



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pristine Prairie

**Tellus & Lori Waddell Grow,
Harvest Native Plants**

Pages 8-9

Drive Out to a Drive-In!

Pages 12-13

A Legacy of **SERVICE**

We invite you to join us for Central Electric Cooperative's 26th Annual Meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2026, at the World's Only Corn Palace in Mitchell. Registration begins at 5:30 p.m., followed by a three-meat buffet featuring broasted chicken, pork chops and roast beef. The business meeting will begin at 7 p.m.



Duane Wolbrink
Board President



Ryan Mueller
General Manager

This year's theme, "A Legacy of Service," recognizes the people, commitment and cooperative spirit that helped Central Electric serve our members and communities for generations. This year also marks the 90th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Act and the beginning of a movement that transformed rural America and helped make cooperatives like Central Electric possible.

Along with youth prizes and a scholarship drawing, we will give away twenty \$25 electric bill credits and two \$100 electric bill credits. Watch for the official notice postcard with additional details. We hope you and your family will join us as we come together to enjoy a meal and visit with friends and neighbors.

As we prepare for this year's meeting, we also want to look back at Central Electric's accomplishments and challenges during 2025. Below is a brief recap.

2025 HIGHLIGHTS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Electric Rates

- The average cost of electricity for Central Electric's farm and residential accounts was approximately 14 cents per kilowatt-hour, well below the 2025 national average of 18.44 cents.
- Rates were adjusted to address the rising costs of purchased power and maintaining the electric system while continuing to provide safe, reliable service.
- Central Electric remains focused on managing expenses responsibly and keeping rates as affordable as possible for our members while enhancing reliability.

Financials & Capital Credits

- The total cost of electric service increased by \$2,270,587.
- Central Electric returned \$1,280,000 in capital credits to member-owners, plus \$174,800 in estate retirements.
- Refer to page 6 for a detailed financial report.

Operations Department

- Completed 52 miles of new underground line to strengthen and improve the electric system.
- Installed 85 new electric services and upgraded 121 existing electric services.
- Continued to manage rising equipment costs, including the cost of vehicles, poles and transformers.
- Installed a new substation and related electrical infrastructure to serve the High Plains Processing plant south of Mitchell.

Load Management

- Continued the multi-year project to replace load management receivers throughout Central Electric's system, completing upgrades at four additional substations in 2025.
- Continued efforts to increase participation in the load management program, helping reduce peak demand and control power costs for the benefit of all members.

Service Department

- Completed approximately 1,600 service requests for heating and cooling, electrical wiring, security lighting and appliance work.
- Generated more than \$2.2 million in gross revenue.

Marketing & Member Services

- Issued \$41,800 in rebates to member-owners for 144 qualifying energy-efficiency improvements.
- Assisted key accounts and members considering distributed energy projects, including wind and solar.
- Provided members with information and support related to rates, programs, energy use and available services.

Operation Round-Up

- Awarded \$28,800 to projects across all eight counties in Central Electric's service territory.
- Reached \$250,000 in total grants awarded since 2016.
- Continued to demonstrate how small contributions can make a meaningful difference in our local communities.

Central Electric's mission is to provide reliable energy and services with a commitment to safety and member satisfaction. Earning and maintaining the trust of our membership remains at the heart of everything we do. Our board of directors, team of managers and employees continue to look for ways to operate more efficiently, prepare for changing industry challenges and strengthen the service we provide.

Please make plans to attend your Annual Meeting. We hope you will join us for an enjoyable evening as we celebrate Central Electric's Legacy of Service. The rest of the 2025 annual report can be found on subsequent pages of this newsletter.

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

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

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

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

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

Contact Us

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

Our Mission

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

Non-Discrimination Statement:

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

Mark Your Calendar!

2026 Annual Meeting

Tuesday, September 15

Meal 5:30-7:00 p.m. Business Meeting 7:00 p.m.

Corn Palace, Mitchell

A Legacy of
SERVICE

CENTRAL
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
Your Tradition Energy Cooperative

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met June 15, 2026, at Central Electric Cooperative's headquarters for the regular board meeting. They reviewed reports by management including details on operations, member services, communications, service department and financials.

Board Report

General Manager Schlimgen reported on the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Rural Electric Economic Development Fund activities, Basin Electric activities, the sale of the former Howard outpost, NISC merger, Brule County strategic planning sponsorship, and other management activities.

General Manager Schlimgen presented a resolution to the board of directors to declare surplus property.

General Manager Schlimgen shared information on the Mitchell Habitat Restore request for a REED loan. Discussion followed.

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

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve the following vehicles and equipment as surplus: Unit #9934 2007 GMC Sierra 3500, Unit #9971 2013 M2-106 Freightliner, #27-3 1993 Wells Cargo 7x14 enclosed trailer and #99-108 2006 All Terrain Genie Lift. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to support a REED loan application for the Mitchell Habitat Restore. The motion carried.

