studying EVs and the energy-related impacts of charging at home and on the farm. We have owned the pickup for about a year now, and I want to share some things that we have learned along the way.

We were excited to take ownership of a Ford Lightning in April 2023 so we could start to learn how EVs may affect the demand for electric power. A couple of months after we took ownership of the pickup, it collided with a deer on the way to the Miner County District Meeting in June. Thankfully, no employees were seriously injured in the accident. The vehicle was still drivable but had many dents and broken pieces.

Following the accident, it took extra time for employees at the body shop to learn how to work on an EV and the different precautions involving the batteries during the finishing stages.

After four months in the body shop, the repairs were mostly complete and we got the pickup back in November. Because of the length of time it took to repair, employees may have been afraid to drive it and cause any new damage that would put it back out of commission. However, those fears would eventually subside and it started getting more usage in January as it made the rounds to the outposts in Kimball, Wessington Springs, Plankinton and Howard. Most of our linemen now have some experience driving the Ford Lightning.

## COLD WEATHER & RANGE

During a recent cold stretch, the electric pickup and electric side-by-side UTV sat outside for three nights in the -20 degree weather. When I came back on Monday, it was still very cold outside. Both vehicles started easily and warmed up very quickly. When I said quick, they were warm and ready to go within about five minutes.

As expected, the pickup's estimated range during the winter is about half of the summer range. That's why we selected a model with an extended-range battery. During the summer months, the maximum range is estimated at 320 miles. The estimated range drops to about 162 miles in cold weather.

## CHARGING & FUEL COST COMPARISON

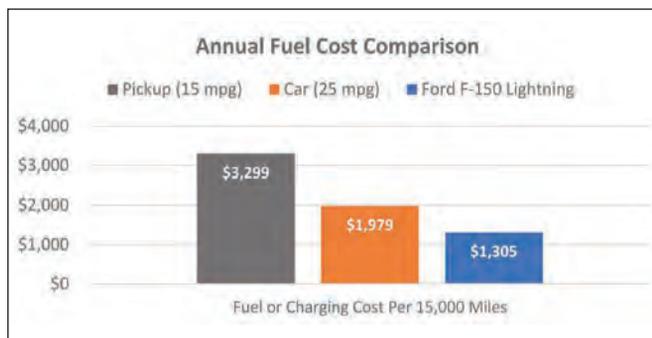
We have primarily been using a regular 120-volt outlet to charge the EV, but work is underway to install a faster after-market Ford charging system. In the future, we will likely see members installing similar charging systems at their homes and farms, so this will be an important component as we study the impacts of EV charging.

A key metric that is important to share is the cost of driving the pickup. Like most EVs, the vast majority of charging is done "at home" in the Mitchell shop. The cost to charge is approximately 12 cents per kilowatt hour. So far, that has added up to roughly 11.6 cents per mile to recharge in the winter and 5.8 cents per mile to recharge in the summer for an overall average of about 8.7 cents per mile.

By comparison, a gas-powered pickup that averages 15 miles per gallon costs 21.99 cents per mile in fuel costs if gas is \$3.299 per gallon. A gas-powered car that gets 25 miles per gallon costs 13.2 cents to operate when gas is \$3.299 per gallon.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, the average South Dakotan drives approximately 15,000 miles per year.

Switching from a pickup that gets 15 miles per gallon to a Ford Lightning EV could save the average driver \$1994 per year in fuel costs. Switching from a car that gets 25 miles to the gallon to a Ford Lightning EV could save the average driver \$674 per year. That assumes gas is \$3.299 per gallon and all EV charging is done at 12 cents per kilowatt hour. Public charging will generally cost more than charging at home.



This is just a snapshot of estimated fuel cost savings when comparing a gas-powered vehicle to the Ford Lightning. This analysis does not factor in additional costs of owning a gas-powered vehicle such as oil changes and other regular maintenance that often isn't required on an EV.

If you'd like to see the Ford F-150 Lightning, it will be on display at the upcoming district meetings in May and June. The full district meeting schedule is on page 15.

