

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Crisp Breezes and Corn Mazes

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Northern Electric Board Reviews Director Districts



Mike Traxinger
District 1 Director

A few years ago, the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors formed a policy committee to review the cooperative’s articles of incorporation and bylaws. After receiving feedback from membership, the board unanimously recommended a set of updates and revisions to the full board in February of 2023. The members voted on the proposed changes in April of 2023, which were approved and adopted by the membership.

The policy committee has continued to meet and review more of Northern Electric’s policies and procedures. One of the policies the committee is currently reviewing is the make-up of director districts. The boundaries of the current director districts were adopted in 1997. As Northern Electric’s membership has grown and changed since 1997, the number of members in each director’s district has also grown and changed.

At the annual meeting of the members of Northern Electric on June 11, 2024, the board provided the membership with the chart below that illustrates the number of members per dis-

trict on 12/31/97 and the number of members per district as of 12/31/2023.

As you can see, there is quite a disparity. One of the seven cooperative principles is democratic member control. Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected directors are accountable to the membership and members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote).

The policy committee continues to review this policy and is seeking feedback from the members on this issue. It has discussed several different ideas to make representation more equitable, including: 1) redistricting the current director districts; 2) changing the number of districts from nine districts (one director per district) to three districts (three directors per district; or 3) reducing the number of directors and redistricting the director districts. All of these are examples that the policy committee has discussed.

As the policy committee and the board continue to discuss this policy, we encourage you to reach out to your elected directors no later than Friday, September 13, 2024, to share your thoughts on this important issue. The policy committee will review the additional feedback from the membership and decide whether or not to recommend a change of the director districts to the full board for consideration.

Comparison of Membership Change 1997-2023

Director By District	12/31/2023	% of Total	12/31/1997	% of Total	Change	% Change
	# Members	Members	# Members	Members	# Members	1997-2023
1 Mike Traxinger	269	5.5%	351	8.5%	(82)	-23.4%
2 Todd Hettich	849	17.4%	663	16.1%	186	28.1%
3 Ron Kaaz	624	12.8%	598	14.5%	26	4.3%
4 Josh Larson	446	9.1%	442	10.7%	4	0.9%
5 Scott Sperry	1,410	28.9%	641	15.5%	769	120.0%
6 Kirk Schaunaman	375	7.7%	315	7.6%	60	19.0%
7 BJ Hansen	260	5.3%	389	9.4%	(129)	-33.2%
8 Fran Esser	300	6.2%	339	8.2%	(39)	-11.5%
9 Nolan Wipf	342	7.0%	388	9.4%	(46)	-11.9%
Total Members	4,875		4,126		749	18.2%
Average Per District	542		458		83	

* Northern Electric and Spink Electric merged in 1997.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Nolan Wipf

Board of Directors

Todd Hettich - Vice President
Scott Sperry - Secretary
Josh Larson - Treasurer
B.J. Hansen
Thomas Lambert
Kirk Schaunaman
Bruce Schumacher, Jr.
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.

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**Northern Electric
Cooperative**
A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

JUNE BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held June 18, 2024, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present except Scott Sperry. As the first order of business, the board approved the June 21, 2024, minutes, and June expenditures.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the July 2, 2024, meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA Board Meeting held on June 27-28, 2024, in Pierre. South Dakota Wind Energy Association Director William (B.J.) Hansen reported on the virtual SDWEA Board Meeting held on July 11, 2024.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Update on Rural Electric Economic Development revolving loan fund activities held on July 1, 2024.
- Report on the East River MAC Meeting held on July 1, 2024.
- Report on the employee meeting held on June 24, 2024.
- President Nolan Wipf reminded the board of the America's Electric Cooperative PAC dues.

