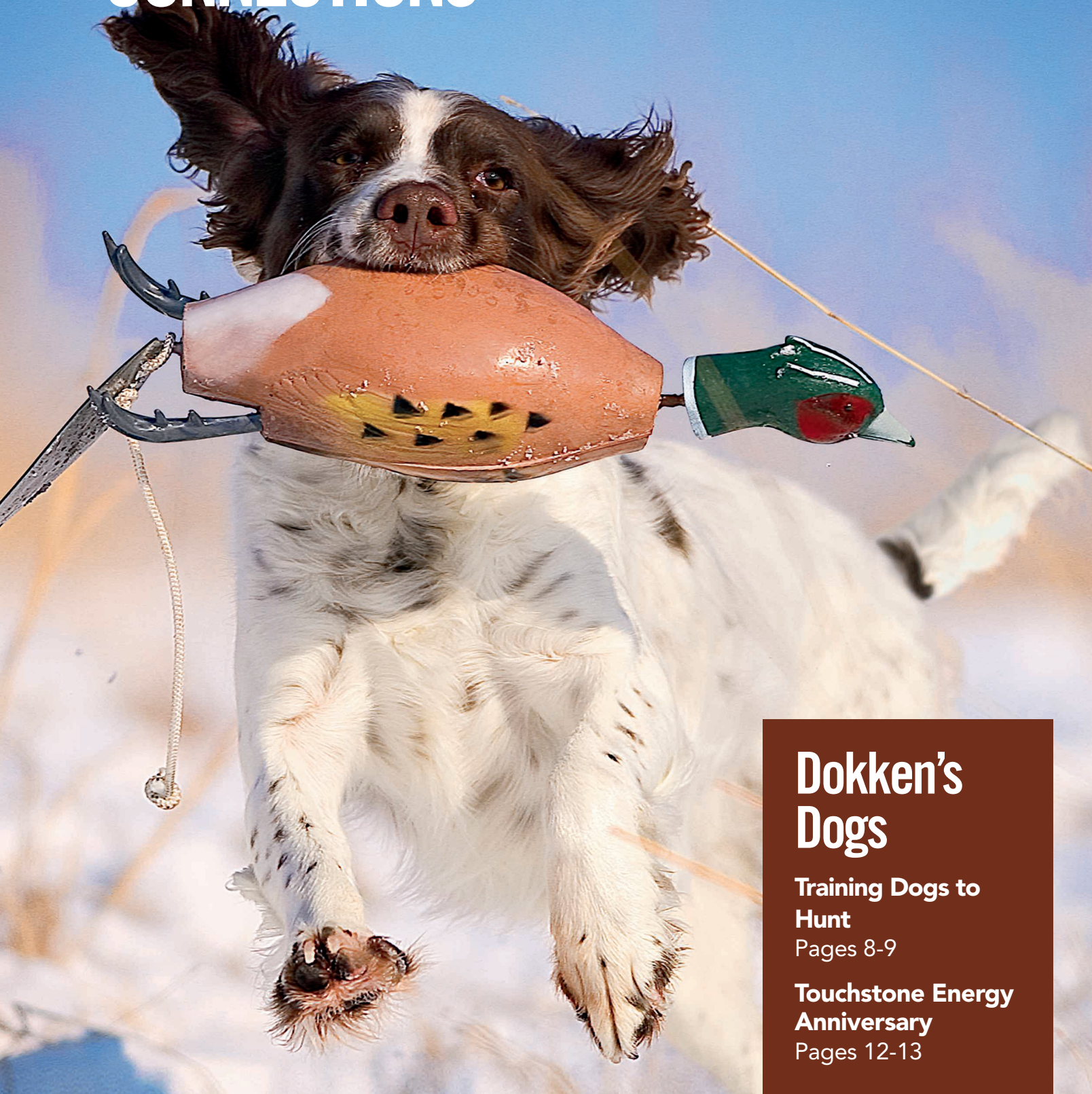


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Dokken's Dogs

Training Dogs to
Hunt
Pages 8-9

Touchstone Energy
Anniversary
Pages 12-13

Celebrate Cooperative Month in October!



Kelly Brandlee
Editor

Happy National Cooperative, Month! Coop Month has been nationally recognized since 1964 when U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proclaimed October the time to celebrate coops. This month we reflect on all the benefits of cooperatives in our communities.