The next regular board meeting was scheduled for July 20. There being no further business, President Wolbrink adjourned the meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE JUNE 2026	YEAR TO DATE JUNE 2025
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	190,099,978 kWh	168,168,024 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 23,268,888	\$ 19,789,911
Total Cost of Service	\$ 22,343,511	\$ 19,239,664
Operating Margins	\$ 925,377	\$ 550,246

STAYING PREPARED IN RURAL S.D.

As most South Dakotans know, weather on the Great Plains can be frightfully unpredictable. In fact, South Dakota holds the record for the fastest temperature rise ever recorded. On Jan. 22, 1943, the temperature in Spearfish climbed from 4 degrees below zero to 45 degrees above zero in only two minutes.

Winter storms also offer reminders of how quickly severe weather can reshape daily life. The Blizzard of 1966 brought wind gusts of 70 mph and snowdrifts reaching more than 30 feet. Roads remained blocked for days, and massive livestock losses made it one of the most severe blizzards in state history.

Winter Storm Atlas, another devastating blizzard in October 2013, dropped several feet of snow over the Black Hills. Heavy snow and strong winds toppled trees and power lines, and devastated livestock operations, leaving some residents without electricity for a week or longer.

Although not every storm will make the record books, severe weather can still disrupt a household. A little preparation on an ordinary day can make a difficult day much easier.

Make A Plan

Emergency preparedness begins with a plan. FEMA recommends that households develop a plan for alerts, appropriate shelter, evacuation and communication if family members become separated.

Start by identifying the types of emergencies most likely to affect your area. For rural South Dakotans, that may include anything from blizzards and tornadoes to severe thunderstorms and wildfires. A good safety plan starts by choosing a safe place inside the home for high winds and tornadoes, generally a basement or small interior room, away from windows.

Next, consider who in your household may need extra help during an emergency, including infants, older adults and pets. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do, then walk through the plan together.

Build A Practical Supply Kit

Once the plan is in place, start collecting and organizing supplies your household could rely on if the power goes out or travel becomes difficult. FEMA recommends keeping enough food and water for at least several days, with one gallon of water per person for each day. For example, a

family of four preparing for three days would need at least 12 gallons of water.

Choose nonperishable foods your household already eats and that can be prepared without electricity. Then add the basics needed to get through an outage, including flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit and a way to recharge cellphones. A NOAA Weather Radio can also provide important updates even when cellphone service is unavailable.

Next, tailor the kit to your household. Set aside medications and other essentials.

There is no need to build the entire supply kit at once. Start with what is already in the house, then add supplies during regular shopping trips. Check the kit a few times each year to replace expired food, medications or batteries.

Preparedness cannot stop a storm, reopen a highway or restore electricity, but it can provide time and options when conditions begin to change.

For more information, visit Ready.gov for additional tips on making an emergency plan, building a supply kit and staying prepared.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Owen Williams, age 7

Owen reminds members to not plant trees near power lines. That is great advice, Owen! Thank you!

Owen's parents are Bruce and Jing Williams from Wakonda S.D.

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

FALL DESSERTS

GOLDEN GRAHAM/ SMORES BARS

Ingredients:

7 cups Golden Graham cereal
16 oz. mini marshmallows
1/2 cup butter
6 full size Hershey bars

Method

Unwrap Hershey bars and break apart on lines and then each piece again in half. Set aside. Melt the butter and 6 cups of the marshmallows. Stir in the Golden Grahams cereal. Cool for one minute. Stir in remaining marshmallows and Hershey pieces. Press lightly into a greased 9x13 pan with slightly wet hands. Cool and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsp. flour

Topping

(makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

VERY GOOD PEACH DESSERT

Ingredients:

First layer:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup nuts
1 stick margarine
Mix together and press in 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 F for 10 minutes.

Second layer:

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
Cream together and add 1 cup Cool Whip. Spread on top of cooled crust.

Third layer:

1 cup sugar
2 tbsp. white corn syrup
3 tbsp. cornstarch
1 cup water
Combine ingredients, cook until thickened, then remove from heat. Add 3 tbsp. of peach-flavored gelatin and 1/4 tsp. almond flavoring. Cool. Peel and slice fresh peaches, then combine with the cooled mixture. Spread on top of cheese filling. Top with a layer of whipped topping and chill.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