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 Friday, August 23, 2024.
- Approved Work Order Inventory #24-06 for \$181,320.29 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved annual special and general capital credit retirements. Estimated retirements will total \$349,955.62.
- Appointed Director Todd Hettich authorized representative and Director Nolan Wipf alternate representative for the East River Annual Meeting, September 4, 2024, Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Appointed Director Kirk Schaunaman authorized representative and Director Nolan Wipf alternate representative for the Basin Electric Annual Meeting, August 13-15, 2024, Bismarck, ND.
- Appointed Director Scott Sperry delegate and General Manager Char Hager alternate representative for the 2024 NRECA Regional Meetings 5 & 6, Minneapolis, MN, September 16-18, 2024.
- Held Executive Session.
Talk to your director or co-op manager if you have questions on these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	June-24	June-23
kWh Sales	18,789,639 kWh	21,245,343 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,271,842	\$2,229,963
Total Cost of Service	\$2,280,985	\$2,289,620
Operating Margins.....	-\$9,143	-\$59,657
Year to Date Margins	\$57,329	\$397,842

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

JUNE 2024.....	1,314 kWh.....	\$199.01	0.1515 per kWh
JUNE 2023.....	1,424 kWh.....	\$187.19	0.1315 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 81.9% of NEC's total cost of service.

WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecasted.
- **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.

- **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

Source: National Weather Service



Power Line Safety “Don’t Fly Kites Close to Power Lines”

Lillee Pannell, Age 11

Lillee Pannell cautions kite flyers to be careful around power lines. Great advice, Lillee! Hobie’s parents are Scottie and Kimberly Pannell, 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.

Summertime SWEETS

SUMMER FRUIT TART

Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust
1 egg white, lightly beaten
1/3 cup sugar
2 tbsps. cornstarch
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ginger
2 cups sliced peeled peaches,
(about 3 peaches)
1 cup blueberries
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Method

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Prepare crust as directed on package. Place on foil-lined 12-inch pizza pan. If necessary, press out any folds or creases. Brush crust with about 1/2 of the beaten egg white. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and ginger in medium bowl. Add fruit and vanilla; toss gently. Spoon into center of crust, spreading to within 2 inches of edges. Fold 2-inch edge of crust up over fruit, pleating or folding crust as needed. Brush crust with remaining egg white. Bake 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

McCormick

RHUBARB PIE

Crust

1-2 cups flour
1/2 stick butter or margarine
1/4 cup water

Add ingredients and knead to complete a pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
3 eggs, separated
2 tbsps. flour
1/8 tsp. salt
2 1/2 cups rhubarb
Smucker's Caramel Sundae Syrup

Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 degrees until golden brown. You may also add more Caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

Lisa Soukup (Kummer)
Tea, S.D.

PEACH DELIGHT

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, melted
1 3/4 cups flour
Pinch of salt
2 tbsps. sugar
2 cups water
2 cups sugar
4 tbsps. cornstarch
3 oz. package peach jello
1 tbsp. butter
10 fresh peaches

Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine butter, flour, salt and 2 tbsps. sugar. Mix and pat in 9x13 inch pan which has been sprayed with Pam. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool when done baking. Combine 2 cups sugar and 2 cups water. Whisk in 4 tbsps. cornstarch until smooth. Cook until thickened in the microwave – stirring often. Remove from microwave and add 1 tbsp. butter and package of peach jello (do not add any water). Stir until dissolved and let cool. While cooling, dip fresh peaches in hot water and plunge in cold water bath. Remove skins and pits. Place back in cold water until all peaches are peeled. Drain peaches, slice into bite size pieces and mix into cooled peach glaze. Carefully pour the glaze over the crust and chill until firmly set. May be served with whip cream. You can substitute strawberry jello and sliced strawberries in place of the peaches. This makes a delicious cool summer dessert.

Shirley Fletcher
Rapid City, S.D.

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

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.



From East River to Missouri River

Tom Boyko's 2,400-Mile Canoe Journey

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sarea.coop

What's a former CEO of East River Power Cooperative to do after they retire? For Tom Boyko, retirement after 37 years in the electric industry and serving nine years as East River's chief executive officer meant an opportunity to embark on a well-earned canoe odyssey from the headwaters of the Missouri River in Three Forks, Mont., to St. Louis, Mo., with his son, Jacob Boyko, who accompanied his father for a portion of the journey.

According to Boyko, the 2,400-mile trip had been brewing in his mind for a long time, so when he retired at the end of August 2023, he wasted no time planning and executing his adventure, jumping from his cozy office chair to his canoe in just six months.

"I grew up on the Missouri in Stanton, N.D., so I've been wanting to do this trip forever," said Boyko. "It's just something I've always wanted to do."