Cooperatives are essential contributors to our economy and communities. In South Dakota, nearly 200 cooperatives provide a range of goods and services throughout the state. According to a South Dakota Rural Electric Association October 2021 Cooperative Connections article, cooperatives generate an estimated annual economic impact of \$8 to \$10 billion. In addition, cooperatives provide an estimated 16,000 jobs for South Dakotans and contribute almost \$600 million in tax revenue to the state.

Cooperatives extend beyond electric coops. There are agriculture cooperatives, bank cooperatives, fuel cooperatives, internet cooperatives, and telephone cooperatives, to name just a few.

“Cooperatives generate an estimated annual economic impact of \$8 to \$10 billion. In addition, Cooperatives provide an estimated 16,000 jobs for South Dakotans.”

No matter the cooperative, we all serve our members and help our communities thrive. All cooperatives follow the same set of seven principles. 1. Voluntary and Open Membership 2. Democratic Member Control

3. Members' Economic Participation 4. Autonomy and Independence 5. Education, Training, and Information 6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives 7. Concern for Community.

What makes a coop different from other business models? Cooperatives exist to provide a service for their member-owners. Governing coops is a board of directors elected by its members. These boards of directors are your family, friends, and neighbors who attend monthly meetings and make the decisions that impact the operation of your cooperative.

Another way a cooperative differs is the annual payment of capital credits back to the members. Capital credits represent a member's share in the cooperative. If warranted, Northern Electric pays out capital credits to its members as bill credits in September.

The cooperative advantage also comes in the form of annual meetings. At our Annual Meeting in September, member-owners received a financial report and heard from the board and staff about the operation of your cooperative. We had three board positions up for re-election, all of which ran unopposed. If those positions had an election, it would've been up to the membership to select their representation. The coop member-owners decide on the direction and operation of the cooperative.

Concern for the community is a cooperative principle and essential to serving cooperative members. Cooperatives have a long history of supporting local programs and youth activities through sponsorships and scholarships.

These are just a few of the many elements making the cooperative model so great. Happy, Cooperative Month!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Nolan Wipf

Board of Directors

Todd Hettich - Vice President
Ron Kaaz - Secretary
Josh Larson - Treasurer
Fran Esser
B.J. Hansen
Kirk Schaunaman
Mike Traxinger

CEO/General Manager: Char Hager
info@northernelectric.coop

Chief Financial Officer: Lorisa Rudolph

Operations Manager: Jerry Weber

Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

Communications Director: Kelly Brandlee
kbrandlee@northernelectric.coop

Executive Secretary: Amy Golden

Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Bath, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held August 25, 2023, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present or via teleconference. As the first order of business, the Board approved the July 31, 2023, minutes, and July expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the August 3, 2023, meeting. The next East River Board Meeting will be September 7, 2023, in Sioux Falls.

South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the next SDREA board meeting will be held September 28-29, 2023.

Directors Kirk Schaunaman, General Manager Char Hager, Manager of Member Services Russ Ulmer and Communications Director Kelly Brandlee reported on the Basin Electric Annual Meeting which was held August 15-17, 2023 in Bismarck, ND.

Director Nolan Wipf reported on the 2023 SDREA Co-op Board Leadership Summit which was held August 20-21, 2023 in Pierre, SD.

MANAGER'S REPORT

General Manager Char Hager's report to the board included the following items:

- Update on Rural Electric Economic

Development (REED) revolving loan fund.

- Reminded the board of the NRECA Regional Meetings 5 & 6 to be held September 12-14 in Des Moines, IA.
- Informed the board that the 2023 Mid-West Electric Consumers Association 66th Annual Meeting will be held December 12-14, 2023 in Denver, CO.
- Informed the board of the 2023 Winter School for Directors, December 8-12, 2023 in Nashville, TN.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 21, 2023.
2. Approved Work Order Inventory #23-07 for \$192,865.48 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
3. Approved bank signature and transaction authorization.
4. Held Executive Session.

Talk to your director or co-op manager with questions on any of these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	July-23	July-22
kWh Sales	22,548,256 kWh	24,018,759 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,292,114	\$2,439,871
Total Cost of Service	\$2,355,280	\$2,306,636
Operating Margins.....	-\$63,167	\$133,235
Year to Date Margins	\$399,562	\$657,639

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

JULY-2023.....	1,413 kWh.....	\$186.96.....	0.1323 per kWh
JULY-2022.....	1,591 kWh.....	\$199.71.....	0.1255 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for **81.8%** of NEC's total cost of service.