2025 YEAR END FINANCIALS

BALANCE SHEET	2025	2024
ASSETS - What we have		
Lines, Office Bldg and Operational Equipment	\$ 121,984,373	\$ 113,099,743
Less Depreciation	32,227,872	29,498,976
Total Electric Plant Less Depreciation	89,756,501	83,600,767
Cash and Investments:		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	3,843,811	3,999,911
Investment (Associated Organizations)	27,805,524	25,731,721
Investments (Other)	99,311	133,757
Total Cash Investments	31,748,646	29,865,389
Accounts Receivable	4,475,928	3,589,370
Materials and Supplies	6,632,412	7,324,695
Prepaid Insurance	227,972	201,295
Other Current and Accrued Assets	6,600	6,600
Deferred Debits	3,074,566	1,581,185
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 135,922,625	\$ 126,169,300
LIABILITIES - What we owe		
Loans Payable to RUS & CFC	\$ 76,885,329	\$ 70,069,788
Accounts Payable	3,036,723	2,472,224
Other Current and Accrued Liabilities	1,458,180	1,443,444
Deferred Credits and Regulatory Liabilities	205,743	214,140
Consumer Deposits	236,277	204,061
TOTAL AMOUNT OWED	\$ 81,822,252	\$ 74,403,657
MEMBER EQUITY - What's left after liabilities		
Patronage Capital and Other Equities	\$ 54,100,373	\$ 51,765,643
TOTAL EQUITIES	\$ 54,100,373	\$ 51,765,643
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 135,922,625	\$ 126,169,300

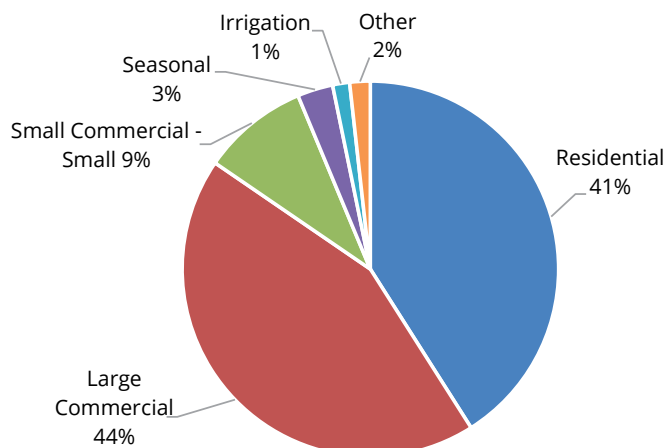
OPERATING STATEMENT	2025	2024
REVENUES - What the cooperative takes in		
Revenue from the Sales of Electricity, Wheeling/Fees	\$ 40,040,544	\$ 38,069,932
TOTAL REVENUE	\$ 40,040,544	\$ 38,069,932

EXPENSES - What the cooperative spends		
Cost of Purchased Power	\$ 25,282,015	\$ 24,291,527
Distribution-Operations Expense	1,530,877	1,282,872
Distribution-Maintenance Expense	2,496,505	2,161,640
Consumer Accounting and Collecting Expense	446,155	465,130
Consumer Service and Information Expense	546,979	517,310
Sales Expense	138,550	88,370
Administrative and General Expense	2,177,207	2,076,670
Depreciation Expense	3,076,894	2,891,134
Tax Expense	560,900	557,054
Interest Expense	2,442,315	2,099,673
Other Deductions	30,951	27,381
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$ 38,729,348	\$ 36,458,761

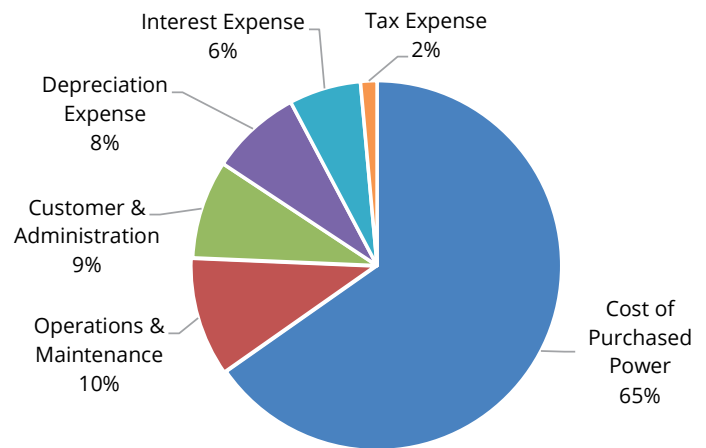
MARGINS - What's left after expenses		
Patronage Capital and Operating Margins	\$ 1,311,196	* \$ 1,611,171
Non-Operating Margins	425,188	198,213
Generation and Transmission and Other Capital Credits	1,962,620	1,670,972
PATRONAGE CAPITAL OR MARGINS	3,699,004	\$ 3,480,356

*Operating Margins included \$1,000,000 in deferred revenue in 2024.

2025 REVENUE



2025 EXPENSES





WONDROUS WILDFLOWERS & PRAIRIE PRESERVATION

Tellus and Lori Waddell.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Waddell Native Seeds Turns Rural Acreage into Prairie Paradise

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Journeying east on U.S. Hwy. 12 toward Milbank, as you make a steep descent into Whetstone Valley, you'll pass the usual South Dakota crops – corn, soybeans, some wheat here and there.

