

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota Snowmobiling

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February is the Month of the Heart



Kelly Brandlee
Communications
Director

February is commonly referred to as the month of the heart. It's not because it is Valentine's Day, although it certainly does have to do with the heart. February is American Heart Month!

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the number one killer of Americans. When you choose healthy behaviors, you can lower your heart disease risk and prevent other serious conditions like type 2 diabetes and some kinds of cancer. Here are a few tips from the Center for Disease Control on how to have a heart-healthy lifestyle.

- Learn your health history – Know your risks and talk to your family about your family health history. Consult with your physician.
- Eat a healthy diet – Make healthy food choices such as more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low-fat dairy products. Eat less salt, saturated fat, and added sugar.
- Move more and sit less – Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week, plus muscle-strengthening activities at least two days a week.
- Quit smoking. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free help, and take the first step on your journey to quit.
- Take medication as directed – If you take medicine to treat high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or diabetes, follow your doctor's instructions carefully. Always ask questions if you do not understand something. Never stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

- Choose your drinks wisely – Substitute water for sugary drinks to reduce calories. If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation by limiting consumption to no more than one drink for women and two for men on days that alcohol is consumed.

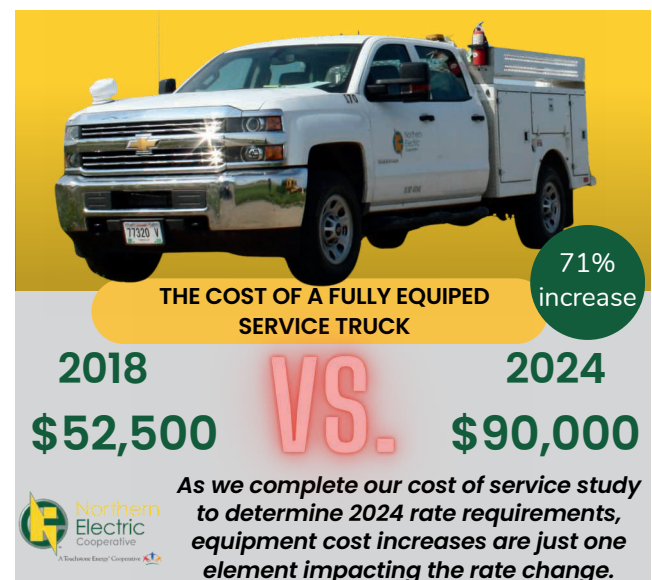
- Monitor your blood pressure at home – Self-measured blood pressure monitors are easy and safe to use.

The American Heart Association recommends if you are 45 years or older to, see your doctor for a heart health screening. During a heart health screening, your doctor will assess your risk factors for heart disease, including your:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Diet
- Physical activity levels
- Medical and family history.

Your doctor will then inform you whether you're at low, moderate or high risk of a heart attack or stroke in the next five years. The most important part of this check-up is working with your doctor to manage your risk factors to improve your heart health.

Consider putting your heart first this February Heart Month!



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

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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.

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**Northern Electric
Cooperative**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held December 21, 2023, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the November 20, 2023, minutes, and November expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on the actions taken by the East River Board at the December 7th, 2023, meeting. The next East River Board Meeting will be held January 4, 2024. General Manager Hager reported on the November 30 SDREA board meeting. The next SDREA board meeting will be January 10-12, 2024, during the SDREA Annual Meeting and Legislative Dinner.

Director Kirk Schanaman reported on the 2023 Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting, held December 12-14, in Denver, CO.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Report on Rural Electric Development (REED) Board Meeting held on December 5th, 2023.
- Report on East River MAC Meeting held on December 5th, 2023.
- Report on the Hecla City Council Meeting held on December 6th, 2023.

- Update on 2024 Annual Meeting preparations.
- Informed the board of the selection of Todd Brickhouse as the chief executive officer and general manager of Basin Electric.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

- Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, January 18th, 2024.
- Approved Work Order Inventories #23-11 for \$310,107.97 and #23-11MC \$13,477.80 to be submitted to RUS for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved the fourth quarter estate requests for early capital credit retirements in the amount of \$45,407.54.
- Appointed Directors to be delegates and alternates for 2024 NRECA PowerXchange, March 1-6th, 2024.
- Reviewed and approved various policies.
- Approved the 2024 Operating Budget.

