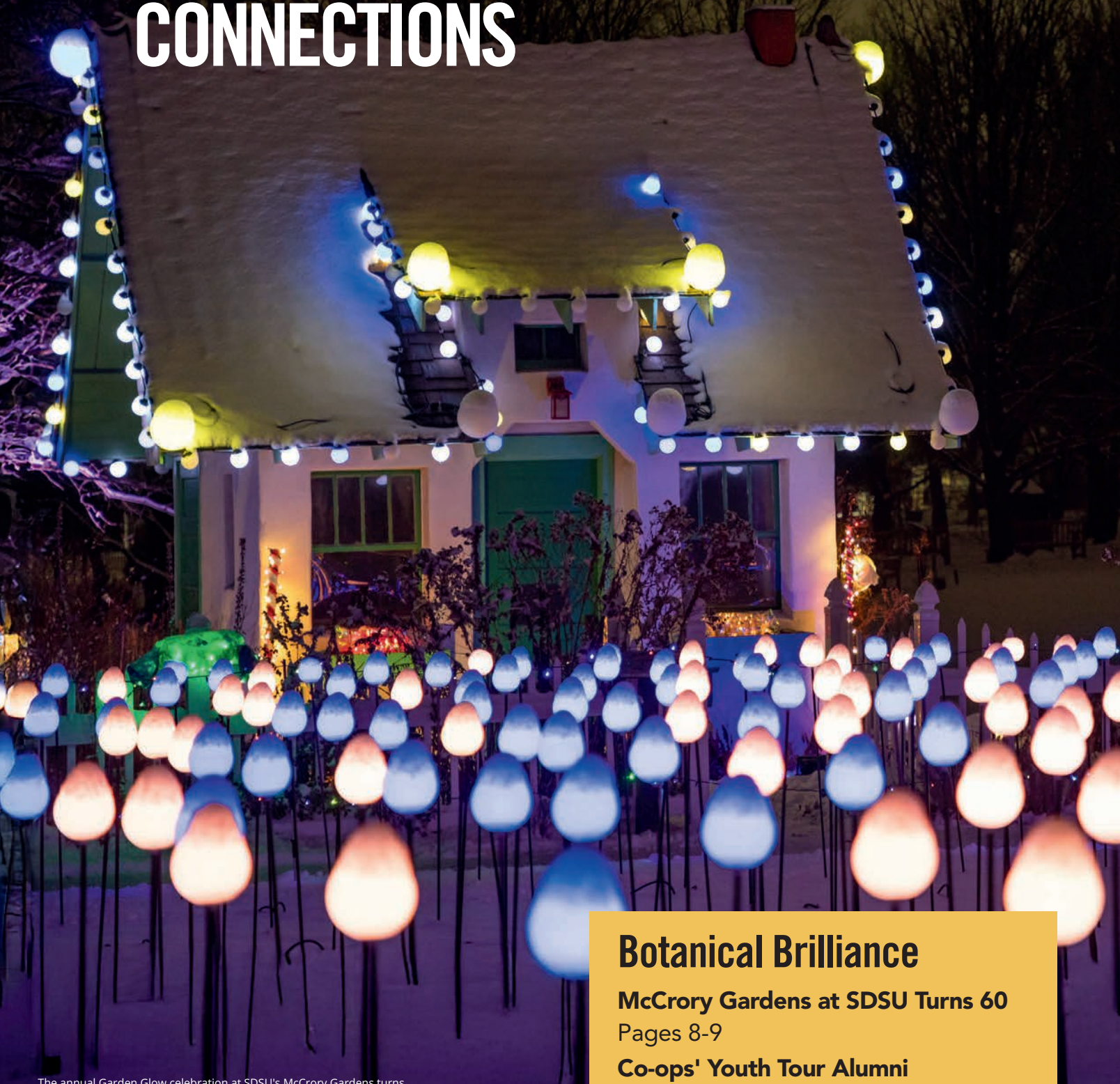


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Botanical Brilliance

McCrary Gardens at SDSU Turns 60

Pages 8-9

Co-ops' Youth Tour Alumni

Pages 12-13

The annual Garden Glow celebration at SDSU's McCrary Gardens turns the space into a winter wonderland with festive lights and decorations.
Photo by McCrary Gardens

KEEPING OUR BALANCE AS WE MOVE FORWARD



Ken Schlimgen
General Manager

Albert Einstein once said, “Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.” It’s too bad that when I was learning how to ride a bike, I didn’t know Mr. Einstein. However, his wisdom applies to many things, including your electric cooperative. To keep our balance between reliability, affordability and future growth, we must keep moving forward.