But for Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative members Tellus and Lori Waddell of Marvin, the most fascinating – and lucrative – harvest is one most of us would overlook, growing tall in roadside ditches and uncut fields.

For more than 30 years, the Waddells have allowed their Grant County acreage to run wild as they grow, harvest and sell the seeds of dozens of native wildflowers and grasses.

"We started noticing wildflowers up in the pasture, and at that time [the internet was] coming out so we could do some research on what they were," Lori recalled. "Tellus started calling nurseries asking them if they wanted this or that ... and that's how we built into this – and there are not a lot of people that do this."

When Lori says "this," she's referring to more than just collecting seeds. She means getting up early before the weather

is too hot, rolling up her sleeves and driving around the property in a side-by-side scanning the ground for patches of whichever wildflower type is ready to be harvested – by hand – for seeds.

"It's very, very labor-intensive," Tellus added. "It's not like picking flowers – because we don't pick a flower. You have to let [the seeds] develop. Right now, we're picking things that blossomed about six weeks ago."

With dozens of plants and just as many harvest schedules, the Waddells have a steady amount of work to do from mid-spring all the way into fall.

Traversing the lightly traveled trails over their expansive, glacially carved property, (this reporter was joined by two labs in the back seat of the side-by-side) Tellus and Lori are quick to point out distant patches of coneflowers, blazing star, wild turnips, vervain and their personal favorite flora they cultivate, milkweed.

"It's for the butterflies," Tellus explained as he pulled the vehicle up to the family's newest experiment: milkweed planted as a row crop.

"It's the first time we've ever done that," Tellus said, proudly explaining his youngest son, Levi Waddell, is heading up the initiative.

Tellus added, "As every generation takes over, you'll get different things."

Most outbuildings on the Waddells' land double as drying rooms for at least one harvest during the season.

That includes their three-stall garage – a more accurate description may be the seed processing facility – where the Waddells dry the seeds, separate them from the chaff and package them for shipment to area greenhouses and other customers.

Demand has grown to the point where the Waddells have hired about a dozen part-time summer workers to help harvest seeds.

Their harvesting efforts don't stop at the

The Waddells are row cropping milkweed for the first time. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed, making it an important resource for conservation efforts.

Photo by Jacob Boyko





Lori Waddell enjoys photographing native flowers on the acreage.
 Top row: prairie lily, pasque flower (S.D. state flower), wild turnip.
 Bottom row: blazing star, scarlet gaura, coneflower.
Photos by Lori Waddell

fence line – Tellus is known to park his car, knock on the doors and ask to collect seeds if a patch of prairie catches his eye.

"We have picking rights [agreements with property owners] from here to Pierre down to Grand Island, Nebraska," Tellus said, recounting an especially vibrant purple field of vervain near Forestburg.

This led Tellus to a more solemn conversation. Piece by piece, he and Lori have bought surrounding acreage in an effort to isolate their native plants from the effects of drifting pesticides. Tellus said that when mixed into a slight breeze, the chemicals are potent enough to wipe out their native broadleaf plants for years at a time – even if the spraying takes place miles away.

Tellus and Lori's observation is that biodiversity is shrinking throughout the region for this same reason – diverse fields of native flowers and grasses are becoming more difficult to find, and the wildlife that relies on native plants for food are becoming increasingly scarce.

"You talk to people in their 80s, and they'll talk about about walking through a field of lilies," Tellus said. "And then they just sit there for a bit and try to think of the last time they've seen that. Sometimes 40 or 50 years ago."

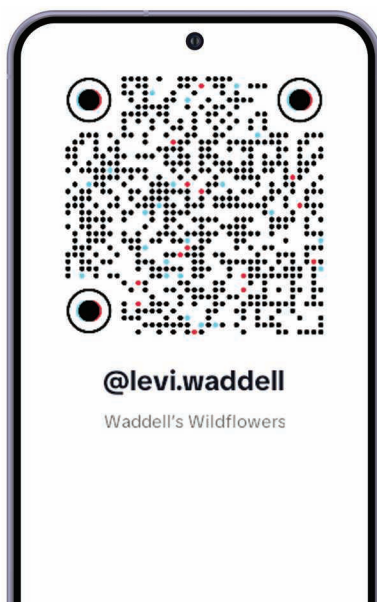
He continued, "that's when people realize the prairie is pretty much gone."

Levi Waddell uses social media to spread awareness about native plants, conservation and his family's operation.

His TikTok page, Waddell's Wildflowers, has more than 1,000 followers and 19,000 likes and chronologizes the day-by-day life of a native plant harvester.

The Waddells hope to share their story to educate others on the importance of conservation and inspire them to preserve the native prairie for generations to come.

"God gave us this beautiful earth and we're ruining it," Lori said. "If we can at least preserve and protect our little corner, I feel like we've done our job."