Held executive session.

Talk to your director or co-op manager if you have questions on these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	November-23	November-22
kWh Sales	32,032,199 kWh	27,403,310 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,756,941	\$2,395,282
Total Cost of Service	\$2,607,675	\$1,982,486
Operating Margins.....	\$149,267	\$412,796
Year to Date Margins	\$459,375	\$1,236,731

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

NOVEMBER 2023.....	3,161 kWh.....	\$272.00	0.0860 per kWh
NOVEMBER 2022.....	2,736 kWh.....	\$244.57	0.0894 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for **83.7%** of NEC's total cost of service.

Cooking Safety

Watch What You Heat: Cooking is the Number One Cause of Home Fires

Plan A: Primary Prevention

- The best time to cook is when you are wide awake, and not drowsy from medications or alcohol.
- Always wipe clean the stove, oven, exhaust fan to prevent grease buildup.
- Wear short or close-fitting sleeves when cooking.
- Keep a pan lid and dry potholders or oven mitts near you EVERY time you cook.
- Turn pot or pan handles toward the back of the stove.
- When heating food in the microwave, use microwave- safe cookware that allows steam to escape.
- Allow food to rest before removing from the microwave.
- When frying, use a pan lid or splash guard to prevent grease splatter.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly. Remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you to check on your cooking.
- After cooking, check the kitchen to make sure all burners and other appliances are turned off.

Plan B: Secondary Prevention

If your food does catch on fire...

1. Cover the pan with its lid. A cookie sheet works too. Leave covered until the pan is cool. NEVER move the pot or carry it outside - the pot is too hot to handle and the contents may splash, causing a severe burn.
2. Turn the heat off. With the lid on and the heat off, the fire should quickly put itself out. NEVER use water to put out a kitchen fire. Water will cause the

oil to splatter and spread the fire, or scald you as it vaporizes.

3. If the fire is inside the oven or microwave, keep the door shut and turn it off. Keep closed until the oven is cool.
4. If the fire gets out of control- get out, stay out and call 9-1-1. Don't return inside for any reason.

STATS

- 47% of all home fires are caused by cooking
- Preventing a burn injury is always better than the pain and trauma of medical treatment afterward.

National Burn Awareness Week (Feb. 4-10, 2024) is a window of opportunity for organizations to mobilize burn, fire, and life safety educators to unite in sharing a common burn awareness and prevention message in our communities.

Source: American Burn Association



Call 811 Before You Dig

Lillee Pannell, Age 10

Lillee Pannell instructs readers to call 811 before digging. Lillee 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.



BRUNCH SPECIALS

FRENCH TOAST SUPREME

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter
2 tbsps. white corn syrup
1 cup brown sugar
5 eggs
1 cup Carnation milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1/4 tsp. salt

Method

Boil together butter, corn syrup, and brown sugar for one minute. Grease a 9x13 pan and put the caramel mix in bottom. Slice French bread about one inch thick or use Texas toast. Put slices close together on top of the caramel sauce. Beat together eggs, milk, vanilla, and salt. Pour on top of bread. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. When ready to serve, turn the pieces over and caramel will be on top. Best served warm.

Brigitta Hofer
Bridgewater, S.D.

MINI FRITTATAS

Ingredients:

8 eggs
1/4 cup milk
1 1/2 tps. Italian seasoning
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
1 cup crumbled cooked bacon
1 med. onion, finely chopped
1 med. zucchini, finely chopped
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese, divided

Method

Preheat oven to 350°F. Beat eggs, milk, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper in medium bowl until well blended. Add bacon, onion, zucchini and 1/2 cup of the cheese; mix well. Spray one (12-cup) muffin tin generously with no stick cooking spray. Spoon about 1/4 cup egg mixture into each cup. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake 20 to 22 minutes or just until eggs are set. Run small knife or spatula around each cup to loosen mini frittatas. Let stand five minutes before serving.