Your cooperative faces many of the same challenges as other electric utilities across the country: meeting growing demand for electricity, replacing an aging electric system, and managing rising costs. To continue providing reliable service, we must anticipate and plan for what’s ahead.

In 2026, our wholesale power suppliers—Western Area Power Administration, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, and East River Electric Power Cooperative—will be increasing the price of the electricity we purchase by nearly 10%. Another similar increase is expected in 2027.

This year, your cooperative will spend about \$14.5 million to purchase the power we deliver to 7,300 homes, farms, and businesses. In 2026, we expect that number to rise by roughly \$1.7 million. While some of that increase comes from members using more electricity, most of it is simply due to higher wholesale power costs.

Several factors are driving these rising costs. Inflation and global supply challenges have increased the price of nearly everything needed to produce and deliver electricity, from generators and substations to the poles and wires along your driveway. Meanwhile, demand for electricity continues to grow across the region. To ensure a reliable power supply, especially during severe weather, new generation facilities must be built soon, and the cost of that new generation is significantly higher than our existing resources.

Like you, Central Electric is also facing higher costs for materials, labor, insurance and contracted services. We understand the impact that rising costs can have on household budgets, which is why we are taking a careful, deliberate approach to any rate adjustment.

Right now, we are completing a detailed cost-of-service study and reviewing our 2026 budget to determine exactly what rate adjustments will be necessary. We will have the results ready for board consideration in December. Our goal is to minimize the impact of any rate increase while ensuring that rates remain fair and reflect the true cost of providing electric service to each member class.

We encourage you to begin preparing for changes to your electric rates in 2026. Please know that your cooperative remains committed to operating efficiently, managing costs responsibly and providing safe, reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost.

As Einstein reminded us, balance comes through motion. Together, we’ll keep moving forward to maintain the balance between reliability, affordability and progress.

Until next month, stay safe!

MERRY *christmas* -&- HAPPY *newyear*

Holiday Open House
Members are invited to enjoy sweet treats,
coffee, and hot apple cider!

Central Electric Betts Road Office
Dec. 15-19 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Office Closed:
November 27-28 for Thanksgiving
December 24-25 for Christmas
January 1 for New Years Holiday

CENTRAL
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
New York State Energy Cooperative

CENTRAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

(USPS 018-963)

Board of Directors

Aurora County - Duane Wolbrink
Brule County - Bradee Pazour
Buffalo County - Donita Loudner
Davison County - Jeff Gustafson
Hanson County - Mark Hofer
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, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. Central Electric Cooperative, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Board Meeting Summary

The board of directors met on Sept. 15, 2025, 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

The annual election of officers was conducted by Attorney Don Petersen. Nominations were accepted for President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. Upon counting the ballots, the following officers were elected: Duane Wolbrink, President; Jeff Gustafson, Vice President; Bradee Pazour, Treasurer; and Mark Hofer, Secretary.

The minutes of the August safety meeting were reviewed.

General Manager Schlingen reported on construction of the new Howard Service Center, the East River Electric Managers' Advisory Committee, Basin Electric activities, Verizon metering updates, Northwestern Energy territory correspondence, SDREA budget information, and other management activities.

Manager of Finance and Administration Uher summarized proposed revisions to Policy 748 Information Technology.

Manager of Finance and Administration Uher presented the proposed capital credit retirement schedule.

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

The board reviewed monthly director expenses.

Board Action

The board considered or acted upon the following:

- A motion was made and seconded to approve Policy 748 Information Technology as revised. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to adopt a resolution to approve the general retirement of Capital Credits to members for an amount not to exceed \$600,000. The motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to adopt a resolution to approve the retirement of Generation and Transmission (G&T) Capital Credits to members for an amount not to exceed \$680,889.34, less estate forfeitures and other adjustments. The motion carried.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT	YEAR TO DATE SEPT. 2025	YEAR TO DATE SEPT. 2024
Kilowatt Hour (kWh) Sales	247,256,854 kWh	256,783,406 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$ 29,194,544	\$ 27,741,352
Total Cost of Service	\$ 28,579,346	\$ 27,460,031
Operating Margins	\$ 615,198	\$ 281,321

So, a Power Line Fell On Your Car...

Driving accidents can happen quickly and easily in the winter months with slick, inconspicuous coatings of black ice, reduced visibility and other weather-related safety hazards.

The important thing is that you know what to do if you find yourself in a collision with a utility pole – because what you don't know can seriously injure or kill you.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is no fire...

Call 911 and remain in your vehicle until help arrives — this is where you are safest. Your vehicle may be insulating you from the electrical current. Once you leave the vehicle and place your foot on the ground, the electricity may take a path through your body and shock you.