PROCESSING NATIVE SEEDS



The harvested seeds are spread indoors to dry for several weeks.



The dried seed heads are broken apart to loosen the seeds from the surrounding plant material.



The seeds are fed into a hammer mill to break apart remaining plant material from the seeds.



The cleaned seeds are sifted one final time to remove any extra material. The separated chaff is spread where the seeds were harvested so any unseparated seeds can germinate.

EAST RIVER ELECTRIC UPDATE



Bob Sahr

General Manager
East River Electric

East River celebrated its 75th anniversary this past year. When individual distribution cooperatives across our region joined together to form their own generation and transmission cooperative, they did so with the knowledge that, through collaboration and joint effort, they could accomplish much more together than each individual cooperative could accomplish alone. And as we celebrate the milestone, we also celebrate our continued focus on providing value and working for our member systems into the future.

East River and our member systems work together in partnership to plan, execute and build for tomorrow. We continue to do so in an electric industry that is rapidly evolving and experiencing unprecedented change and growth. And, we are growing with that change, as it provides us with unique and continued opportunities to deliver affordable, reliable power for the future.

Through our collective efforts, we continue to supply the region with a diversified, all-of-the-above generation mix, navigate an ever-changing political and regulatory climate and provide cybersecurity resources and innovative technologies as cyber threats and artificial intelligence rapidly change the technological landscape. We continue to advocate for safe use of electricity, cooperative education and workforce development. We are planning ahead to upgrade and build out the grid of the future. The foundation of our cooperative has always been collaboration, and our future will continue to be shaped by a shared commitment to advocating for and serving members.

With growing demand, electric cooperatives are facing challenges. We continue to manage rising power supply and infrastructure costs while maintaining the reliable power that members depend on. Costs are going up, and these pressures are being felt across the electric industry, requiring thoughtful operational planning, responsible financial stewardship, and long-term strategies that can be tailored to current needs. There's been a lot of talk about large new electric loads, including data centers, and what that could mean for rates and reliability. These are legitimate questions that we're also asking, and we have some answers. In the co-op world, we typically consider a large load to be over two megawatts. Some of these data centers are closer to 250 or 500 megawatts. Compare that to an ethanol plant at 5 to 10 megawatts or a mid-sized city of 10 to 20 megawatts; it's a magnitude that is well above what we are used to serving.

Each decision we make about large loads for the future is evaluated by asking ourselves if a project fosters greater reliability and long-term affordability for our member cooperatives and the communities they serve. Protecting our existing members remains our number one priority. We have an established large load process in place, and any new significant load, whether it's a data center or another major facility, is required to pay its fair share of the infrastructure and generation needed to serve it, so that members at the end of the line don't have to pay for those costs. That includes appropriate rate structures in coordination with our power supply partners to ensure those costs are not shifted onto legacy members.

General operational and construction costs are rising across every industry. That's the reality of building and maintaining the infrastructure required to serve growing energy needs. What's important

is that, as a cooperative, we exist for our member-owners, and that sets us apart. We remain focused on strategies to maintain competitive wholesale rates, like thoughtful planning and responsible spending. Our membership in our regional transmission organization (RTO), the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), continues to generate revenue, helping to offset power supply expenses. We continue to look for new revenue opportunities through our participation in the RTO.

In 2025, East River set in motion its largest construction work plan in the cooperative's history and continued work on our ten-year transmission system upgrade plan that was launched in 2019. With millions of dollars in planned investment, the work reflected not just growth, but the reality of delivering reliable service across a system that is changing in scale, reliability requirements and complexity. Over the last year, we completed several key projects designed to strengthen our system's backbone and marked an important milestone in our upgrade plan by completing the first fully networked segment of East River's system under the SPP Integrated Transmission Plan. The project hardens our system and better integrates it into the regional grid, strengthening reliability and positioning us for the future.

East River and our power supply partners continue to take an all-of-the-above approach to power generation, focused on reliability, competitive rates and long-term stability for our members. Our generation includes a balanced mix of dispatchable generation, low-cost hydropower from the Missouri River dams and renewables like wind and solar. Our wholesale power provider, Basin Electric, continues to add resources to meet future demand across the region, including new renewable generation coming online and the Bison Generation Station, a nearly 1,500-megawatt, natural gas-fueled facility that will provide dependable, on-demand energy.

We remain actively engaged on behalf of our members in the political and regulatory process to ensure we stay ahead of policies impacting our industry and help shape a path that aligns with our mission. Issues like permitting timelines and the ability to develop infrastructure are front and center. Our focus is on making sure the voice of our members is represented as political policies and decisions are made.

Along with the investments we are making in the grid, we continue to focus on investing in people.

Safety remains at the center of everything we do. We continue to partner with our member systems through our Co-ops in the Classroom Program, regional electric safety communications campaign and ongoing training to promote electrical safety across our communities and within our team.