We have learned a great deal over the past year, and there is still more to learn regarding EVs and charging. We will continue to share our EV experiences going forward. Thanks for taking the time to read this update.

# Juniors Selected To Attend Youth Tour

Central Electric Cooperative is sending seven high school juniors on the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Youth Tour in June. Your cooperative sponsors the trip to Washington, D.C., to support the development of future members and community leaders.

The 2024 Youth Tour delegates are: Alexys Fink, daughter of Troy and Kerry Fink of Plankinton; Daniel Leiferman, son of Todd and Hillary Leiferman of Kimball; Kitahna Charging Hawk, daughter of Wahinapa Charging Hawk of Fort Thompson; Madisyn Raymond, daughter of Jason and Betsy Raymond of Ethan; Carson Ferry, son of Glen and Valerie Ferry of Fulton; Robert Hine, son of Jason Hine and Kate Schmidt of Wessington Springs; Avarie Prien, daughter of Fred and Michelle Prien of Letcher. There were no applicants from Miner County. Congratulations to these impressive students!



**Alexys Fink**  
White Lake H.S.  
Aurora County Rep.



**Daniel Leiferman**  
Kimball H.S.  
Brule County Rep.



**Kitahna Charging Hawk**  
Crow Creek H.S.  
Buffalo County Rep.



**Madisyn Raymond**  
Ethan H.S.  
Davison County Rep.



**Carson Ferry**  
Hanson H.S.  
Hanson County Rep.



**Robert Hine**  
W. Springs H.S.  
Jerauld County Rep.



**Avarie Prien**  
Hanson H.S.  
Sanborn County Rep.

# Students Awarded Scholarships



**Jerin Schulz**  
MTC Scholar



**Carson Weber**  
MTC Scholar

Central Electric Cooperative is awarding \$3,000 in scholarships to local students. The scholarships are funded by Central Electric, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the family of the late Jay Headley of White Lake.

Two \$500 scholarships are awarded to member-dependent students enrolled in eligible programs at Mitchell Technical College (MTC). Students apply through the MTC Foundation and they are objectively ranked by the school. Jerin Schulz, son of Ben and Carissa Schulz of Emery, was awarded a \$500 Central Electric MTC scholarship. He is a student in the electrical construction and maintenance program. Carson Weber, son of Victor and Kellie Weber of Emery, was also awarded a \$500 Central Electric MTC scholarship. He is studying agronomy at MTC.

Quinton Berg, son of Bob and Heidi Berg of Emery, will receive the \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship. He plans to attend Fort Scott Community College in Kansas and pursue a degree in ag business.

Hailey Kizer, daughter of Brian and Heather Kizer of Howard, will be awarded the \$1,000 Jay Headley Memorial Scholarship. She plans to study animal science at South Dakota State University.



**Quinton Berg**  
Basin Electric Scholar



**Hailey Kizer**  
Jay Headley Memorial Scholar

Qualifying students must receive electric service from Central Electric at their primary residence. Recipients are selected by outside judges not affiliated with Central Electric. To learn more about Central Electric's scholarship programs, visit [www.centralec.coop](http://www.centralec.coop).



Patsy Besson helps package fresh cuts of meat at the Wall Meat Processing plant.  
Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel

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## Wall Meats Revives Local Meatcutting in South Dakota Through New Underwood Expansion

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

A local meat processing plant is expanding its footprint in Pennington County in a way that will put more locally produced protein on dinner tables and bolster the local meat processing workforce throughout South Dakota.

The man behind this plan is local business owner Ken Charfauros, who owns Wall Meat Processing, which has locations in Wall and Rapid City.

Charfauros is currently raising funds through a capital drive campaign to finance the construction of a 30,000 square foot meat processing facility in New Underwood. The new facility will help train the next generation of meat processors through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City.

“We are at \$2.8 million in our drive. We also have the \$3.3 million USDA Rural Development grant, which is a meat and poultry expansion plan grant. We are about \$200,000 short of our goal,” Charfauros said.