Never go off looks; a downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

If someone attempts to assist you, warn them to stay back until the utility can de-energize the line.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is a fire...

If your vehicle has caught fire, you must proceed with extreme caution. Again, even if a line isn't sparking, it may still be energized.

To make your escape, jump from your vehicle to the ground, making sure your body is not touching the ground and vehicle simultaneously. Making contact with both would make your body a direct conduit, and you would be electrocuted.

For that same reason, do not assist anyone else exiting the vehicle or accept help exiting the vehicle.

Once you're on the ground, keep your feet together and hop or shuffle away from the scene, at least 40 feet away. As you move, your goal is for there to not be a voltage difference between your feet. You do not want one foot off of the ground while the other foot is making contact with the ground.

Call 911 and warn others to stay away from the scene.

If you come across downed power lines...

Stay no less than 40 feet away, as the ground can become energized. Never drive over downed power lines – not only do you risk electrocution and damage to your vehicle, but the added tension could pull down surrounding utility poles and create additional hazards.

If you're a first responder at the scene...

Always assume lines are energized. Contact the utility and wait for them to de-energize the lines and give you the all-clear.



Always assume a downed power line is energized. A downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

"Never go outside during a lightning storm!"



**Josiah Krcil,
Age 9**

Josiah cautions readers on the dangers of going outside during a lightning storm. Great picture, Josiah! Josiah's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, 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.

Specialty SOUPS

CHEESEBURGER VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
2 lbs. block Velveeta cheese
(2) 12 oz. cans evaporated milk
(3) 10.5 oz. cans cream of mushroom soup
10.5 oz. can cream of celery soup
1 can French style green beans
1 can mixed vegetables
1 can diced potatoes

Method

Brown ground beef. Cut Velveeta into cubes. Put all ingredients into slow cooker. Cook on low six to eight hours, stirring halfway through or cook on high two hours, and then on low another two hours, stirring halfway through.

Wendy Thorson
Northern Electric

DUMPLING SOUP

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tsps. sesame oil
1 cup carrots, shredded
5 green onions, thinly sliced (whites and greens separated)
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 cup white miso paste
6 cups chicken vegetable broth, divided
1 lb. frozen mini dumplings
3 cups baby spinach
3 tsps. soy sauce (plus more to serve)
Hot sauce or chili oil to serve

Method

In a large pot, heat the vegetable oil and sesame oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, green onion whites, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften, two to three minutes. In a small bowl, combine the miso paste with 1/2 cup broth, whisking until the miso is dissolved. Add the miso mixture and remaining broth to the pot and bring to a boil.

Add the dumplings and bring to a simmer. Heat until the dumplings are heated through, three to five minutes. Stir in the spinach, cooking until the greens are wilted, one to two minutes. Add the soy sauce and green onion greens.

Serve hot with hot sauce or chili oil, and extra soy sauce.

Susan Forma
Union County Electric

PHEASANT CHOWDER

Ingredients:

2 pheasants (thighs and breasts: or only breasts if preferred)
4 celery stalks, sliced
1/2 lb. bacon strips, sliced
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 cups chicken broth
4 medium size Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 cloves garlic, diced
5 tsps. flour
2 cups half-and-half
1 cup parmesan cheese
Salt and Pepper

Method

Put cubed potatoes in a separate pot, cover with the chicken broth, and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until they are soft.

Slice the pheasant meat, across grain into 1/4 to 1/2 inch strips.

Cut bacon slices into small pieces and put in a Dutch oven on medium heat. Add diced celery and onion and cook until the bacon and celery are cooked through and onions are transparent. Add the garlic and pheasant. The meat should cook quickly because of the small sized pieces. Once meat is cooked, add the flour one tablespoon at a time while stirring the mixture, thoroughly coating the vegetables and meat.

Add the potatoes and broth from the separate pot. Once incorporated, stir in the half-and-half, then stir in the parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. This chowder is ready to eat once heated through, or you can let it simmer on low heat. Flavors should continue to meld.

Nick Kvernevig
Lake Region Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Share Your Best Recipes for the Country Cookin' Cookbook

As an East River Electric member distribution system, Central Electric is collecting recipes for the next edition of East River Electric's Country Cookin' Cookbook, and we would love to include yours.

Maybe it's a family favorite passed down through the years or a go-to dish everyone asks for at potlucks. Whatever it is, your recipe could be featured in next year's cookbook.

Each recipe you submit earns you a chance to win one of two \$100 gift cards. Winners will be drawn at

random once the cookbook is published. You can fill out the form below and mail it to East River Electric or scan the QR code to submit your recipe online and enter the drawing.