October is Fire Safety Month

Is your workplace or home fireproof? Each year, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) celebrates National Fire Safety Month in October. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, there were 88 occupational fatalities as a result of workplace fires or explosions. This is down from 2015, in which there were 121. While the statistics show that the number of fatalities due to fires or explosions in the workplace is on a downward slope, any number other than 0 is unacceptable and demands the attention from management, safety professionals and employees in every company. Not only do fires present a severe life safety hazard, they also can be detrimental to business success due to the possible destruction of business equipment and facilities. This campaign serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of fire safety awareness in both the workplace and our home lives.

The safety reminders communicated in the workplace can be easily translated to fire safety in the home. Establish a family emergency action plan, discuss escape routes with family members, and locate fire extinguishers in your home. Additionally, conduct a mock fire drill with your family members to ensure you and your loved ones know how to get out safely. During this drill, outline meeting places that are at a safe distance from the home. Designate a neighbor to contact for help in the event of an emergency. Simple exercises such as the aforementioned could mean the difference maker in your family making it out alive in the event of a fire in your home.

Below are key components to ensuring your workplace and home are fireproof:

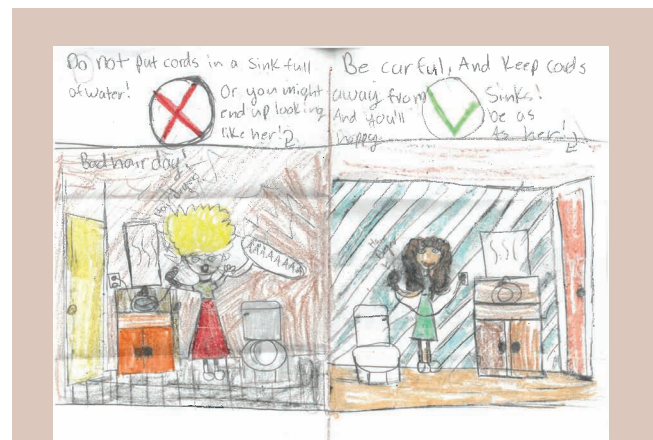
- **Eliminate Clutter** – Exercise good housekeeping. Clutter can easily become a fuel source in the event of a fire, allowing a fire to spread quickly. Furthermore, clutter can restrict access to emergency equipment and exit routes.
- **Fire Extinguishers** – Maintain the appropriate type and number of fire extinguishers. Conduct monthly and annual extinguisher inspections to ensure they are in good, working condition. Provide training for employees on the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- **Chemical Safety** – Use and store chemicals safely. Read hazard warning labels and safety data sheets

to determine flammability and other fire hazards. Ensure your chemical storage areas provide adequate ventilation for the storage of chemical or other hazardous substances.

- **Waste Control and Storage** – Limit the accumulation of flammable or combustible materials and residues as to prevent the risk for such materials contributing to a fire emergency.
- **Exits** – Ensure emergency exit route diagrams are posted and accessible in all areas of the facility for all employees to easily view. Additionally, ensure means of egress are well-lit with regulated exit signs and free from debris or clutter.

Remember it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive and it is best to alleviate hazards or hiccups in times of peace than in times of chaos. Utilize the above tips to reduce the risk for catastrophe or at least minimize the damage.

Source: Safety Resources, Inc.



Keep cords away from water!

Maddy Pannell, Age 12

Maddy Pannell advises people it's not safe to plug in appliances around water. Maddy is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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

PASTA PERFECT

ITALIAN SPAGHETTI

Ingredients:

1-8 oz. can tomato sauce
 1-6 oz. can tomato paste
 1 1/2 paste cans water
 1 small onion, chopped
 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
 1 tsp. garlic salt
 1/2 tsp. chili powder
 3 shakes cayenne pepper
 1/8 tsp. black pepper
 1 tsp. basil
 1 tsp. oregano
 1/2 to 1 lb. ground beef

METHOD

Combine all ingredients except ground beef. Cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Brown beef and add to sauce. Serve over cooked noodles. May add green peppers or mushrooms.

Gail Keating
Flandreau, S.D.

GARDEN HARVEST PASTA SHELLS

Ingredients:

2 tbsps. vegetable oil
 2 medium zucchini, shredded
 1/2 cup finely shredded carrots
 2 cups chopped fresh broccoli
 1 small onion, chopped
 Salt and pepper
 1 lb part-skim ricotta cheese
 2 cups shredded mozzarella
 1 egg, lightly beaten
 1/4 cup grated parmesan
 1 tbsp. dried basil
 27.5 oz. jar pasta sauce
 12 oz. pkg jumbo pasta shells, cooked and drained

METHOD

Heat oven to 350. In a large skillet heat oil, then saute broccoli, zucchini, carrots, and onions until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl, thoroughly combine ricotta, mozzarella, egg, parmesan, and basil. Add vegetables and stir to combine. Spread 1 cup of the pasta sauce evenly in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Fill pasta shells with the vegetable and cheese mixture and arrange in the baking dish. Spoon the remaining sauce over the shells. Cover and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake another 10 minutes or until bubbly.