McCormick.com

CINNAMON PANCAKES

Ingredients:

2 cups pancake mix
1 tsp. cinnamon
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup milk
2 tbsps. vegetable oil
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

Method

Stir pancake mix and cinnamon in large bowl until well blended. Stir in eggs, milk, oil, and vanilla just until blended.

Pour 1/4 cup of batter per pancake onto preheated lightly greased griddle or skillet. Cook one to two minutes per side or until golden brown, turning when pancakes begin to bubble. Serve pancakes with Spiced Syrup, if desired.

Kitchen Tip: To make flavorful Spiced syrup, mix one cup pancake syrup, one teaspoon pure vanilla extract and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon in a small microwave-safe bowl and microwave on HIGH for one minute or until warm, stirring once.

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.



Char's Kitchen

Turton business delivers delicious jams and jellies to communities all over the world.

Kelly Brandlee

kbrandlee@northernelectric.coop

Char Barrie loves gardening, baking, and canning. One year, her daughter asked if she would make some jelly to give as gifts to relatives. The pair found some small Gerber baby jars and got to work. That following summer, Turton had an all-school reunion, which included a craft fair. "My daughter saved

me more jars, and I made some for that," says Char. She continues, "To dress up the jars, my daughter helped me create a label. She had fabric and a ribbon and showed me how to make a bow. I did the Doland craft fair, and the rest is history."

Char's Kitchen has come a long way since those early years of jelly in Gerber baby jars. Twenty-seven years later, Char's Kitchen prepares between 10,000-12,000 jars of product a year! It is not just jelly

in those jars. Char, her husband Rolland, and a neighbor also put up salsa, syrup, pickles, jams, and watermelon pickles.

When Char started, she mainly attended craft fairs in small towns. Today, Char's Kitchen sells products to 45 businesses and attends 15 craft fairs yearly. Char's Kitchen has shipped to 42 states and 10 countries. Char and Rolland even make a corn cob jelly special for the World's only Corn Palace. Char takes care of the jelly-making while Rolland uses an old-fashioned corn sheller to prepare the cobs. Many of Char's Kitchen products are in high demand. However, the most popular include Choke Cherry and

Strawberry Rhubarb jellies. Char personally loves the Raspberry Rhubarb with bread or toast.

Char and Rolland grow most of the products for their canned items themselves; what they do not grow, they purchase from the local colony. This last year, they put up 50 dozen beets, 50 dozen dilly beans, and 105 dozen kosher dill pickles, they have lost track of how many watermelon pickles.

All those orders certainly keep Char and Rolland busy. Not only do they grow much of their product, but they also cook, prepare, and can all their product. In addition, they do all the marketing, website updates, inventory counts, decorate jars, and ship and deliver products themselves with help from just a few others.

While being a small business owner certainly has challenges and is a lot of work, Char and Rolland agree that the good outweighs the bad. "I love the self-satisfaction that we did something on our own without help from others," says Rolland. "All the compliments and kind words we receive from our customers about our product are really appreciated and make the long hours worth it," says Char.

As Northern Electric members, Rolland and Char certainly have a great appreciation for electricity in their business. Rolland remembers when his family farm got electricity. Rolland was in high school in the 40s when the Rural Electric Association (REA) started digging holes for poles and putting lines up. Rolland helped install electricity in some of the area farm homes. "A Turton Electrician recruited me to help. They would drill a hole in the ceiling and then put me in the attic. I would drop the wire down. At that time, every farmhouse received one light bulb in the middle of a room.

It was quite something to go from no electricity to having that one light," says Rolland.

Rolland remembers his parents sitting on chairs in the kitchen, watching their first refrigerator make its first ice cubes.

"That refrigerator was a big upgrade for us. Before then, we had a root cellar to store ice. In the winter, us kids would haul ice to the root cellar in the ground. We would have to pack the ice with straw so it would stay insulated, and we could have ice all summer," says Rolland.