The Country Cookin' Cookbook is a long-standing tradition, filled with delicious recipes from co-op members across the region. Copies are distributed by your local cooperative at district meetings and events.

Send your recipe to East River Electric by Dec. 15 for a chance to get it published in the next edition.



Submit recipes to
graphics@eastriver.coop
or contact your local co-op
for more information.

Deadline: December 15

RECIPES NEEDED

Help us create another great
cookbook by submitting your
favorite recipes.



MAILING ADDRESS:

Attention Member Service
211 South Harth Ave. | P.O. Box 227
Madison, SD 57042-0227

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Recipe Name: _____

Cooking Directions:

List of Ingredients:

Operation Round-Up® Supports Local Projects

Small change continues to make a big difference in our local communities through Central Electric's Operation Round-Up grant program. This is a voluntary program in which cooperative members round up their monthly electric bill to the next whole dollar. Those extra cents, along with contributions from employees and board members, are pooled together to support local projects.

To the right are pictures of projects that were recently awarded Operation Round-Up grants. Since the fund was established in 2015, more than \$230,000 has been awarded to various organizations across the service area.

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

To learn more about Operation Round-Up qualifications and the application process, call the office or visit www.centralelec.coop and click on member programs.



Town N Kountry Blue Group 4-H Club of Letcher received a grant for the community aluminum can bank. Pictured from left to right is Central Electric Director Jeremy White, Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen, Operation Round-Up Trustee Dawna Van Overschelde and 4-H club members Westen White and Cain Zoss.



Sunset Memorial Park Cemetery received a grant for corner fences. Pictured from left to right is Central Electric Manager of Communications Tara Miller, Central Electric Director Merl Bechen, Operation Round-Up Trustee Steve Weisz, Cemetery President Jim Grosz, Treasurer Lynette Schreck, Secretary Dorene Winckler and Sexton Julie Granger.



Trinity Lutheran Cemetery received a grant for headstone repairs. Pictured from left to right is Central Electric Director Jeremy White, Operation Round-Up Trustee Dawna Van Overschelde, Cemetery President Myron Sonne and Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen.



Letcher Community Development Foundation (LCDF) received a grant for improvements at Lake Letcher. Pictured from left to right is Central Electric Director Jeremy White, LCDF board member Tiffany Hoffman, Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen and Operation Round-Up Trustee Dawna Van Overschelde.



St. Peter's Cemetery of Farmer received a grant to help purchase materials for a new fence. Pictured from left to right is Central Electric Manager of Communications Tara Miller, Central Electric Director Bob Banks, Operation Round-Up Trustee LeAnn Moe and Cemetery President Darin Bartscher.



Hanson County 4-H Leaders received a grant to help purchase new bleachers for the 4-H grounds. Operation Round-Up Trustee Dawna Van Overschelde and Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen presented the grant to the Hanson County 4-H Leaders and 4-H participants during Achievement Days.



During the annual Garden Glow event, McCrory Gardens in Brookings is transformed into a winter wonderland.
Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

NATURE GROWS & GLOWS AT MCCRORY GARDENS

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Tucked among the towering pines at the busy corner of 6th Street and 22nd Avenue in Brookings, S.D., you'll find a little plot of botanical paradise.

For 60 years, South Dakota State University's McCrory Gardens has not only served as a mecca for horticulture enthusiasts, but also a versatile, community-focused space for weddings, workshops and other seasonal festivities.

"Here, our mission is connecting people and plants through education, research, discovery and enjoyment of the natural and built landscape," said Lisa Marotz, director of McCrory Gardens.

Working toward that mission, Marotz and staff keep a schedule full of activities for SDSU students and community members with a variety of seasonal events: a spring-time syrup-making workshop where participants are taught to tap trees; the summer-time TuliPalooza where more than 15,000 tulip bulbs are planted in a colorful display; and the family-focused fall festival during Hobo Day weekend featuring horse-drawn hay rides and food trucks.

"There really is always something to see — just maybe not always what you expect," said Kathryn Bowar, an SDSU ag science

student and McCrory Gardens intern from Hoven, S.D.

Bowar says the space is increasingly popular for students looking to take a break from busy campus life to study, hang out with friends, or just enjoy time alone in a tranquil, outdoor environment surrounded by nature.

"I grew up as a ranch kid and adjusting to city life was overwhelming at times," Bowar added. "Coming to McCrory Gardens was a breath of fresh air and helped me recenter in the beauty of nature."

The garden's hallmark event is the regionally renowned Garden Glow, which transforms the dormant grounds into a winter wonderland with bright and festive Christmas lights and decorations.