He added that the New Underwood processing plant will also use funding from the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP), which according to the USDA’s website “provides grant funding to intermediary lenders who finance – or plan to finance – the start-up, expansion, or operation of slaughter, or other processing of meat and poultry. The objective of the MPILP is to strengthen the financing capacity for independent meat processors, and to create a more resilient, diverse, and secure U.S. food supply chain.”

Charfauros said he’s still meeting with potential investors and has a financial team focused on creating relationships with local ag producers.

“After we get our capital drive, the plan itself will be about \$21 million,” he added. “And then we start the project. The groundbreaking is going to happen in about a year and the facility will begin operations six months after that.”

Charfauros said he expects to purchase the property to site the new plant this spring.

### Returning to a Passion

Wall Meats Processing opened for business 57 years ago, but

Charfauros took ownership over the facility in 2017. His passion for meat cutting began when he was a teenager while working for a local meat plant in Delaware.

“It was my high school job and I loved it. After I graduated high school, I felt that my country needed me, so I joined the Air Force and did 30 years. But I always missed that part of my life,” Charfauros recalled.

“A guy that taught me how to cut was like my second dad, and I always wanted to come back to it. My son had just graduated from South Dakota State University, and I had retired from the Air Force. That’s when we decided to buy a plant.”

His son manages the store in Rapid City while Ken’s three nephews help run the family’s businesses in Wall, which include Wall Meats and the Red Rock restaurant.

## Supporting Local Producers

Building the new facility has been a challenging venture that’s been years in the making.

“We started building this plan about four years ago, then COVID hit and got in our way. Then, we were lucky enough to get those grant awards last year, and ever since we have been working diligently to get the format right,” Charfauros said.

“I have drawings. I have an equipment list all put together — everything is ready to go except for this capital drive that we are undergoing.”

Charfauros said he has been meeting with both potential and locked-in investors daily over the last year to produce the required financing.

“We have met with over 600 people with 99 percent of those people being producers, because this is all for them. This plant offers them premium pricing above the market rates,” Charfauros said.

While the cattle market is high now, Charfauros remains realistic that the market can change for the worse.

While he hopes the market remains high enough for producers to survive, his partnership with producers will serve as

added security. That means the partnership must be tightknit.

He knows he cannot do it alone.

## Reviving a Dying Art

“Meat cutting is a dying art, and we teach meat processing at our store in Rapid City to bring that art back. We’re trying to fight for that industry as it is,” he said.

Three meat processing students are currently being taught at the Rapid City facility through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech, which recently began offering the two-year program.

Pam Stillman-Rokusek, director of communications and marketing at Western Dakota Tech, said three students are currently enrolled in the Meat Processing program. Of those three, two will graduate in May.

But the college is still working on more outreach.

“Enrollment has been a bit low in the program, so the plan is for a hiatus this fall. They’ll revamp the curriculum. Then, we will certainly do additional outreach. We have done advertising, gone to the schools. We have reached out to 4-H

groups and done some traveling, but we need to turn it up a notch to produce more students in the program. That is our goal,” Stillman-Rokusek said.

Despite the Meat Processing program being put on hiatus, the school will still ensure that the remaining student completes the program while actively working on developing the program and outreach methods.

“There’s such a high need for meat processors and we’re looking at different ways to fill that gap. It’s something we’re committed to doing,” she added.

The goal is to enroll at least five students in the following school years when the program restarts.

The learning center that will be built within the New Underwood facility will also teach producers, in addition to students, the art of meat cutting.

“We are trying to bring that industry back to what it should be—regionally processed protein,” Charfauros said.

“That means we must build the environment to spark that passion. In anything you do, you need to learn how to do it the right way.”



Wall Meat Processing plant, established in 1957. Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel

# Notice of Capital Credit Allocations



Each spring, members receive notification of capital credits acquired the previous year. Members will not receive a refund 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 does not earn profits like other businesses. After the co-op

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 the 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.

When the board decides 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 through the equity you have invested.