Boyko continued, "At first, my family didn't think I would follow through. But through the winter, I built a tank so I could sit and practice paddling, day after day. Then they realized I was going to do it. My wife and daughter actually drove Jacob and I out to Montana. They weren't sure I was going to make it all the way, and they thought we might call it quits, but we didn't."

Having read the journals of Lewis and Clark, Boyko wanted to follow in the pioneering duo's footsteps along the Missouri River. However, instead of relying on the historic travelers' accommodations, Boyko took a more modern approach to his journey with modern provisions, including a canoe packed to the brim with packets of chicken and tuna, boxes of mac and cheese, a valuable cache of instant coffee, a tent, two propane stoves, and many other supplies.

"I got ahold of David Miller's book, *The Complete Paddler*, and he really went through, step-by-step, what he experienced when he went down the Missouri River," said Boyko. "He logged the locations of the campgrounds and included a lot of great information, so it was a great book to have with."

Armed with the knowledge to navigate hordes of flies and mosquitos, unpredictable summer storms, and the channels of the Missouri River, Boyko launched his expedition on May 16 with his son, who had just graduated college with a degree in Journalism from South Dakota State University. Jacob had also just won a Pulitzer fellowship for a writing project about the Matanza Riachuelo River in Buenos Aires, Argentina. As a result, Jacob left the Missouri River expedition in Williston, N.D., to explore his own river-centric journey in Argentina. The rest of the trip, Tom tackled solo.

"When you get to be a dad like me, you just so appreciate the



Tom Boyko stands with his son, Jacob, at Tobacco Gardens Resort & Marina, a campground in McKenzie County, N.D. Photo submitted by Tom Boyko.

opportunity to do something like this with your son," said Boyko. "He enjoyed it, and he plans to finish the trip at some point in his life. And the cool thing is that every guy my age I met on the trip said the same thing, 'I wish I could have done that with my son.' I was very fortunate, and I very much appreciate that he came with me."

Although Boyko tackled most of the trip by himself, he did have help along the way. Boyko received help from family, friends, and co-workers from the co-op industry when portaging his canoe over the many dams along the way.

"My brother portaged me around Garrison Dam," said Boyko. "Jordan Lamb, the general manager of Oahe Electric, helped me portage Oahe Dam. Russell Gall with Charles-Mix Electric and Ervin Fink, a former director of East River, helped me through Fort Randall. Stephanie Horst with Bon Homme Yankton paddled Lewis and Clark Lake with me. Even my family came down and to help me portage Gavin's Point. It was great to see friends and family along the way."

Even bolstered by the help of friends, the trip wasn't always smooth sailing. Over the course of his 98-day journey, Boyko traversed strong winds and high waves on Lake Oahe, which forced him to ground his canoe and camp along the beaches of the reservoir. He drifted through oppressive 114-degree heat in Missouri and navigated past large barge traffic. There was even a rowdy raccoon who helped himself to some mac and cheese – all part of the adventure.

"I started packing the canoe when it became evident that a raccoon had been in my canoe during the night and ate through one of my food dry bags leaving mac and cheese noodles and orange cheese throughout the boat," wrote Boyko in his travel journal. "What a mess."

But it wasn't all bad. Boyko said he met some great people and found some real gems along the way.

"I worked for the Western Area Power Association for many years, so I was very familiar with the river and the dams... but when you are actually canoeing it, you get a different appreciation," said Boyko. "It's a beautiful river."



CRISP BREEZES AND CORN MAZES

A broken-down 1950s-style Chevrolet pickup welcomes visitors to the Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

Celebrating Autumn on the Family Farm

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

The first signs of autumn sweep across the plains as daylight dwindles and treetops wither into amber. For some, the nostalgia of fall is evoked by the first crisp breeze at a football game or the taste of a freshly picked apple from the orchard. But for Clint and Kelly Brandlee, Lake Region Electric members living in rural Pierpont, the magic of the harvest season begins with the opening of their family-owned corn maze.

The Brandlee family homesteaded their land in 1886 on the western edge of the Coteau Hills, an area characterized by rolling hills, fertile ground and native pastures. With deep roots extending through five generations of ranching and farming, Clint and Kelly's daughters, Jaycee

and Kylie, represent the sixth generation on the farm.