"Garden Glow is a way that we are able to bring thousands of people to a botanical garden in South Dakota in December," Marotz said with a laugh. "We started out in 2015 when about 51 people came. Last year we were up to about 13,000, so it's grown a lot in popularity."

At the upcoming Garden Glow, visitors will meander through the reindeer meadow, travel across the life-size "Candy Land" board, warm up with a stop at the hot cocoa hut and peek inside Santa's summer-time home while exploring all the garden has to offer.

And there's been a lot of change over the garden's 60-year history, from new flowerbeds and gardens to patios and memorials.

But despite that, Marotz says she and her staff work to ensure the original vision of the garden and the contributions of those who worked before her are preserved.

Rather than tearing out and replacing sections of the gardens, the staff update and add to the space, with each parcel of the 25-acre garden bearing the fingerprints of past enthusiasts who cultivated, researched and appreciated the flora that make the Midwest beautiful.

"We have visitors comment that they now know what heaven looks like," Marotz said. "That's what people feel here: sanctuary and peace."



Lisa Marotz – McCrory Gardens Director since 2016 – with intern Kathryn Bowar, who is beginning her third fall working at the garden.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

With bright, blooming flowers, McCrory Gardens is the perfect stop for migrating butterflies and other helpful pollinators.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Many area visitors recognize this cottage as the 1928 Lawson Gas Station in Lake Preston, which was moved to McCrory Gardens in 1996 and renovated in 2024.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Each cactus in the cacti garden is dug up each fall and moved into a greenhouse on campus before being replanted in the spring.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



The 1991 Sioux Quartzite rock garden and 2013 waterfall are a favorite fixture in the garden — and the site of numerous summertime marriage proposals.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



A labyrinth of pathways and trails lined with mature trees and vines give garden visitors a sense of exploration — even though they're right in the middle of Brookings.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



During the Garden Glow event, the East Terrace Lawn and Gazebo becomes The Enchanted Forest. Marotz notes this was the site of the first Garden Glow in 2015 — miniscule compared to today's expansive decorating.

This winter, Garden Glow is open 5-9 p.m. from Dec. 6, 2025 through Jan. 6, 2026.

Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

60TH ANNIVERSARY THE MCCRORY STORY

*Photos submitted by
McCrory Gardens*

1964

The S.D. Legislature approves funds to construct Bailey Rotunda and Wagner Hall on the site of SDSU's Horticulture-Forestry Gardens. Samuel A. McCrory, head of the horticulture department at SDSU, advocated for a research garden filled with S.D. flora that would also serve as a learning center for students. McCrory passed away March 10, 1964.



1966

The new horticulture garden is formally dedicated "McCrory Gardens" to honor the late department head.



1977

McCrory Gardens receives the prestigious All-American Display Garden Award. The Garden is now designated to receive and showcase winning plant selections each year.



1979

McCrory Gardens is named on a list of the top 10 small gardens in the U.S. by ARCO Travel Club Magazine.



1988

The first annual Garden Party is held to fund the maintenance and operating costs of the garden.



1994

The late Gov. George Mickelson is honored in the newly-constructed Mickelson Grove.



2012

The new Education & Visitor Center is dedicated.



2025

McCrory Gardens celebrates its 60th anniversary!

\$1.45 Million in Capital Credit Refunds Issued

Central Electric Cooperative's board of directors recently approved approximately \$1.28 million in capital credit general retirements, refunding past margins to cooperative members. The refunds include approximately \$600,000 of Central Electric Cooperative capital credits, \$182,361 of East River Electric Power Cooperative capital credits and \$498,477 of Basin Electric Power Cooperative capital credits. On top of that, the cooperative has also refunded approximately \$174,800 in capital credits to estates, bringing total retirements to \$1.45 million.

Revenue margins earned by the cooperative are allocated back to members as capital credits in proportion to the amount of electricity that was billed during the years being retired. Because capital credits



are based on electricity purchases, each member's refund amount is different.

Members with active Central Electric accounts receive their refund as a credit on their November bills mailed in December. Inactive members are mailed a check to the current address on file. Former co-op members should contact Central Electric to ensure capital credit payments are sent to the correct address. Please keep a copy of capital credit retirements for your records.

Capital credits are fundamental to the cooperative business model. They are a financial benefit for the membership and ensure strong financial standing. If you have questions, contact the office or visit our website at www.centralec.coop/capital-credits to view a list of frequently asked questions.

Wholesale Power Costs Increasing

Central Electric Cooperative was recently notified that a wholesale rate increase of approximately 10% is expected on the power we purchase and deliver to our members. Outside the rural electric network, public power companies are facing similar challenges.