**Administrative Professionals Day is April 24!**

Please show your appreciation for the front office team. This group is the calm during the storm, keeping us organized, sharing information and easing the minds of those we serve. Their work is appreciated!

## Employee Years of Service

 <b>Dustin</b> 29 years on May 8	 <b>Donn</b> 25 years on May 17	 <b>Paul</b> 23 years on May 21	 <b>Wade</b> 17 years on May 14
 <b>Dustin</b> 17 years on May 16	 <b>Aaron</b> 14 years on May 24	 <b>Rodney</b> 12 years on May 1	

## Hearts & Hammers of S.D. Named Finalist in Regional 'Who Powers You' Contest

Hearts and Hammers of South Dakota, a new non-profit serving residents in Miner County, has been named a finalist in the third annual "Who Powers You" contest hosted by Central Electric Cooperative and the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

Hearts and Hammers of South Dakota is part of the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance. Through the organization, volunteers from several local churches help

fix up home exteriors for the elderly and others who need assistance. Donations are used to help pay for materials, supplies, equipment and contractors.

Mark Struwe and Mary Leary were recognized for their efforts in kickstarting Hearts and Hammers of

South Dakota during the "Who Powers You" segment on Keloland Living.

Struwe said the organization combines faith and service to make a difference in the lives of others.

"We reignited the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, and it took off. We are very grateful for the support," Struwe said.

Leary explained, "We developed this organization because, in Miner County, many homes need exterior repairs, and it can be difficult for seniors and others to get the necessary repairs completed."

She added, "We are very grateful to Central Electric, East River Electric and Touchstone Energy for this opportunity."

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

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



## Co-op Directors Recognized for Educational Achievements

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) recently recognized three Central Electric Cooperative directors for continued education to maintain the Director Gold Credential certification.



**Duane Wolbrink**  
Central Electric Board  
President & East  
River Electric Power  
Cooperative Director

Board President Duane Wolbrink, Vice President Todd VanWalleghen and Secretary Mark Hofer have worked diligently to continue growing their governance knowledge of the electric industry to best serve the members they represent.

Director Gold Credential recognizes directors who have earned their Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificates and wish to continue to learn throughout their service on the board.

Ongoing educational curriculum may include advanced courses in director duties and liabilities, board operations, strategic planning and financial decision making.

A quickly evolving business environment has imposed new demands on cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of electric utilities, governance skills and the cooperative principles. Central Electric is committed to sharpening this body of knowledge for the benefit of the cooperative and its member-owners.

Besides serving on the Central Electric board of directors, each of these professionals goes above and beyond through their work with



**Todd VanWalleghen**  
Central Electric Board  
Vice President &  
S.D. Association of  
Cooperatives Director



**Mark Hofer**  
Central Electric Board  
Secretary & National  
Rural Electric Cooperative  
Association Director

other organizations. Wolbrink represents Central Electric on the East River Electric Power Cooperative board of directors. VanWalleghen serves on the S.D. Association of Cooperatives board of directors. Hofer serves on the S.D. Wind Energy Association board and represents South Dakota on the NRECA board of directors.



# CYBERSECURITY ON THE GRID

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Imagine sitting at your desk on a typical Monday morning. You have logged into your computer with coffee in hand, ready to tackle the day. But as you begin, your computer displays an ominous message: “Your files have been encrypted. Pay a ransom to regain access.” It’s not just your computer; your co-workers have received the same message. Overnight, the entire office has fallen victim

to a ransomware attack that has locked away critical data. Your office computers will remain unusable until a payment is made.

This scenario, among others, has become a primary concern for workplaces everywhere, including electric cooperatives. As a result, local co-ops are taking action in the cybersecurity space to prevent bad actors from disrupting the critical goal of delivering power that is safe, affordable and reliable to their members. Electric co-ops are focused

on enhancing cybersecurity resilience and readiness to defend against potential cyber threats.

Co-ops are routinely monitoring and managing cyber risks, working with federal and local law enforcement agencies and the North American Electric Reliability Corp. to protect critical infrastructure. By working as a network, co-ops are enhancing grid resilience, ensuring reliable electricity for their members.