Faye Chambliss
Murdo, S.D.

CREAMY CHICKEN AND BACON PASTA

Ingredients:

8 oz. spaghetti
 1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
 2 tbsps. flour
 4 slices bacon
 1 cup milk
 4 oz. (1/2 package) cream cheese, at room temperature
 1 1/2 tbsps. basil leaves
 1 1/2 tbsps. garlic powder
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. coarse ground black pepper

METHOD

Cook spaghetti as directed on package. Drain well. Meanwhile, toss chicken with flour. Set aside. Cook bacon in large skillet on medium heat until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Set aside. Remove all but 1 tbsp drippings from skillet. Add chicken; cook and stir 4 minutes or until golden brown. Stir in milk, cream cheese and seasonings until well blended. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cut bacon into bite-size pieces. Add to skillet. Place spaghetti in serving bowl. Add chicken mixture; toss well. Serve immediately.

mccormick.com

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

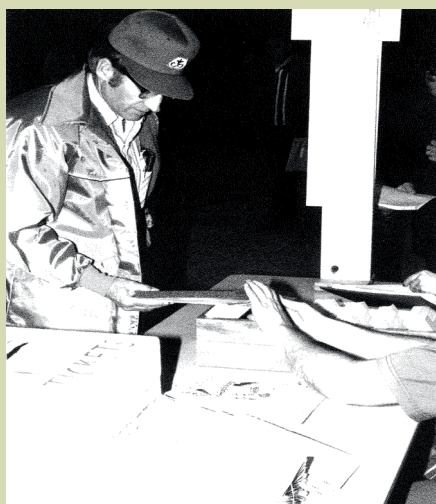
Happenings at Northern Electric

FARM SAFETY PARTY AT THE BROWN COUNTY FAIR



Northern Electric partnered with Agtegra, FEM Electric Association, and Lake Region Electric Association to return the Farm Safety Party to the Brown County Fair. Kids dressed as line workers, learned about farm safety, and watched Neon Leon Power Town safety demonstrations.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Northern Electric had its first meeting of the members 76 years ago in 1947. Here is a flashback to the 1982 Annual Meeting showing a member picking up his Annual Meeting information. We carried on our Annual Meeting tradition this September at the Brown County Fairgrounds Club House.

AMY GOLDEN HIRED AS NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Amy Golden has been hired as the new Executive Secretary for Northern Electric. Golden replaced Kay Albrecht, who retired in August.

Golden grew up in Bell County, Kentucky. She graduated from Eastern Kentucky University with a Bachelor of Health Science degree.

Golden moved to South Dakota in the fall of 2019 and fell in love with the people and the Aberdeen area community. Before coming to Northern Electric, she worked as the office manager at Aspen Dental. "My father was a foreman for the Kentucky Utilities where I grew up," Golden said. "I grew up in that electric company where my father worked. As an adult, I am excited to be again involved in the electric world here at Northern Electric Cooperative."



CUT CORN NOT CORNERS

Time is a precious commodity, especially during harvest. However, cutting safety corners while harvesting around power lines can be deadly. Taking a moment to be prepared can help prevent catastrophic accidents. Knowing what to do if an accident does occur can be the difference between life and death.

RE-ENERGIZING SAFETY

Contact your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
or visit **YourCoopPower.com** to find safety tips and make a plan.



FOR THE LOVE OF HUNTING DOGS

Source: Travel South Dakota

A Successful Hunt May Depend on Your Dog

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

With numerous television appearances and A-list clients under his belt, Day County resident and Lake Region Electric Cooperative member Tom Dokken has become one of the premiere hunting dog trainers of our time.

But you won't hear the modest pro brag about himself. Instead, Dokken gives credit to the hard work and the innate capabilities of the dogs themselves.

The 70-year-old Minnesota native has been professionally working with dogs over the last 50 years at his training facility, Dokken Oak Ridge Kennels, Inc. in Northfield, Minnesota.

It's one of the largest gun dog training kennels in the region.

His love for hunting alongside a canine

companion harkens back to his teenage years when he'd tag along to go hunting throughout the country with his friend and his friend's Labrador Retriever, Charlie.