Considering approximately 70% of your co-op's annual budget is purchased power, this will impact electric rates. The exact rate adjustment for Central Electric members will be determined at the end of the year after East River Electric provides its 2026 rates, factoring in Basin Electric and Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) wholesale electric rate increases.

What's Driving the Rate Increases?

Rising costs from inflation have made it more expensive to build and maintain infrastructure. Basin Electric's current power generation fleet had an average cost of approximately \$800 per kilowatt-hour, with future costs predicted to be \$2,700 per kilowatt-hour. Basin Electric's current transmission lines had an average

cost of approximately \$400,000 per mile of line, with future costs projected at \$2 million per mile of line.

Growth in energy use by existing members and ongoing investments in reliable energy are also contributing factors for the upcoming rate adjustment. To serve this growth, our electric generation and transmission partners are investing in new assets, which are more expensive to build than existing assets.

While energy-intensive projects such as data centers and crypto mining are hot topics, they are not a factor behind the upcoming rate increase. Basin Electric has a program designed to protect existing members from the costs and risks associated with those types of projects.

Our wholesale power suppliers have historically managed rates responsibly through careful planning and strategy. Decisions at Basin Electric are made by a board of directors, and each director is a member of a local electric cooperative. Under the cooperative business model, members work together, ensuring nobody bears the burden alone.

Central Electric Offers Scholarships

Central Electric Cooperative is committed to helping develop the next generation of leaders. To support that goal, we're proud to offer several scholarship opportunities for our members and their dependents.

- Jay Headley Memorial **\$1,000** Scholarship: Must be a full-time student, the dependent of a member with primary residence served by Central Electric and pursuing a bachelor's degree in an agriculture-related field.
- Basin Electric Power Cooperative **\$2,500** Scholarship: Must be a full-time student and the dependent of a member with their primary residence served by Central Electric.
- District **\$500** Scholarship: Up to two recipients per county. Must apply for the Basin Electric Scholarship to qualify.
- Mitchell Technical College **\$500** Scholarship: Must be a member or the dependent of a member in a specified major. Apply through the school.

Applications are due by January 30, 2026. Scholarships are paid to the post-secondary school of the selected student's choice. Mitchell Technical College scholarships are administered by the school foundation.

Eligibility guidelines and scholarship applications are available online at www.centralec.coop/scholarships.



Cadence Jarding of Alexandria was the 2025 Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship recipient. Students can get more information online at www.centralec.coop/scholarships.



2026

June 14-20

YOUTH TOUR

Join students from across South Dakota for a free, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., sponsored by your electric cooperative. Contact your electric cooperative for more details and application information!

D.C. Trip for H.S. Juniors



The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and Central Electric Cooperative invite current high school juniors to apply for a trip to Washington, D.C. The educational experience takes place June 14-20, 2026. Up to four students will be selected to attend.

Applicants must be high school juniors living in Aurora, Brule, Buffalo, Davison, Hanson, Jerauld, Miner or Sanborn County. Interested students can find the online application at centralec.coop/youth-tour. The deadline to apply is Dec. 10, 2025, and students must include a letter of recommendation from a teacher. Those selected to attend will be notified by Dec. 31. Read more about past Youth Tour attendees on page 12.



The 2006 Youth Tour group takes a photo on the Albert Einstein Memorial in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan

YOUTH TODAY. LEADERS TOMORROW.

South Dakota's Youth Tour Continues to Inspire Leadership Years Later

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdeca.coop

Each summer, a new group of South Dakota teens will board a plane for Washington, D.C., full of excitement for the trip of a lifetime. They're part of the South Dakota Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, a weeklong experience that connects rural students to the people, places and ideas that shape our country.

The Youth Tour began after a 1957 speech by former Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, who encouraged electric cooperatives to send young people to the Capitol so they could "see what the flag stands for." Since South Dakota sent

its first group in 1963, more than 1,300 students have made the trip.

During the trip, students visit landmarks like Ford's Theater, the National Archives and the U.S. Capitol. They meet members of Congress, make friends from across the country and see firsthand how decisions made in Washington affect people back home.

For many, the most meaningful part of the trip happens long after they return. The experience lights a spark that shapes how they view their communities and their roles within them.

Two of those alumni, Kevin Larsen and Andi Fouberg, still carry lessons from their Youth Tour experiences today.

Kevin Larsen

Kevin Larsen remembers applying for Youth Tour in 2006 as a junior from Howard High School to represent Central Electric Cooperative.

"I've always been a history nut," he said. "My parents, like a lot of farmers, weren't made of money. This was a chance to go see the nation's capital, and I figured, why not apply?"