Over the years, the family has maintained their commitment to traditional farming values while embracing innovation. In 2020, Clint and Kelly

transformed their operation into a direct-to-consumer agriculture business, launching Back Forty Beef, LLC. Their new venture allowed them to provide locally raised beef at a fair price while giving customers the opportunity to see



Back Forty Beef hosts a number of family-friendly events including duck races. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

how their animals and crops are raised, from farm to table.

“During the pandemic, people were looking for a direct source for their beef, and we wanted to provide that,” Kelly said.

Through Back Forty Beef, Clint and Kelly supplied their area with local beef and discovered new ways to engage their community. Just last year, the two started an annual tradition by planting a 12-acre, agriculture-themed corn maze as a way to bring something new to their part of the state. In just a year, the maze has become a hub for families to come together and celebrate agriculture and the harvest season.

“We wanted to do something really fun and get families outside in northeastern South Dakota during the fall, and what better way to do that than through a corn maze?” Kelly said. “It’s a way for us to share our passion for agriculture and our story. As a population, we are getting two to three generations removed from the farm. There is less of a connection to rural life, so any time we can provide people an opportunity to get out onto the farm and learn something, that benefits the whole of agriculture.”

This fall, Clint and Kelly are again inviting their surrounding communities to visit their homestead and explore this year’s newly designed maze. The maze is set to be open to the public every weekend after



A bird's-eye view of last year's Back Forty Beef corn maze. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

Labor Day to the last week of October. The theme is pollinators, featuring images of a corn cob, flower, bee and barn. Several twists and turns will be embellished with fun facts about pollinators and crop production in South Dakota, making it an educational experience for all ages.

Along with the corn maze, Back Forty Beef is planning to incorporate other family-friendly activities, including duck races, farm animal exhibits, farm basketball, a straw mountain slide and more. Back Forty Beef will also host a farm store where customers can buy everything from local pumpkins to their homegrown beef.

Other local businesses are also joining

in the fun. A different local food truck is scheduled to attend each weekend during the open season, and local businesses are offering small discounts and deals for participants who complete the maze.

“There are checkpoints in the maze, and each checkpoint is equipped with a fun fact and a partnered local business,” said Kelly. “For example, Dairy Queen is offering a buy one, get one free offer for those who hole punch their card at their checkpoint and read the fun fact about pollinators and production agriculture.”

Clint and Kelly’s efforts to engage the community have resulted in a community that engages with their business. Like many other direct-to-consumer operations, Back Forty Beef has its own website and online shop for its brand of beef, dairy products, merchandise and even hand-poured tallow candles. The Brandlee family has also found success through their beef subscription club where boxes are regularly delivered to the doorsteps of customers every month. Whether it’s through the corn maze or the subscription beef boxes, Kelly said the local community has fully embraced Back Forty Beef.

“We had a lot of people who attended that had never done a corn maze before, so a lot of people were excited to do something new and different,” said Kelly. “We had a great turnout to our maze last year, and that’s why we decided to do it again.”



Owner-operators of Back Forty Beef, Kelly and Clint Brandlee and their two daughters, Jaycee and Kylie. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.



2024 Youth Tour

Aberdeen Central Student Attends 2024 Washington, D.C. Youth Tour

Kelly Brandlee

kbrandlee@northernelectric.coop

Thirty-six students representing 18 South Dakota electric cooperatives headed to the Washington, D.C., area June 15-21 for the 2024 Rural

Electric Youth Tour.

The program, which can trace its existence back to a 1957 speech by Lyndon B. Johnson, in which he encouraged electric cooperatives to send youth to the nation's capital so

they “can actually see what the flag stands for and represents,” encourages teens to engage in their communities and learn about the importance of political involvement. More than 1,300 teens have represented the Rushmore State since South Dakota sent its first group in 1963.

The 2024 group visited many historic sites the region offers, including Fort McHenry in Baltimore. The fort’s bombardment in the War of 1812 was captured in Francis Scott Key’s poem, which would eventually become the national

“While exploring D.C., we saw some really cool landmarks. George Washington’s plantation was beautiful. I enjoyed the opportunity to experience the history of our country.”

– Parker Flack

anthem. Old Glory would play a recurring theme in the trip as students could see it at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History and hear an inspirational message centered on the flag from Youth Day keynote speaker Mike Schlappi, a four-time Paralympic medalist in

U.S.A. men’s wheelchair basketball.