"We were probably 16 years old when we started hunting together. He had a lab and I didn't have one. We hunted with that dog just about every weekend."

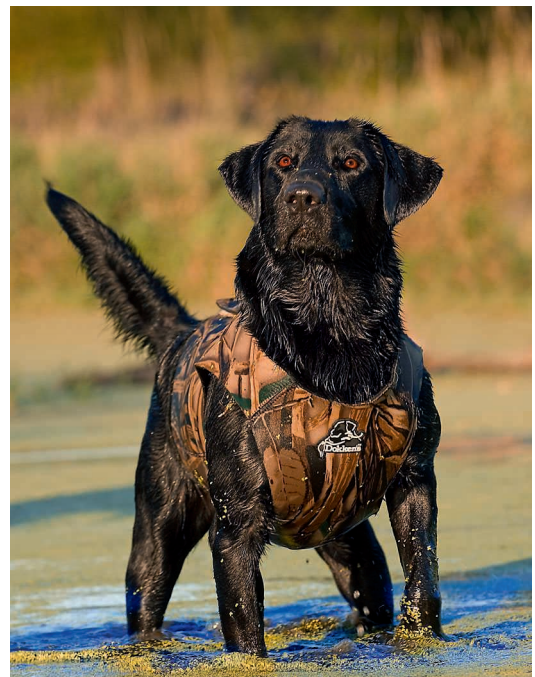
After a few years, Dokken decided it was time to get his own dog.

And to that dog goes all the credit, in Dokken's eyes.

"I started training her then I started running field trials. I did really well, not because of me, but I had a good dog who did

really well on a national level," he recalled.

After that, Dokken was hooked and knew training dogs was what he wanted to do for a living. He's since established



An adult black lab out hunting

himself as one of the top hunting dog trainers in the world, even bolstering a line of dog training products – Dokken Dog Supply – which is carried in sporting good stores across the country.

“That’s just as a result developing products we wanted for training themselves,” Dokken said of his supply company.

Some of the dogs Dokken has trained have hunted under some big names, including President George W. Bush and country music legend Hank Williams, Jr., along with many major professional athletes.

But it takes some prying to get that kind of info out of the humble Dokken, and he’s quick to emphasize that everyone that he does business with is treated the same, no matter what.

“Every customer is important. One person doesn’t get treated different than the other,” Dokken said.

His facility employs four full-time trainers, as well as office staff.

When Dokken isn’t training one of the 350 hunting dogs that come to his Minnesota training facility each year, he’s at home with his wife, Tina, in Day County.

“My wife and I live north of Webster. That’s our connection with the area. I’ve hunted down in the Lily area for years. We’ve had our place here 18 years or better,” Dokken explained.

“My mom’s family homestead is down in the Selby area, so as kids we’d be back on the farm for a good portion of the summer,” he added.

Dokken said his business trains pretty much any of the sporting, pointing and flushing breeds. But in the Upper Midwest, the more popular breed tends to be the Labrador Retriever.

Dokken has a special place in his heart for labs, which he described as a hardy breed able to withstand the punishing winter conditions known to challenge hunters in South Dakota during pheasant season.

And in South Dakota, pheasants are

king, according to Dokken.

“As far as population of pheasant – up in our area the weather sometimes knocks them back a little bit. Last year we had rain in December, which is a little bit of a factor when it comes to pheasant numbers,” Dokken said.

“The further south and west you get, the population changes too. Regardless, South Dakota numbers will always be top in the U.S.”

Hunters who have a dog in their arsenal have a much greater advantage over those who do not. For one, they can flush birds out of thick cover and, unlike the average human, have an absolute blast doing so.

“Without a dog – if you’re a pheasant hunter – you’re not going to have the ability to get the birds up and get them out of higher and denser cover. Finding birds that you’ve shot is going to be a real challenge as well. A dog is a great conservation tool as well,” Dokken said.

From a training standpoint, Dokken advises dog owners to start teaching their hunting partners good habits when they’re really young.

The earlier the training begins, the more success you’re setting the dog up for down the line.



Dokken with two adult labs

“Try to buy the best bloodlines that you can because if you do, in most cases your success rate just gets higher.”

Dokken says it boils down to three things: teaching, repetition and reinforcement. For the human, practicing patience is crucial.

“A majority the time the dog is not in the wrong, it’s that the dog can’t understand what you want,” he said.

The entire job is a dream for Dokken and his team, and one he hopes to continue for decades more to come.

“It’s what we do,” he said. “It’s a labor of love.”