We continue to invest in our future workforce by partnering with higher-education facilities to invest in education and training programs that will ensure we have a qualified, highly skilled employment pipeline. When our neighbors at Northwest Iowa Power Cooperative needed help in the aftermath of a severe storm that caused significant damage to their region's infrastructure, we organized a team of lineworkers and specialized equipment to support their restoration efforts. In our hour of need, we know they'll be there for us.

The Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund, founded in 1996, continues to support communities. It has now provided more than \$144 million in economic investments to businesses and community ventures to aid in our region's development since its founding. Governed by 27 cooperatives in South Dakota and Minnesota, including Central Electric, REED highlights the strength of our membership's commitment to our communities.

And as always, we also worked closely with our members to live out the cooperative principle of commitment to community by giving back to those we serve through charitable giving, events, youth outreach programs, education and scholarships.

As a not-for-profit wholesale power supplier, we exist to enhance the value of our member systems. Our 75-year history has shown us that, as cooperatives working together, we not only rise from adversity, we flourish. We adapt, we're resilient and we're committed to each other's success and the principles that make cooperatives different than any other type of organization.

A Legacy of
SERVICE



DRIVE OUT TO A DRIVE-IN

Outdoor Movie Theaters Offer Old-Time Fun

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

It's one of the defining cultural behemoths of the 20th century. Load the family into the station wagon – or someone you fancy in a borrowed hot rod – and head over to the drive-in theater. You pick up popcorn and soda pop, tune your car stereo to the transmitter, and settle in for an unforgettable experience.

It all started in 1933, when Richard Hollingshead of Camden, New Jersey, began developing an accessible and comfortable way to bypass the confining indoor theater seats and allow moviegoers a way to enjoy a show from the comfort of their own vehicle.

The Smithsonian Magazine reports a peak of more than 4,000 American drive-in theaters in 1958. But with cities continuously expanding and the price of property increasing, most of them have closed in the time since. Today, it's estimated that fewer than 300 drive-in theaters remain.

But don't fret! If you're reading this magazine, there are still some nearby drive-in movie theater options for you and your family (or your date) to enjoy!

Midway Drive In – Miller, S.D.

In Miller, mid-May through Labor Day weekend is drive-in movie season. Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are illuminated by the distant glow of the local drive-in movie theater.

Sarah Resel is one of the owners of the Midway Drive-In. Growing up in Miller, the drive-in was her weekend hangout and the site of so many cherished memories. Years later, that's still the case – just under slightly different circumstances.

A show is about to start at the Midway Drive In near Miller.
Photo submitted by Midway Drive In

"We pretty much don't have weekends during the summer," Resel said. "We're committed to being here with the theater. We all have full-time jobs; we always call this our community service."

Despite the hefty commitment, Resel says seeing people turnout from all over the country for an authentic drive-in experience makes it worthwhile.

"I think with us in our Miller community, we take it for granted that it's just here," Resel said. "It's crazy the support we get from other towns coming to our community."

Pheasant Drive-In – Mobridge, S.D.

Cam Wal Electric Cooperative members Jon and Jill Olson of Mobridge have experience with both indoor and outdoor theaters.

"The day-to-day prep is a little bit different," Jill said, explaining



The Pheasant Drive-In sits on the Missouri River hills near Mobridge.
Photo submitted by Pheasant Drive-In

the maintenance needed for the property and screen, along with weather surprises.

"I think weather is probably the number one issue," she continued. "We had a windstorm that came through Sunday [July 19] and caused some damage for us."

Even with the unexpected challenges, Jill said owning the drive-in theater is a positive experience, and on summer nights as people from near and far gather for a showing, she's reminded why she does it.

"It's a completely different vibe than sitting inside a dark theater," Jill said. "Parents do such a good job making it a fun experience, like bringing a pickup, backing it in and letting the kids sit in the back end. The other weekend, we had a family bring a bunch of blow-up air mattresses. The kids can talk and run back and forth – it just isn't your typical thing."

Hilltop Drive Inn Theater – Gregory, S.D.

"It's awesome," Rosebud Electric Cooperative member Dawn Boyer said when asked about running a drive-in movie theater.

"It's like owning a piece of the past while being in the present – and hopefully the future."

When Dawn was a kid, her mom worked at the ticket counter, sometimes taking Dawn along too. When she learned in 2018 the theater was looking for a new owner, it just seemed right.

"Two weeks later, I was running a theater I knew nothing about," Dawn laughed.

The drive-in is an 80-year-old landmark in Gregory County, and the oldest operating drive-in theater in the state. The age is catching up with it, Boyer said, explaining the heavy maintenance schedules necessary to keep the theater running.

Though the theater is becoming harder to operate, Boyer says the smiles on visitors' faces make it all worth it.

"The people who come through that have never seen a drive-in before – that's who we do it for," Boyer continued. "The expression on somebody's face when that big screen lights up at night is awesome."