Students also met with the state’s congressional delegation, and a short meet-and-greet session was held with U.S. Sen. John Thune and U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds. While in D.C., Youth Tour participants from across the country toured many of our nation’s historical sites, including the National Archives, Library of Congress, Mount Vernon, the U.S. Supreme Court, and many more.

Representing Northern Electric Cooperative at the Youth Tour was Aberdeen Central High School student Parker Flack. While in the capitol city, Flack enjoyed many sights, but Mt. Vernon was his favorite. “While exploring D.C., we saw some really cool landmarks. George Washington’s plantation was beautiful. I enjoyed the opportunity to experience the history of our country,” stated Flack.



Northern Electric Youth Tour representative Parker Flack pictured in front of the White House during the 2024 Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

RODEO CHAMPIONS

Short Go Finalists Win Touchstone Energy Shirts During the State Competition in Ft. Pierre

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

South Dakota's electric cooperatives united in celebrating rodeo on June 15 during the state high school competition in Ft. Pierre, S.D. Cowboys and cowgirls competed in events that mimic the daily chores of a typical rancher, racing to place in the Short Go.

Short Go state finalists earned the coveted Touchstone Energy shirts that mark them as the top competitors of a beloved rural pastime. After a season of competing, the visual representation of wearing this shirt is

more than a fashion statement.

"These shirts are almost like a trophy," said Kylee Ellerton, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D. "It's something you can keep and look back on to remember."

Ellerton earned the Short Go shirt, sponsored by Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives. She won 10th place in goat tying at state.

"My grandpa and dad grew up rodeoing," Ellerton said. "So, I got started in rodeo pretty young."

High school rodeo events began in 1949, and by 1951, South Dakota was among five states that established the National High School Rodeo

Mataya Ward keeps her eyes on a goat she tied during the Short Go.
Photo credit: Charles Minor

Association.

It's a shared heritage for many in the state, and electric cooperatives have a 22-year history of celebrating rodeo by sponsoring the Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirt program. More than \$150,000 has been given to this program since 2002, and these funds are used to honor the contestants who make it to the Short Go round



Photo credit: Charles Minor



Kailey Deknikker rounds a Touchstone Energy barrel during the state Short Go in barrel racing.
Photo credit: 4-C Photography

of the state finals competition in their respective events.

Kailey Deknikker, member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Lennox, S.D., has a passion for rodeo and wishes to go as far as she can in the sport. She will be attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for business management and joining

the college rodeo team in barrel racing and pole bending.

"The shirt shows that your hard work paid off," explained Deknikker after placing in the Short Go and winning a Touchstone Energy Short Go shirt. "It shows your accomplishment."

Decknikker placed 7th in barrel

racing after running a time of 18.246 seconds in the 1st Go, 17.802 seconds in the 2nd Go, and 18.078 seconds in the Short Go.

Leighton Sander, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., won 6th place in the bareback riding Short Go competition. Sander works with his family on a cow/calf operation outside of Custer, S.D.

"There's some pride that goes with wearing that Short Go shirt," said Sander. "You go to a rodeo and see a couple people wearing those shirts outside of the high school season, and you think, 'they must have been good enough to make it to the Short Go – I better watch that guy.'"

Sander explained that his draw to one of the toughest events in the sport of rodeo is the adrenaline rush. He hopes to use his bareback riding skills in future horse training efforts while noting, "being able to stick to a horse is important."

"I don't know how to explain it," Sander said. "It's super scary before you start, but once you climb into that chute and they open up the gate, it's like eating your favorite cake."



Finalists wear Touchstone Energy Short Go shirts. Photo credit: Charles Minor



FROM FARM TO LODGE

A group of hunters showcase their success after a day of hunting on Larry Schecher's land. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

Prairie Meadows Lodge Fuels Economy and Conservation

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When a pheasant hunter travels to South Dakota, dons an orange hunting vest and steps out onto one of the state's many acres of pristine hunting land, they are doing more than just participating in local recreation and tradition; they are bolstering one of South Dakota's cornerstone industries. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks estimates that hunting alone contributes \$683 million to the

state's economy, far exceeding the contributions from fishing and state park visitation.

Many producers across the state are enthusiastically welcoming these outdoor recreationists, including landowner Larry Schecher. Schecher is a fourth-generation, lifelong rancher, farmer and member of Grand Electric in Bison, S.D., who recently made the savvy decision to develop a private hunting lodge and accommodate hunters on his land.