Source: Travel South Dakota



Bees in School

Doland and Northwestern High Schools add bees to their school curriculum.

Kelly Brandlee

kbrandlee@northernelectric.coop

Two area schools have a unique opportunity for their students. You may say it's the "bees' knees" of experiences. A USDA grant and an invitation from Edmunds Central in Roscoe to attend their Honey Bee Education Institute opened the door for Doland and Northwestern High School educators to bring bee education to their classrooms. Through this grant and Honeybee Education course, teachers Bailey Coats and Melissa Knox from Doland and Denise Clemens from Northwestern went home armed with supplies to start their hives and a wealth of knowledge ready to share with their students.

"While at this course, we toured Adee Honey Farm and met with their ownership," said the Doland Agriculture Education teacher Bailey Coats. "We also worked with an organization out of Detroit, Michigan called 'Bees in the D'. They taught us in the classroom everything about bees, including production, life cycle, how to capture the honey, diseases, and anything else they could teach us in two days. We also watched the Adee team move bees out for the fall to be shipped to California," said Coats. The teachers then had the entire 2022-2023 school year to teach their students about bees and their care. During May of 2023, teachers participating in that program

welcomed 100,000 bees to their hives. Throughout the summer, the teachers cared for the bees and prepared for their student's hands-on involvement in caring for them. "I had no idea there was so much involved in caring for bees and collecting honey," said Northwestern High School Science teacher Denise Clemens. "There is a lot of maintenance involved and lots to learn on properly handling hives and how to be efficient and calm around them." That care not only happens in the spring and summer months when the bees are active, but it also carries over into the winter months. Bees will not leave their hive if it is below 55 degrees outside. Because bees do not work in colder temperatures,

many bee farms ship their bees to warmer climates to pollinate orchards and other crops. Doland and Northwestern bees will not go south for the winter. Instead, with a lot of preparation, they will stay in South Dakota. “This spring and summer, we really pushed them to produce as much honey as they can and leave a lot of it in their hive this first winter so they can use it as a food source since they will not leave to get food in the colder months,” said Coats. She continued, “the bees will be supplemented with sugar in their hive to give them extra nourishment. The hives will be house-wrapped with haybales placed around them for insulation from the cold. Bees can essentially survive the cold; they cannot survive the wind we have in South Dakota. So, we place them in an area with great wind protection.”

The topics and educational material are endless when it comes to incorporating the bees into the classroom. These complex insects have many lessons to teach their young aspiring apiculturists. Doland’s science teacher, Melissa Knox, and agriculture education teacher, Bailey Coats, will tag team the instruction in their classrooms. Knox will focus on the life cycle and how bees impact the environment. Coats will focus on the importance of pollinators for plant science and the honey production discussions for her food science class. “We are incorporating bees into our curriculum by stressing the importance of pollinators in our ecosystems and how they impact our nation’s food supply. We will also look at the economic impact of bees within our state/nation, helping students to become better-informed consumers,” says Knox.

Did you know?

Honey is often served with a wooden spoon, as metal spoons can take away some of the beneficial enzymes in the honey.



Doland Agriculture teacher Bailey Coats showcases the school’s bee hive located just outside Doland.

At Northwestern, Clemens hopes to incorporate the bees in each of her science classes. Bees release different pheromones, which is a topic that will be of focus in chemistry class. Bees can cool their hive in the hot summer months by swarming their entrance. This activity from the bees will help teach her physics class about the thermal movement of air and ventilation. Many topics can be addressed during biology, including bee society structure and every worker bee’s purpose and role they were born to fulfill. “I am willing to try anything to get kids excited about and interested in science. I think bees will do just that. When the bee curriculum came out, I thought it would be such a great experience for the kids,” Clemens said. She continued, “Living in an agricultural community, many kids may be

involved in agriculture in the future. They need to understand how bees function and help crops pollinate. This is a great opportunity for every kid to truly understand the importance bees have on our ecosystem.”

Knox said this when asked how the students felt about their new educational experiment.

“The students have been very excited about our new bee adventure. They are a little apprehensive about actually working hands-on with the bees, as most people are because they are afraid of getting stung. However, they realize the suits will protect them and warm up to the situation. They are excited to help with the honey extraction process as well. They have jumped right into this sticky process. They are amazed at the process from start to finish; it has been a fantastic learning experience for the students.”



Touchstone Energy Celebrates 25 Years with Commercial Debut

Frank Turner

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Touchstone Energy Cooperatives is encouraging member electric cooperatives and their member-owners to pop some popcorn, settle in, and join them in celebrating the organization's 25th anniversary on Nov. 29, when they'll debut their

newest line of 2024 commercials.