How electricity is used has undoubtedly changed since farms in the Northern Electric territory first received it. However, one thing that has not changed over that time is the hard work, dedication, and can-do attitude of the members served. Rolland and Char are great examples of the continued ingenuity and adaptability of our Northern Electric members.

"Rolland was in high school in the 40s when the Rural Electric Association (REA) started digging holes for poles and putting lines up. Rolland helped install electricity in some of the area farm homes. "A Turton Electrician recruited me to help. They would drill a hole in the ceiling and then put me in the attic. I would drop the wire down," says Rolland."



Pictured are a few of Char's Kitchen jam and jelly options. Char's Kitchen jams and jellies have no preservatives, just like Grandma used to make them.



SOUTH DAKOTA'S SNOWMOBILE CLUBS

A group of Black Hills Snowmobile Club members enjoy a ride through the snow covered pines.

Snow Lovers Create Trails and Lifelong Friendships Through Club Membership

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Being a member of one of South Dakota's many snowmobiling clubs is more like being a member of a big, adrenaline-loving family.

Being a part of a snowmobile club provides the opportunity to meet likeminded individuals that can easily turn into some of your best friends. That's the case for Mike Boock, of Rapid City, who is a longtime member of the Black Hills Snowmobile Club (BHSC).

"Most of the friendships that I have today are because of the snowmobile club. Many of us even camp together during the summer at the lake," Boock said.

Boock said the club boasts up to 70 members in all. While he primarily rides the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, Boock loves riding in Black Hills when the area receives enough snow.

There are a total of 416 miles of groomed snowmobile trails

in the Black Hills National Forest, making it a pristine spot for snowmobiling.

The snowmobile clubs in the Black Hills have it a little easier than those out east as they don't have to mark, install, groom or repair trails.

"The state takes care of that," Boock said. "This allows clubs like the BHSC to become more of an educational and community support organization."

This allows club members more free time to volunteer or participate in community events, such as the Festival of Lights Parade and Storybook Island Christmas Nights of Light.

Kelly Weaver is the President of the South Dakota Snowmobile Association and a member of the Aberdeen Drift Busters Snowmobile Club.

The Aberdeen Drift Busters maintain what's called the Dakota Midland trail system, which connects Aberdeen, Mina Lake, Richmond Lake, Westport, Frederick and Columbia.

"This provides about 75 miles of riding in a safe, marked, and groomed corridor," Weaver said.

There are rules governing the trail system. While there are no posted speed limits on the trail, when the trail is located in a road right-of-way, the speed limit of the road applies.

There are also laws governing the type of vehicle that can be ridden on a snowmobile trail. Machines must meet the state definition of a snowmobile. ATV's and other motorized vehicles do not typically meet that definition.

Aberdeen Drift Busters has held the title of being the largest snowmobile club in the state for several years. It was established in 1969, the same year the South Dakota Snowmobile

Association was established.

“Currently, our membership is right around 100 families,” Weaver said. “The club has been as large as 225 members but membership has slowed over the past decade due to the lack of snow and the growing number of activities that families have an opportunity to participate in.”

Anyone can join a snowmobile club and snowmobile ownership is not a requirement.

“You are connected with very experienced snowmobilers who can provide information about machines, riding ventures and how organized snowmobiling operates,” Weaver said. “It is a way to connect with people who have a shared passion for the sport.”

Weaver had her first taste of snowmobiling as a young child with her father and neighbors.

“When I was young, I only rode as a passenger, which I found was not to my liking. When I met my future husband, he also had a snowmobile and I had to ride as a passenger once again,” Weaver said.

Weaver and her husband decided to join the Aberdeen Drift Busters while taking a break from riding for a bite to eat years ago.