Pheasant City Drive-In Theatre – Redfield, S.D.

Redfield's drive-in theater has been open continuously since 1953, and thanks to Dave and Stacey Marlow, it will continue for many years.

"We bought it at the time the industry was changing over to digital projectors," Stacey said, recalling the 2014 sale. "And [the previous owner] wasn't going to do it, so we went to him and asked if he'd like to sell it."

Since taking over, they've upgraded the display system again, installing a brighter, higher-contrast laser projector that allows shows to begin earlier and helps future-proof the theater.

While modern, the theater retains its original elements: the speaker poles are functional (Dave spends hours wiring each spring) and the propane popcorn maker satisfies hungry moviegoers.

"People tell us all the time, 'We are so glad you took this and have kept it going,'" Stacey said. "This is a part of our town we didn't want to lose, so we decided we were the ones to step up and save it."

Winner Drive In Theater – Winner, S.D.

In 2022, Rosebud Electric Cooperative members Austin and Jill Moser were looking for more space for their family. They finally found the perfect house on a nice chunk of land – with a catch.

"The movie theater was included," Jill said. "We thought, 'Why not?'"

The Mosers say running the drive-in theater with their three kids has been a good experience for the family and has given the kids an opportunity to work concessions.

During the Mosers' second season in operation, a windstorm damaged the screen, necessitating a lengthy rebuild. Luckily, the theater was able to reopen for the 2025 season.

"It's really great to see how many people still support drive-in movie theaters," Jill said. "There's not that many left in the country. We meet people from all over – we've had people from France come to the theater."

Verne Drive In – Luverne, Minn.

Half an hour east of Sioux Falls, the Verne Drive In welcomes hundreds of I-90 travelers Wednesday through Sunday each summer.

Owner and operator Doug Rozeboom said his goal is to provide an experience that is affordable, fun and unique for both locals and travelers.

"I don't want to say drive-in theaters are a thing of the past, but they're becoming it," Rozeboom said. "It's a unique experience because you can't just go anywhere to watch a movie outdoors on a big screen."

He continued, "Kids are able to run around and throw a football, so they can blow off some steam."

Rozeboom described the enthusiasm of moviegoers, recounting creative truck-bed setups, typically with lawn chairs, sofas or mattresses.

"For the Toy Story 5 premiere, someone had a tree-trimming truck, so they had the boom arm out," he laughed. "I was like, 'Huh, that's interesting.'"

Making the perfect setup is part of the drive-in movie theater experience!
Photo submitted by Verne Drive In



Winner's drive-in features a curved screen.
Photo by Kim Boyko



UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE 2025 ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Central Electric Cooperative Inc. members was held on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, at the Corn Palace, Mitchell, South Dakota. Duane Wolbrink, the President, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. President Wolbrink announced that registration for Central's 25th Annual Meeting had closed.

President Wolbrink thanked Central Catering of Hawarden, Iowa, for providing the meal, East River Electric for providing video and sound equipment, and the City of Mitchell for allowing Central Electric to host the Annual Meeting in the Corn Palace.

President Wolbrink appointed Attorney Don Petersen as acting secretary and announced that a quorum of 508 registered members was present at the time the meeting began.

President Wolbrink called upon Davison County Director Jeff Gustafson to give the invocation.

President Wolbrink recognized past and present U.S. Military service members in the audience. Attendees were asked to stand as special guest Vayda Hofer sang the National Anthem, followed by attendees reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Wolbrink introduced IT Manager Ryan Mueller and Manager of Communications Tara Miller, who then conducted drawings for a scholarship and youth door prizes.

President Wolbrink stated that members received a postcard providing proof of due notice in accordance with the bylaws. The reading of the notice was dispensed with no objection, and the order of business was approved.

The minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting were mailed to each member as part of the Central Electric Cooperative Connections Annual Report. President Wolbrink asked if there were any objections to dispensing with the reading of the minutes. There being no objections, the minutes were approved.

President Wolbrink noted that director elections are held every three years for each director seat. Miner County Director Bob Banks and Jerauld County Director Mark Reindl were deemed re-elected as no other nominating petitions were turned in by the membership. Sanborn County Director Todd Van Walleghen chose not to run for reelection after serving on the cooperative board for 15 years. Jeremy White was elected to represent Sanborn County and will take his seat on the board later this month. President Wolbrink thanked outgoing Director Van Walleghen for his service on the Central Electric board and presented him with a gift of appreciation.

President Wolbrink introduced the board of directors and

attorney to Annual Meeting attendees: Vice President Todd Van Walleghen, representing Sanborn County; Secretary Mark Hofer, representing Hanson County; Treasurer Mark Reindl, representing Jerauld County; Donita Loudner, representing Buffalo County; Bradee Pazour, representing Brule County; Jeff Gustafson, representing Davison County; Bob Banks, representing Miner County; Director-At-Large Merl Bechen representing all eight counties served by Central Electric; and Don Petersen, serving as the cooperative's legal counsel.