The historic milestone will commemorate a quarter-century of Touchstone Energy's drive to establish a universal brand – seen on t-shirts, logos, and even soaring hot air balloons – for co-ops nationwide. Select commercials from the lineup, which will feature on the Touchstone Energy website, will highlight the local South

Dakota prairie landscape and local co-op employees with Sioux Valley Energy.

Touchstone Energy Board of Directors President and Sioux Valley CEO Tim McCarthy said he is glad to see South Dakota being represented on a national scope. "We are excited to be celebrating this historic milestone," said McCarthy. "Touchstone Energy continues to be an invaluable resource for co-ops in South Dakota and throughout our nationwide network."

Touchstone Energy's journey began 25 years ago when a group of movers and shakers recognized the need for an outward-facing organization that would connect the image of

co-ops across the nation. Although individually small, cooperatives from all around the nation believed a unified brand would broaden and strengthen their presence. Together, these co-ops owned and operated more distribution lines than any other sector in the electric utility industry and served more than half of the American landmass. On Nov. 26, 1998, 17 founding co-ops established Touchstone Energy, powering through a time of regulatory uncertainty.

“In the late ‘90s, there were some revolutionary things happening in the energy industry,” said Jana Adams, executive director of Touchstone Energy. “The cooperatives really wisely said: as individual entities we are small, but if we come together and create a recognizable brand, we will have a better opportunity to compete in this evolving energy landscape.”

From the start, Touchstone Energy was set on making an impression. By purchasing six iconic Touchstone Energy branded hot air balloons and sponsoring notable events such as the famous NASCAR Talladega 300 race, Touchstone Energy quickly transformed into a nationally recognizable brand.

To date, Touchstone Energy’s membership has grown to nearly 700 co-ops, which now reaches more than 30 million member-owners across 46 states. Along with this remarkable growth, Touchstone Energy has enhanced its services, including advertising, social media management, and web development, among others. Over time, Touchstone Energy’s wide range of services, said Adams, have become a crucial communication resource for their membership.

“Our first national ad was in the early 2000s, and to this day, we run advertisements in every single zip code served by a Touchstone Energy cooperative,” said Adams. “We are

constantly innovating and giving our cooperative members the opportunity to highlight the great work they do and the achievements they have.”

Looking back on the last quarter century, Adams said Touchstone Energy is thrilled to connect to its original roots and celebrate its longstanding service to co-ops across the country.



Touchstone Energy celebrates 25 years while producing new commercials in South Dakota.



“We encourage everybody to join us on Nov. 29 for our 2024 national ad premier and to celebrate the 25 years behind us, but more importantly the many years ahead of us where we continue to work together,” she said.





HOMES OF STEEL

Mike Adolph, left, checks in with an employee during a break from construction on Aug. 22 in Watertown. Photo by Shannon Marvel

REED Fund Helps Finance Summit-Based Manufacturer

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

On the northwestern edge of Watertown, just east of Jefferson Elementary School, a sea of hard hats, brightly colored safety materials, utility trucks, commercial vans, and lumber piles spans across several blocks.

It's hard to differentiate between the houses under construction as most contractors rarely deviate from the methods they've relied on for years. Especially when framing a house.

But one construction crew's telehandler towers above the rest. The steel trusses and wall panels hoisted into the air are also not typically seen in residential construction, but using steel in lieu of timber is just as effective.

And thanks to financial assistance through the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund, Skyview Construction is able to provide steel

trusses and wall panels to the local home building industry.

Contractors usually use the platform framing method, which allows the use of dimensional lumber pieces instead of the larger, natural wood pieces which are harder to come by in the supply chain.

Lumber used in construction has become more difficult to secure and more expensive.

That's why the owners of Skyview Construction, LLC in Summit decided to manufacture trusses and beams out of steel themselves then use those

products to build homes.

But that required purchasing two very expensive pieces of equipment.

After visiting with American Bank and Trust about ways to finance the new venture, Skyview Construction owners Mike, Jackie, and Gerry Adolph reached out to Dave Eide, the general manager of Codington Clark Electric Cooperative to see if their business qualified for REED funding.

Eide was happy to help.



Gerry Adolph, Mike Adolph, and Jackie Adolph stand in the doorway of a townhome built with steel members that the family manufactured themselves.

Photo by Shannon Marvel

The REED Fund worked with American Bank and Trust to help secure financing that offered Skyview Construction a loan with more amicable terms.