“In 1986, my fiancé – now husband – and I were on a snowmobile ride and stopped to eat at a trailside business. Another snowmobiler, who we did not know, approached us and told us we needed to join the club. We did and have been actively involved ever since. That snowmobiling ‘stranger’ became a lifelong friend who we’ve shared many snowmobile memories with,” Weaver said. “Like most things we are drawn to, it is the ability to connect with others who share a common interest that keeps us involved. We have met so many people across the state and the nation through our involvement and have experienced some awesome and fun-filled trips over the years. There are so many ways to be involved that even members who are not avid riders can benefit from and enjoy

being part of the club.”

Once married, Weaver decided she’d need her own sled if she were to continue with snowmobiling. When her husband acquired a new Polaris, she was granted a used Arctic Cat Jag that she described as a “trusty starter sled.”

“Early on in our riding, we were able to make trips to the Black Hills, Big Horn Mountains and West Yellowstone. These venues are even more breathtaking in the winter,” Weaver said.

A long day on the trail in a large riding area might last six to eight hours. There needs to be a minimum of six inches of snow on the ground, depending on the terrain.

It may take several layers of snow to create a base for the trail, which can then be groomed and maintained throughout the season.

With adequate snow and a trail in place, an ideal riding day for Weaver would be sunny skies with a little wind, and temperatures between 0 and 30 degrees.

Over in the southeastern corner of

the state, Duane Duerr, President of the Siouxland Sno Trackers, finds great enjoyment in riding his Ski Doo 900 Ave Four Cycle snowmobile.

The Siouxland Sno Trackers is one of the original snowmobile clubs in South Dakota and has around 78 miles of groomed trails for its 80 members.

Duerr grew up in Minnesota and joined the club in 2006 when he moved to South Dakota. Joining the club helped him to learn the trails and rules, and provided him with many friendships.

“I think snowmobiling has become more popular, but involvement in all organizations is down,” Duerr said.

“Many do not realize that snowmobile clubs are why we have a trail system and that they put it in and take it out. Without the clubs, we will no longer have trails in South Dakota. Member support is what makes a difference and too many take that involvement for granted.”

More information on the state’s snowmobile clubs can be found at the SDSA’s website at snowmobilesd.com.



Watertown’s South Dakota Snowmobile Club members take a break during an outing.

Happenings at Northern Electric

FOOD AND TOY DONATIONS FOR FAMILIES IN NEED



Northern Electric employees donated items to the Salvation Army and Toys for Tots program in Aberdeen as well as the Redfield Good Samaritan Center.

Pictured are Northern Electric employees Brandon Flack, Amy Golden, Kelly Brandlee, and Kelby Fey with some of the items donated to these wonderful causes in our community.

LEGISLATIVE FORUM HELD WITH LOCAL LEGISLATORS



Three legislators attended the Northeast Rural Utilities Legislative Issues Forum. This annual event allows us to highlight the issues that are important to electric co-operatives, our members and our rural communities.

(Pictured Left to Right) Rep. Scott Moore, District 23, Rep. Brandei Schaeffbauer, District 3, and Rep. James Wangness; District 23.

COOPS IN THE CLASSROOM VISITS AREA SCHOOLS



Northern Electric joined East River Electric's Jen Gross at six area schools for "Coops in the Classroom." Fifth grade classrooms learned about static electricity, how electricity travels, how to be safe around electricity, and how it is generated. Schools visited included Hitchcock/Tulare, Redfield, Warner, Frederick, Northwestern, and Simmons Elementary schools. Jen will be back visiting more schools in the Northern Electric territory this spring.

Pictured is Jen Gross with Simmons Elementary fifth grader Mia Hubert.



APPLY FOR 2024 SCHOLARSHIPS

Students Can Apply Now For \$1,000 and \$500 Co-op Scholarships

Students of Northern Electric Cooperative members who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary school - or plan to enroll in the fall of 2024 can now apply for two co-op-sponsored scholarships.

Bismarck-based Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates electricity for Northern Electric Cooperative, is awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a student within the Northern Electric service territory. Northern Electric is also awarding a \$500 scholarship to a student of a co-op member. Students can apply for both scholarships by filling out one Basin Electric 2024 scholarship application which can be found on the Northern Electric website at northernelectric.coop/scholarships. Applications can also be picked up at a Northern Electric office.