So what prompted the lodge? In 2019, Schecher expanded his



Fourth-generation farmer and rancher Larry Schecher. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

operation, taking the usual steps to purchase land that he had previously been leasing. The land came with one interesting perk: an outbuilding that the previous owner had used to repair and rebuild classic cars. The outbuilding became the perfect avenue for him to not only expand his operation physically but also add an entirely new revenue stream by transforming the old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge.

“It wasn’t insulated or anything, but it was a nice enough building,” said Schecher. “We just took it to the next level and remodeled the entire interior.”

What started as a car garage quickly became a private hunting lodge on Schecher’s land, equipped with a complete kitchen and living space, two bedrooms with four beds each, an electric fireplace, and even a washer and dryer.

Yet, accommodations are only half the equation. Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts are self-guided, meaning hunters can explore the plentiful food plots, thick shelter belts and acres of brush that adorn Schecher’s land and plan their hunt accordingly. The producer estimates that he owns more than 300 acres of premier hunting land for Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts, scattered across almost 3,000 acres of farm and ranch land. The land, he said, harbors a healthy population of wild pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse and partridge.

Since starting Prairie Meadows Lodge, Schecher said he and his son, Bradley, have begun planting food plots specifically to promote healthy habitat and food sources for the wild birds on their land.

“We planted a few food plots this year with a ‘pheasant mix,’” said Schecher. “The mix includes



Prairie Meadows Lodge welcomes pheasant hunters from across the nation. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

flowering species that attract insects and milo, millet and sunflowers to produce seeds for the birds to eat. We plan to continue adding more food plots in the future to enhance our bird numbers, which have been steadily increasing over the past few years. It’s been great for being in the business of letting people hunt.”

A year after purchasing the outbuilding and preparing the land, Schecher invited hunters to test the newly renovated operation. The launch was a success, and Prairie Meadows Lodge has since hosted hunters from all over the country, including those from surrounding states and as far away as Washington, Texas and Pennsylvania, many of whom are repeat customers.

“Adding wildlife into the equation has just become another facet of being a producer,” said Schecher. “In many ways, it’s like adding another crop to the mix. It gives an incentive to create more habitat and include more conservation techniques into my operation, enhancing the ability of the wildlife to thrive and prosper.”



In 2019, Larry Schecher renovated an old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge, a private hunting lodge for unguided pheasant hunts. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

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Photo Credit: SDStateFair

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

AUG. 28-SEPT. 2
South Dakota State Fair
7 a.m.-8 p.m.
Huron, SD
www.SDStateFair.com

SEPT. 1
Studebaker Car Show
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Custer, SD
605-673-2244

SEPT. 2
Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show
Starts at 1 p.m.
Clear Lake, SD
605-881-8405

SEPT. 6-7
Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll
Vermillion, SD
www.sdbbq.us

SEPT. 8
Homesteader Day
1-4 p.m.
Valley Springs, SD
Beaver Creek Nature Area

SEPT. 12-15
South Dakota Film Festival
Downtown Capitol Theatre
Aberdeen, SD
605-226-5494

SEPT. 13-14
Black Hills Polkapalooza
Each Night at 4-10 p.m.
Palmer Gulch
Hill City, SD
605-574-2525

SEPT. 13-14
Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show
Davison County Fairgrounds
Mitchell, SD
605-359-2049

SEPT. 14-15
2024 Kuchen & Harvest Festival
Delmont, SD
605-928-3792

SEPT. 17
EV Expo
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Sioux Falls, SD

SEPT. 20-22
South Dakota Festival of Books
Various Locations
Brookings, SD
605-688-6113

SEPT. 27-29
Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show
Meadow, SD
605-788-2299

OCT. 5-6
Run Crazy Horse Marathons
Crazy Horse
605-390-6137
www.runcrazyhorse.com

OCT. 5-6
Magic Needlers Quilt Show
Codington County Extension Complex
Watertown, SD
605-881-3273

OCT. 5-6
The Black Market
Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Expo Building
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 6
Giant Pumpkin Festival
Bentley Memorial Building
Bison, SD
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.
605-244-5475

OCT. 10-11
Rural Women Conference
The Lodge of Deadwood
Deadwood, SD
SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com

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