According to an FBI Internet Crime Report, the U.S. reported more than \$12.5 billion in annual losses in 2023 due to cyberattacks like the one described. A significant number of these attacks target the elderly and vulnerable. When breaking down the losses by age group, individuals aged

20 to 29 accounted for \$360.7 million of the total losses, while those 60 and older incurred losses of \$3.4 billion in 2023 alone.

And it's not just about the money. These attacks also have the potential to undermine the stability of entire systems, including the electrical grid. This year, directors of the FBI, NSA, and CISA testified before Congress about Chinese Communist Party hacking groups that had gained access to the electric grid and other critical infrastructure to "wreak havoc and cause real-world harm to American citizens and communities."

"Many cyberattacks are conducted by criminals trying to steal money or collect a ransom," explains Chief Security and Compliance Officer Daniel Graham of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. "Nation-states

target electric utilities for different reasons. Some nation-states want to steal intellectual property. Others want to be able to disrupt our electric grid."

So how is it done? To execute their schemes, bad actors employ a long list of complex strategies and techniques, such as phishing, data breaches and malware to adversely impact their targets. Business email compromise, one of the most common techniques, occurs when an impostor poses as a legitimate business contact, seeking to steal sensitive information such as credit card numbers, bank account information or login credentials.

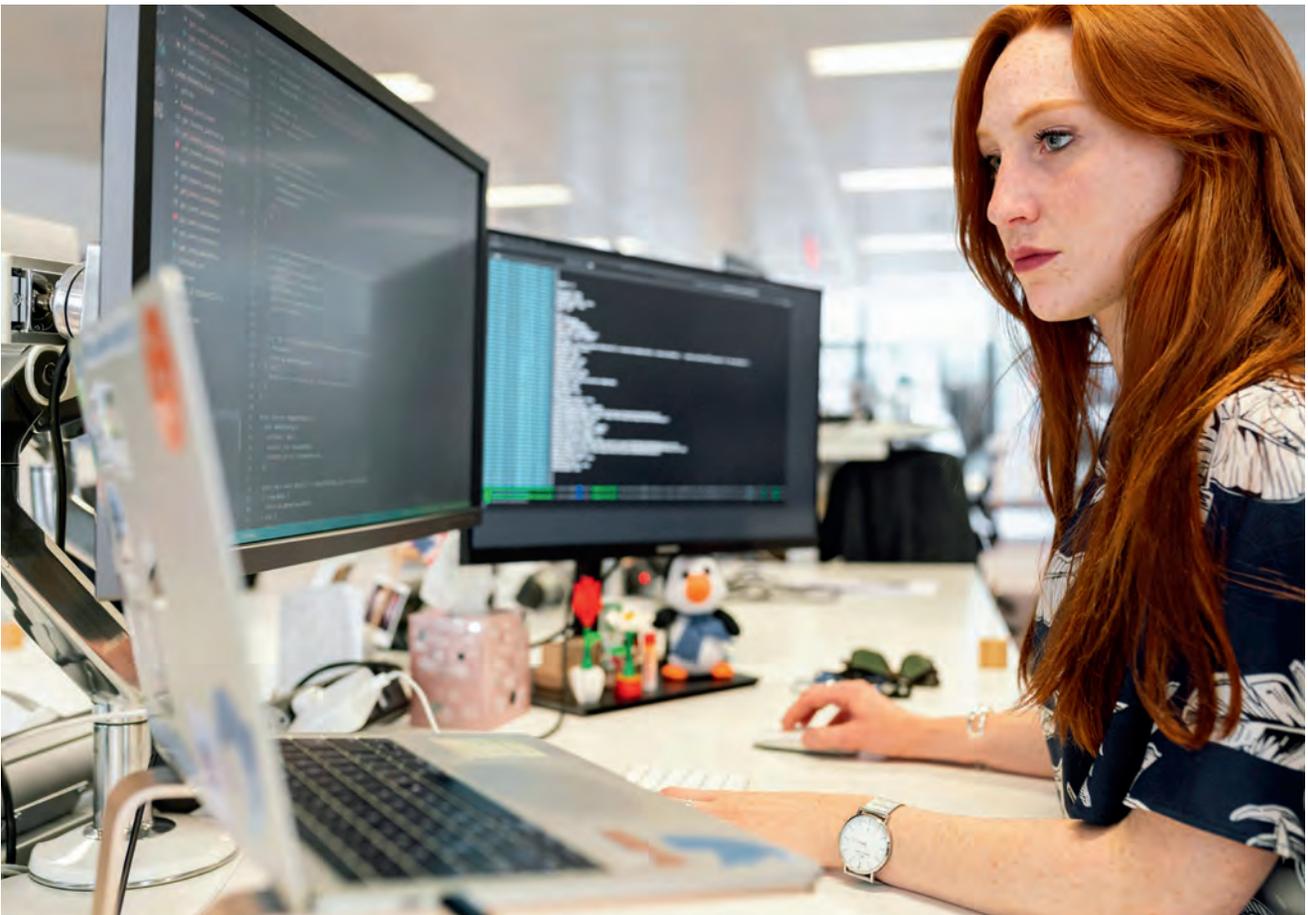
Luckily, co-ops are implementing a variety of tools, policies and training to help mitigate attacks and secure the grid. Programs like NRECA's Co-op Cyber Goals Program help co-ops build fundamental cybersecurity