Once he decided to apply, he approached his high school English teacher, who helped him polish his essay, which landed on the desk of longtime Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen. "Lo and behold, the legendary Ken Schlimgen gives me a call," Larsen said. "And the rest is history."

Larsen now serves as the public information officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society in Pierre. He is also active in local organizations and community leadership roles, serving as president of the Pierre Kiwanis Club, incoming exalted ruler for the Pierre Elks Lodge, and in 2025

he ran for a position on the Pierre City Commission, only to come short by a handful of votes.

“These types of trips instill a passion for civics, and I think they mean a lot more for rural South Dakota kids,” Larsen said. “I’m from the middle of nowhere, Canova, South Dakota – a lot of people don’t even know where that is. The nearest town from our farm was six miles away, and that town is 100 people if everybody’s home. I think the opportunity to travel means more coming from somebody that was raised on a farm.”

He laughs when he thinks back to the trip. He keeps in touch with one of his roommates from that week. “You build connections you don’t expect,” he said. “One of the guys I roomed with ended up being a friend of my wife’s, and years later he attended our wedding.”

Larsen also credits his former Youth Tour Director, Brenda Kleinjan, for making the trip a success. “She was so passionate about the places we visited,” he said. “We weren’t just seeing historic monuments; we were learning what they meant.”

For Larsen, that week in D.C. helped set him on a lifelong path of leadership. “That trip really instilled that leadership ability and finding that inner voice to apply for something you might not think would ever happen,” he said. “When I sent off the essay in high school, I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams that I’d get an all-expenses-paid trip to D.C. We even ate well, too.”

Andi Fouberg

When Andi Fouberg applied for the Youth Tour, she was a high school student from Letcher. “I’m pretty sure my best



Kevin Larsen
2006 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo



Andi Fouberg
1994 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo

friend went the year before, and I thought that seemed pretty cool,” she said.

Also representing Central Electric Cooperative, she joined the 1994 Youth Tour, a year she remembers vividly for an unusual reason.

“The night before we left was when O.J. Simpson went on the white Ford Bronco run through Los Angeles,” she said with a laugh. “We watched it on TV in the hotel in Sioux Falls because we met there and stayed the night before we all flew out together.”

The trip instilled an early passion for civic life in Fouberg. After college, she moved to Washington, D.C., and spent 10 years as Sen. John Thune’s communications director.

“Youth Tour was what prompted me to want to be in D.C. at some point,” Fouberg said.

While working for Sen. Thune, Fouberg would regularly meet new Youth Tour students visiting the Capitol every year in June.

“I’d see these students walking the same halls I once toured, wide-eyed and curious, and I’d think, that was me,” she said.

Now, Fouberg leads the South Dakota State University Alumni Association as its president and CEO. She credits that early trip with showing her what public service and connection can look like.

“The trip had an impact on me wanting to be out there and be part of that environment,” she said. “It made me want to be part of the process and feel like you are part of the government machine, but in a way that helps people.”

Reflecting on it now, she believes the experience gives students from small towns something they might not otherwise see.

“Growing up in Letcher or any small community in South Dakota, I don’t know that civic engagement is something you naturally imagine yourself doing without exposure from something like Youth Tour,” she said. “Without exposure to Washington D.C. through something like that, I probably would not have pursued that path. It all had its roots in Youth Tour.”



Kevin Larsen (left) takes a photo with Youth Tour friends at the FDR Memorial in 2006.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan



401 CREATE

LifeQuest Program Brings Mitchell Community Together

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

As creative director for 401 Create, Jessica Callies spends her days helping others find joy through art, music and connection. The program, part of LifeQuest in Mitchell, has become a place where creativity, inclusion and community come together.

LifeQuest is a nonprofit that has served adults with disabilities for more than 60 years. Its mission is to create opportunities that enrich lives, and 401 Create is one way to achieve that goal. The program began after LifeQuest purchased and renovated its downtown building in 2021, creating a public space where members and community volunteers can gather, collaborate and celebrate creativity.

“The idea of 401 Create came about to build partnerships between the

people we serve and the community of Mitchell,” Callies said.

401 Create serves as both a day program and a public gathering space that Callies describes as a community center, the first of its kind for LifeQuest. The front of the space features a small stage for live music, while the rest of the room often fills with laughter, paintbrushes or the smell of something good baking in the kitchen.

“401 Create is a day program,” Callies said. “A group of LifeQuest members comes most days to take part in the activities we host. It also serves as a public space for the community, so in many ways, it’s like a community center.”