In 2023, Ethan Boekelheide of Northville was awarded the \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship and

Abbilyn Kaan of Aberdeen was the recipient of the \$500 Northern Electric scholarship.

The scholarship application includes information about the student's academic record, work experience, an applicant appraisal from an advisor or supervisor, and a one-page essay on the topic: *'What challenges face rural electric cooperatives in the coming years and how do you think challenges should be addressed?'*

The entire application must be completed and turned into the Northern Electric Cooperative office in Bath by the **February 16, 2024** deadline.

A committee of cooperative employees will evaluate the applications and award both the \$1,000 and \$500 scholarships from the pool of applicants. Scholarships will be directly paid to the institution where the recipient is enrolled in the fall of 2024.

How to Apply

• SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY

Applicants must be U.S. citizens under the age of 25, and natural or adopted children of Northern Electric Cooperative consumers/members. Any applicant must be a student who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

• THE SELECTION PROCESS

All applications are critically evaluated by a committee of cooperative employees using a combination of several criteria including: a written essay, participation in school and community activities, grade-point average, SAT/ACT scores, a statement by the student explaining his/her educational and career goals, financial need, and a written recommendation from a third party. The winning \$1,000 entry will be sent to Basin Electric for scholarship distribution. The committee will also select the winning entry for the \$500 Northern Electric scholarship.

• APPLICATION

Applications are available from local high school guidance counselors, on the Northern Electric Cooperative website at northernelectric.coop/scholarships or directly from the Northern Electric office in Bath.

COMPLETED APPLICATIONS MUST BE RETURNED BY FEBRUARY 16, 2024 TO:

Northern Electric Cooperative
Attention: Scholarship
PO Box 457
Bath, SD 57427

For more information contact Kelly Brandlee at: **605-225-0310**



Jocelyn Cihak takes a dual-credit calculus class offered by Northern State University. Photo courtesy of Northern State University

DUAL-CREDIT

High Schoolers are Gaining College Credits

Scott Waltman

Some graduates of South Dakota high schools are showing up on college campuses with a semester's worth of credits.

Sometimes even more.

The dual-credit program has proven to be both beneficial and popular since it was introduced by Gov. Dennis Daugaard in 2014.

It's easy to understand why. Here's how the program works. High school juniors and seniors at any South Dakota high school can take classes for which they get both high school and college credits. There are scores of

classes to choose from, and the cost to take them is steeply discounted.

For instance, once a student enrolls at any of the state's six public schools or universities, they pay between \$253.85 and \$260.55 per credit hour. That cost for a high school student taking a college-level class through the dual-credit program? It's a mere \$48.33 per credit hour.

That's why education officials in South Dakota love the program.

Nathan Lukkes, executive director and chief executive officer for the South Dakota Board of Regents, said providing an affordable education has been a priority for the regents in

recent years. Tuition freezes and an increased number of scholarships are part of that work. But so are dual-credit classes, he said.

Most of the dual-credit courses are general education classes – or generals, as college students often call them – he said. Through the program, students can have some of those courses out of the way before they even get their high school degrees.

The work done by the regents and the universities resulted in Forbes naming South Dakota the most affordable state in which to get a high school education, Lukkes said.

All six South Dakota public universities offer dual-credit classes, and the number of high school students taking advantage has been going up in recent years.

The number of students taking dual-credit classes changes throughout

the year, but there were 1,223 taking classes at Northern State University in Aberdeen in fall 2023 compared to 1,141 the year before. And at South Dakota State University in Brookings, the number jumped from 903 to 1,031 in fall 2023, according to statistics from the board of regents.

Here's how the systemwide numbers are trending based on the number of students taking dual-credit classes, according to the 2023 South Dakota Board of Regents Fact Book, which was issued during summer at the end of the most recent fiscal year.

2021-2022: 4,300

2020-2021: 3,919

2019-2020: 3,781

2018-2019: 3,168

The 10 most popular classes all had more than 150 students.