measures, such as employee training, developing cyber incident response plans, and regular self-assessment. These strategies help co-ops reduce the risk of a successful cyberattack in the ongoing battle against cybercrime.

"Additionally, co-ops can conduct cybersecurity exercises to determine the effectiveness of current defenses and practice responses," Graham says.

Despite these efforts, the threat of a successful cyberattack persists, making vigilance an essential component of effective cybersecurity.

"If you see something suspicious, report it to your cooperative," explains Graham. "Electric co-ops are an essential part of our country's critical infrastructure. We can best protect our electric grid by working with each other."





Manager of Member Services & Marketing Patrick Soukup teaches fourth graders about electrical safety during Ag in the Classroom.

## Building A Bright Future

Central Electric Cooperative is working to build a bright future through youth education initiatives. Your cooperative participates in a variety of programs, including Ag in the Classroom and Co-ops in the Classroom, that engage the next generation in electrical education and safety principles.

Ag in the Classroom is a youth education program offered by the Mitchell Area Chamber Ag Committee. It is an opportunity for fourth graders in the Mitchell area to learn about farm animals such as cows, horses, sheep, dogs and pigs. They also learn about soil, crops and the importance of safety around electricity and farm machinery.

Coops in the Classroom is a hands-on educational program offered to area schools by Central Electric and its wholesale power provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative. Protons, neutrons, electrons, insulators and conductors are major topics of discussion as students take an educational journey into the exciting world of electricity. Kids learn about electrical safety on the farm and in town.

To learn more about youth educational opportunities, contact Central Electric at 1-800-477-2892 or visit [www.centraleccoop.com](http://www.centraleccoop.com).



The future is bright at Woonsocket Elementary! Pedal Power is a demonstration that allows kids to become a power plant during Co-ops in the Classroom.



White Lake students had fun with static electricity during Co-ops in the Classroom.

# Co-op Surplus Equipment for Sale

The vehicles and trailer pictured below were declared surplus and will be sold to the highest bidder at Central Electric's Betts Road office on Thursday, May 16. Bidding is open to the public. The vehicles will be accessible for on-site viewing one hour prior to the sale at 9:00 a.m.

**When:** Thursday, May 16, 10:00 a.m.

**Where:** Central Electric Cooperative  
25487 403rd Avenue, Mitchell S.D.  
Interstate 90, Betts Road exit 325, half mile south

**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. Payment is expected in full at the conclusion of the sale.

For more information about the surplus equipment auction, contact Lincoln Feistner at 1-800-477-2892.