Codington-Clark Electric provides financing through REED to help business start-ups and expansions, create and retain jobs and assist communities with facilities, services and infrastructure needs.

The Adolfs were able to secure the funds through the REED Fund to purchase the machine that will form the steel members for the rafters, floor trusses, and walls, and the rotating telehandler that will be used to place the components on-site.

That was in January. Within the last month, the Adolfs and their crew of around nine men completed construction of four twin home units using the wall panels and trusses they manufactured right on their own property in Grant County.

Jackie and Mike reflected on their journey into the steel manufacturing and construction industries.

The couple wanted to start a construction business after going through the extensive process of building a group of townhomes and their own home a few years ago.

Mike's mother, Gerry Adolph, is also an owner of Skyview Construction.

The family has been in the seeding and erosion control and real estate investing business together for the last 18 years, and agreed to expand into the housing industry.

They had planned to build with wood, but the soonest the equipment and necessary supplies could be delivered was at least three years down the road. It also would've cost at least \$3 million.

"So how it went down, we were going down the wood side pretty hard. Like we were going to put

in a big fancy factory with robots and everything," Mike said. "And then the equipment cost so much and it would've put us three years out. I didn't want to wait three years. Then someone asked if we had looked into steel. So we looked into the steel and it made sense."

The program the Adolfs use to manufacture the steel wall panels and trusses maps out the design and provides a detailed view of the project.

"It labels each piece and even tells you how many nails or screws to put in each connection and where to put them for that design," Jackie explained.

Their existing employees would also work as laborers for the construction outside of the seeding and soil erosion season.

The software allows the workers to assemble components without any guess work.

"While we have an experienced building supervisor, the guys that are installing it, they really don't have much construction experience. They've never done this. But it's laid out so well by the software," Mike said.

"The biggest thing with steel is they can do this with minimal experience."

The steel parts are manufactured at the Adolph's shop in Grant County.

Once the structure's design has been completed within the software, steel is ran through a machine and manufactured into the proper stud or truss material.

"Our goal right now is to do a whole house in a week or two— print it, assemble the components in the shop, and then send it out to the jobsite and have it up in a couple of days," Jackie said.

"We're hoping when we get to the single-family homes, it's going to be a little bit quicker," Mike added.

Eide noted how the insulation used with steel framework is at a higher rating and uses a Zip system, creating a more energy efficient temperature control system.

"This is just a really cool project and the owners provide the market with a product that no one else had before," Eide said.

To learn more about the REED Fund, go to www.reedfund.coop.



Jackie Adolph points to a label on one of the steel components, which was generated by the design software to ensure the pieces are properly assembled. Photo by Shannon Marvel



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.

SEPT 22-24
Coal Springs Threshing Bee
 Meadow, SD
 605-788-2229

SEPT 23
German Fest
 Webster, SD
 605-380-0588

SEPT 24
Annual Bazaar & Fall Fest
 4-7 p.m.
 St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
 Wagner, SD

SEPT 30
Day of Wellness
 10 a.m.
 Sturgis Armory
 Sturgis, SD

SEPT 30
Mission Quilt and Bake Sale
 Zoar Lutheran Church
 Revillo, SD

OCT 6-7
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show
 Philip, SD
 605-441-1060

OCT 7
Spirit of Dakota Award
 Huron Event Center
 Huron, SD

OCT 12-19
"In Flanders Fields" Art Exhibition & Silent Auction
 Vermillion Public Library
 Vermillion, SD

OCT 14
Pumpkin Fest
 10 a.m.
 City Park
 Groton, SD

OCT 19-21
Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale
 Spearfish Senior Center
 Spearfish, SD
 605-642-2827

OCT 21
Fall Festival
 11 a.m.
 18473 U.S. HWY 83
 Onida, SD

OCT. 23
Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 Johnson Fine Arts Building
 Aberdeen, SD

OCT 31
Downtown Trick-or-Treat
 4 p.m.
 Groton, SD

OCT 31
United Methodist Church Trunk-or-Treat
 5:30 p.m.
 Groton, SD

NOV 11
Sisseton Area Merchants & Crafters Holiday Extravaganza
 Sisseton, SD
 605-698-7425

NOV 12
Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

NOV 23
Community Thanksgiving
 11:30 a.m.
 Community Center
 Groton, SD

DEC 2
6th Annual Holiday Party, Tour of Homes, Live & Silence Auctions
 4 p.m.
 Olive Grove Golf Course
 Groton, SD

DEC 9
Santa Claus Day
 9 a.m.
 Professional Management Services
 Groton, SD

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