College algebra: 990

Fundamentals of speech: 905

Composition I (English 101): 830

General psychology: 513

U.S. history I: 379

American government: 317

Music appreciation (Music 101): 280

Introduction to sociology: 241

Biology survey I (Biology 101): 157

Biology survey lab: 156

In 2021, there were 9,523 dual-credit courses taken by South Dakota high school students, according to information from the regents. That number includes summer courses and students who took more than one course.

At Northwestern High School in Mellette, Superintendent Rob Lewis said about 25% of the juniors and seniors are taking advantage of dual-credit courses. One student has taken a full semester's worth, he said.

Do the math over the course of a semester, and that's a savings of north of \$2,300. And that doesn't take on-campus housing and food into account.

That's just a great deal for high school kids, Lewis said.

Chris Ulrich, the middle school and high school principal at Northwestern, agrees.

"It's a nice opportunity for kids

to get not only college credits, but also experience what college is like," he said.

And they get to do it within the comfort of their high school, Ulrich said. The program is a great transitional step leading from high school to college, he said.

AP, or Advanced Placement classes, were great, but dual-credit classes are even better, Lewis said.

AP classes are college-level courses taught by high school teachers. But they don't always equate to college credit. Dual-credit courses are taught by college instructors and professors and always result in college credit, if a student passes.

In South Dakota, dual-credit courses can be taken on any of the six public university campuses, in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Huron, Pierre, Watertown and online.

And there's another benefit, Lukkes said. Dual-credit classes create a tie between South Dakota high school students and the regental schools. Any chance a high school student has a chance to engage with a state school creates a bond that could help keep that kid in South Dakota, he said.

Perhaps a Spearfish High School student takes a dual-credit class at Black Hills State University and it's a good experience. Maybe that high school graduate stays in town and enrolls at BHSU.

Lewis, too, said the program is a great way to keep students in South Dakota for college and perhaps beyond.

That's also a focus for the Aberdeen Development Corp., which is starting a program aimed at keeping more Northern graduates in town to start their professional careers.



Rhianna Troske, a student at Northwestern High School in Mellette, takes a dual-credit class while at school. Photo by Scott Waltman



Basin Electric Security and Response Services dispatchers take calls from rural electric cooperative members at Basin's headquarters in Bismarck, N.D.

SRS Dispatchers Keep Watch Over South Dakota Linemen

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

No matter the time of day or night, nor outdoor conditions, members can be assured their calls will be taken during an outage thanks to the Security and Response Services (SRS), a 24-hour dispatching service provided by Basin Electric in Bismarck, N.D.

When a rural electric cooperative is closed, the SRS team takes incoming outage calls from members. "Safety is the reason we exist," said Chad Reisenauer, Director of Community and Member Relations for Basin Electric.

The SRS program started in 1992. Reisenauer has been in charge of the

dispatch team for just over a decade.

"We started with one or two cooperatives that were asking us to monitor alarms and dispatch linemen. Back then it was nothing but a phone and a computer screen where we typed notes. Now we're integrated into outage management systems, we're doing all sorts of things to predict outages and this technology has grown leaps and bounds," Reisenauer said.

The team is comprised of 22 dispatchers total, with 18 of those positions dedicated to dispatching full time, while the other four dedicate half their time to dispatching and the other half to alarm monitoring. Each dispatcher works 12 hour shifts with

four to six dispatchers working per shift, depending on what they're expecting for the day. These shifts begin at 4 p.m. and end at 4 a.m.

"Our job is to be the cooperative during the hours they are closed," said Jolene Johnson, dispatch supervisor.

"We'll back them a little bit if they have a safety meeting or a funeral where they're shutting the office down. We oversee 18 cooperatives in South Dakota. We're a little bit of feast and famine," Johnson said.

Overall, Basin SRS oversees 13 states, from Washington to Illinois to Texas. On any one day, dispatchers could be dealing with a blizzard in the Dakotas, freezing rain in Nebraska and a tornado in Texas.