The lineup of activities is as varied as the people who walk through the door. On any given week, you might find a group singing karaoke, a volunteer

LifeQuest and community members are gathered during a cafe night, chatting and laughing, waiting for the live musicians to start their show.

Photo submitted by 401 Create

leading a cooking class or a visiting artist guiding a painting workshop.

“Last summer, we did a 12-week program with Healing Hearts Haven, who used to have a presence in Mitchell but has since moved to Sioux Falls,” Callies said. “She came over from Sioux Falls two days a week and did some creative therapeutic activities, and that was open to the public.”

Each event offers something different, but they all share a common goal: making sure everyone feels welcome. “The goal is always to create opportunities for persons with support to have the same opportunities that people without support have,” Callies said. “We actually have thrown two pep rallies for the basketball team. We can’t always get into every space, but we can invite people into ours.”

That welcoming spirit has turned 401 Create into a lively downtown community hub. Larger events like karaoke or live music nights often draw between 35 and 50 participants.

Smaller art or therapy sessions are kept more intimate, giving each person a chance to explore something new. “Because many of these adults haven’t always had the chance to try activities like this, some are just now discovering what they’re truly interested in,” she said.

It wouldn’t be possible without the volunteers from the Mitchell community who help make it all happen. About a dozen people lend their time regularly, from musicians to business employees who stop in to help with events.

“John Cersosimo is a retired teacher who comes in once or twice a month and plays guitar while we do what I call calm creating,” Callies said. “Chris Foster volunteers once a month to come sing for us, and Northwestern Mutual has sent people down to play bingo once a month.”

That growth has spread beyond LifeQuest. “I’ve seen a lot of people from the general public come in and be kind of surprised at what LifeQuest members are capable of doing,” she said. “Maybe breaking through stereotypes is important.

If I put an activity out, they fill right away. There’s no lack of participation.”

From art exhibits and choir performances to cafe nights and fundraisers, 401 Create has become a place where new connections are made every week.

“The impact isn’t just within the LifeQuest community but within the greater Mitchell community,” she said. “What’s happening at 401 is providing opportunities for things outside of there, which is ultimately the goal.”

Partnerships have played a big role in that success. LifeQuest often works with the Mitchell Area Arts Council and other local groups to bring in instructors, musicians and volunteers.

For Callies, the most rewarding moments are the ones when LifeQuest members take ownership of the space.

“Being able to run an event at 401 Create with LifeQuest members basically doing the legwork and raising money for other nonprofits is really an avenue of success,” she said.



(Above) LifeQuest members (from left to right) Jackson, Payton, Marlena and Taylor groove to Just Dance! on the Nintendo Wii.

(Top left) A group of LifeQuest members work together to paint a spot in Creative Way, an art alley in downtown Mitchell started by the arts council.

(Bottom left) Mindy, Jess, Jenny & Michael pose in front of donations for SafePlace of Eastern South Dakota during a cafe night fundraiser.

Photos submitted by 401 Create

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



NOV. 25-DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m. (holidays included)
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

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.

NOV. 28
Parade of Lights
7 p.m.
Main Street
Chamberlain, SD

NOV. 29
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

NOV. 30
Pepperberries Christmas Market
11 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
141 N. 3rd St.
Emery, SD

DEC. 4
Parade of Lights
6-7 p.m.
Vermillion, SD
605-624-5571

DEC. 5
Hometown Christmas
Downtown
Plankinton, SD

DEC. 5
Hometown Holiday
Main Street
Kimball, SD

DEC. 5-7, 12-14
Mighty Corson Players Humbug
Dec. 5-6, 12-13: 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7, 14: 2:30 p.m.
Corson, SD
www.mightycorson.com

DEC. 6
Parade of Lights
Main Street
Howard, SD

DEC. 7
KCBA Hometown Christmas
10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

DEC. 13-14
Alexandria Winterfest
Downtown
Alexandria, SD

DEC. 14
Canova Firemen's Pancake Feed
Legion Hall
Canova, SD

DEC. 14
Lake Campbell Lutheran Cookie Walk
9 a.m.
46610 219th St.
Volga, SD
605-864-9907

DEC. 14
A Poker Alice Christmas
2 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

DEC. 15
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
7-9 p.m.
H.S. Performing Arts Center
Mitchell, SD

DEC. 15-19
Central Electric Holiday Open House
Hot Cider & Sweets
Betts Road Office
Mitchell, SD

DEC. 21
Bethlehem in Brule County
5 p.m.
Ag Building
Pukwana, SD
605-730-0553

DEC. 30
Phil Baker Music & Movement
10 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m.
401 Create
Mitchell, SD
605-990-7919

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.