President Wolbrink delivered the President's Report, highlighting the cooperative's 2024 financial performance, continued investment in system reliability, regional growth in electric demand, and ongoing infrastructure improvements. He discussed future challenges facing the electric utility industry, pressures on wholesale power costs, long-term planning considerations, and provided a brief overview of the cooperative's cost-of-service study and future rate design implications.

President Wolbrink also informed the membership of the board's process for selecting the cooperative's next general manager with the upcoming retirement of Ken Schlimgen in 2026. He concluded by expressing appreciation to the cooperative's employees, directors, power supply partners, members, and employees' families for their continued support and dedication.

President Wolbrink introduced General Manager Ken Schlimgen. Schlimgen presented the Manager's Report, recognizing Central Electric's 25th anniversary and reaffirming the cooperative's commitment to safety, reliability, affordability, and member service. He reviewed major system improvement projects, operational accomplishments, current financial performance, and anticipated increases in wholesale power costs that may affect future electric rates. Schlimgen also discussed industry challenges, including increasing electric demand, infrastructure investment, cybersecurity, workforce development, and regulatory issues. He concluded by thanking the board of directors, employees, cooperative partners, and member-owners for their continued confidence and support.

President Wolbrink called for old business and any new business. There was none.

President Wolbrink asked for and received a motion and a second to adjourn the 2025 Central Electric Annual Meeting. There being no further discussion from members, the meeting was adjourned.

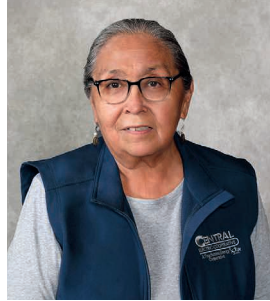
CENTRAL ELECTRIC BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Duane Wolbrink
President
District 1 Director
Aurora County



Bradee Pazour
Treasurer
District 2 Director
Brule County



Donita Loudner
District 3 Director
Buffalo County



Jeff Gustafson
Vice President
District 4 Director
Davison County



Mark Hofer
Secretary
District 5 Director
Hanson County



Mark Reindl
District 6 Director
Jerauld County



Robert Banks
District 7 Director
Miner County



Jeremy White
District 8 Director
Sanborn County



Merl Bechen
Director-At-Large

Weber Awarded Basin Electric Scholarship

Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Central Electric Cooperative are pleased to announce that Karter Weber of Plankinton has been selected to receive a \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Employee Dependent Scholarship.

Weber is one of only 20 students chosen from across Basin Electric's nine-state service area to receive this prestigious award. He plans to study Power Line Construction and Maintenance at Mitchell Technical College. He is the son of Rodney and Kelli Weber of Plankinton. Rodney is a Lead Journeyman Electrician at Central Electric.

Central Electric receives power from Basin Electric, a regional generation and transmission cooperative based in North Dakota. The employee dependent scholarship program is designed to support the educational goals of children and legal dependents of employees working for Basin Electric member cooperatives.



REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



SEPT. 3 (ONE DAY EVENT)
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives
at the South Dakota State Fair
Horticulture Park, State Fairgrounds
Huron, 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.

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 6
Studebaker Car Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
South 6th St.
Custer, SD

SEPT. 11-13
James Valley Threshing & Tractor Club Show
Andover, SD
jamesvalleythreshers.com

SEPT. 12
Artesian Fall Festival
Bingo, Inflatables, Food, Vendors
3-8 p.m.
Artesian Ball Park
Artesian, SD

SEPT. 12
9th Annual Pink Ladies Ribfest
Vendor Fair: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Bean Bag Tournament: 12 p.m.
Ribfest Cookoff: 4-7 p.m.
Emery, SD
605-261-9057

SEPT. 12-13
Harvest & Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD
605-505-0535

SEPT. 12-20
Rustic Designs & More Fall Country Show
9 a.m.-6 p.m.
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

SEPT. 13
Antique Car & Tractor Parade
Food by Hanson Co. Pink Ladies
Registration: 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Parade 1 p.m.
Vendors & Inflatables
Farmer, SD
605-641-5498

SEPT. 15
Central Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting
Corn Palace
Mitchell, SD

SEPT. 26
Harvest Pumpkin Fest
3-7 p.m.
Eureka City Park North Shelter
Eureka, SD
605-230-1777

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

OCT. 3
Kiwanis Kids Fun Run
5 p.m.
Corn Palace Plaza
Mitchell, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 4
Palace City Kiwanis Half Marathon/10k/5k
7:30 a.m.
Corn Palace Mitchell, SD
Facebook: Palace City Kiwanis Half Marathon

OCT. 4
St. Anthony's Fall Bazaar
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Swiss Steak 12-1:30 p.m.
Legion Hall
Hoven, SD

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.