On a light day, the SRS team will receive 600 to 700 calls for assistance. That number quells in comparison to the number of calls SRS dispatchers receive during major storm events, such as the winter storms events in April of 2021, when a couple of huge blizzards came through the Northern Great Plains region. During that storm, the

SRS team took in around 33,000 calls for service in a 24-hour period.

“That’s a stressful day for our dispatchers. They’re getting beat up continually, then they have to get onto the next call and maintain the safety of the linemen,” Reisenauer said.

“The other type of stress is if Bismarck is getting hit by a blizzard. Then there’s the stress of employees getting into work.”

A new dispatch center equipped with a sleeping room for dispatchers was recently built at the headquarters in Bismarck, which has no windows and a locking door so dispatchers can get as good of sleep as they’re going to get if the weather prevents them from traveling back home.

Dispatchers are also trained to remain calm under high stress situations, especially when the caller on the other end has lost power and is having a stressful day as a result.

“We reassure them that crews are working on it. We do call backs to make sure they’re not left in the dark, no pun intended. We just remain calm, we can’t

let them get us worked up,” said Seth Neer, lead dispatcher.

“No one ever calls us to tell us thanks for keeping the lights on,” joked Reisenauer. “It’s the worst day in the world for them if they’ve got water freezing and pipes bursting. They’re mad about the situation and we stress to our dispatchers that we’re just the voice on the phone and focal point of their anger.”

Neer added that it’s one of those jobs where you have to have the right mentality and the calls are something you cannot take personally.

Dispatchers must successfully pass a training program, which is self-directed.

From the time the dispatcher is hired to the time they are allowed to go live on the phones typically takes two months.

Reisenauer said he wouldn’t put anyone on the phone that he feels wouldn’t be able to handle an emergency.

“This is lineman safety. We literally have their lives in our hands,” he added.

Johnson said the SRS dispatchers are

also taken out into the field to visit local member cooperatives, such as Moreau-Grand Rural Electric, so they can go out and see what linemen are looking at.

“It’s hard for any dispatcher to get a call about a transformer if they don’t know what a transformer looks like,” she said.

Dispatchers track the locations of all linemen and check in with them every 90 minutes. If they miss a status check, dispatch will be sending someone their way. Their duty is to keep track of linemen at all times.

“We’re talking to them everyday. They do get to be family in some ways,” Reisenauer said.

“It’s funny when we bring operations and linemen in and they’ll go ‘I recognize that voice!’ And it turns out they’re good friends with the dispatcher but they’ve never met in person before,” Reisenauer said.

For more information on the SRS team, including quarterly newsletters on the department’s activities, go to Basin Electric’s website – www.basinelectric.com.





FEB. 24, 2024
Nemo 500 Outhouse
Races & Chili Cookoff
 10 a.m.
 Nemo Guest Ranch
 Nemo, 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.

FEB. 3
Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby
 11 a.m.
 City Boat Landing
 Hendricks, MN

FEB. 9-10
Mardi Gras Weekend
 Historic Downtown Deadwood
 Deadwood, SD

FEB. 10
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
 11 a.m.
 Main Street
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 11
Beadle County Humane Society Bingo, Silent Auction & Bake Sale Benefit
 2 p.m.
 Huron Community Center
 Huron, SD

FEB. 18-20
MASC presents Disaster! the Musical
 Vesta Community Center
 Vesta, MN

FEB. 22
The Starlets: Pop Female Trio
Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center NSU
 Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 23-24
Women in Blue Jeans Conference
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

MARCH 1-3
National Pheasant Fest & Quail Classic
 Denny Sanford Premier Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 2
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 7
Elevate Rapid City Economic Summit
 8 a.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed & Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy & 3rd Annual Shamrock Gala and Benefit Auction
 5 p.m.
 Alex Johnson Ballroom
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 11-15
Black Hills Institute's 50th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWFT 31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 16
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 16-17
Hill City Antiques, Railroad & Collectibles Show & Sale
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 17
St. Patrick's Day Green Pancakes and Sausage
 8:30 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 20-23
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Hill City Children's Easter Egg Hunt
 Visitor Info Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 24
Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 24
Run for the Rangers
 Hill City, SD

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