**2013 Chevrolet Express 2500**  
246,010 Miles  
6.0 Liter Gas Engine  
Opening Bid: \$4,000



**2011 Ford F-350 Super Duty XL**  
234,550 Miles  
6.7 Liter Diesel Engine, 4-Wheel Drive  
Opening Bid: \$6,500



**2006 Sterling A9500**  
517,020 Miles  
Detroit Diesel Engine  
Single-Axle Day Cab  
Opening Bid: \$6,500



**2006 Trail King Flatbed Trailer**  
41-Foot Semi Trailer  
Tandem 10,000 Pound Axles  
Electric Over Hydraulic Brakes  
Opening Bid: \$5,000

## ATTEND YOUR LOCAL DISTRICT MEETING

**Aurora County**  
June 10, 2024  
Ag Building,  
Plankinton  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Q&A session

**Hanson County**  
May 23, 2024  
A1 Al's Pheasant  
Ranch, Emery  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Director Election

**Brule County**  
June 5, 2024  
Ag Building,  
Pukwana  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Q&A session

**Jerauld County**  
May 29, 2024  
Springs Inn Cafe,  
Wessington Springs  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Q&A session

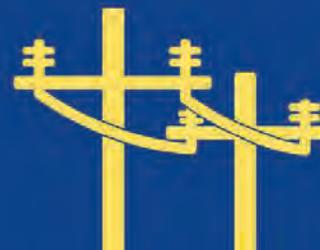
**Buffalo County**  
June 6, 2024  
Powwow Grounds,  
Fort Thompson  
Meal @ Noon  
Q&A session

**Miner County**  
May 30, 2024  
4-H Building,  
Howard  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Q&A session

**Davison County**  
May 20, 2024  
Fairgrounds  
Building, Mitchell  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Director Election

**Sanborn County**  
June 3, 2024  
4-H Building,  
Forestburg  
Meal @ 6:30pm  
Q&A session

**Enjoy a free meal, cookbook and good conversations. Attending members receive one \$10 energy bill credit per household.**





**MAY 11, 2024**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 Falls Park  
 Sioux Falls, SD

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.

**APRIL 26**  
**Mitchell Technical College Alumni Cornhole Tournament**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 World's Only Corn Palace  
 Mitchell, SD  
[www.mitchelltech.edu/foundation](http://www.mitchelltech.edu/foundation)

**APRIL 27**  
**66th Annual Lions Pancake Jamboree**  
 7 a.m.-1 p.m.  
 Masonic Hall  
 112 E 5th Ave.  
 Mitchell, SD

**MAY 4-5**  
**Flea Market**  
 9 a.m.-6 p.m.  
 Rustic Designs & More  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

**MAY 4-12**  
**Spring Show**  
 9 a.m.-6 p.m.  
 Rustic Designs & More  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

**MAY 11**  
**"Summer Shakes" Midwest Sprint Touring Series**  
 7 p.m.  
 Dakota State Fair Speedway  
 Huron, SD

**MAY 20-JUNE 10**  
**Central Electric Cooperative District Meetings**  
 Dates & locations on page 15

**JUNE 8**  
**"Challenge Cup XXII" Wheel Jam**  
 7 p.m.  
 Dakota State Fair Speedway  
 Huron, SD

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

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

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

**JUNE 22**  
**Alexandria Car Show**  
 Sponsored by Alexandria Fire District  
 Facebook.com/  
[alexandriafiredistrictSD](https://www.facebook.com/alexandriafiredistrictSD)  
 Alexandria, SD

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

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

**JULY 20**  
**S.D. MCC Relief Sale Food Court, Bake Sale, Live Auction & Silent Auction**  
 Free Admission & Parking  
 Pioneer Hall  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-7009

**JULY 20-21**  
**Charles Mix Saddle Club**  
 SDREA Rodeo  
 Geddes, SD  
 605-680-2763

**JULY 26-28**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
 Facebook & Instagram  
 Bruce, SD  
 605-627-5671

**AUG. 9**  
**Northern Bull Riding Tour Finals & Bull-a-Rama**  
 Geddes, SD  
 605-680-2763

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