

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pick of the Patch

**Pumpkin Patches Offer
Plenty of Reasons to Get
Outside this Fall**

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**Ghost Town Under
Lake Oahe**

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Keep safety at forefront this fall



Kathy Haas
Communications
Specialist

Fall is an especially busy time of year in South Dakota. Harvest is in full swing, with oversized equipment bustling in and out of fields. Teens with newly issued driver's licenses are reveling in the newfound freedom. Elaborate displays for homecoming parades are being built to showcase community pride and school spirit.

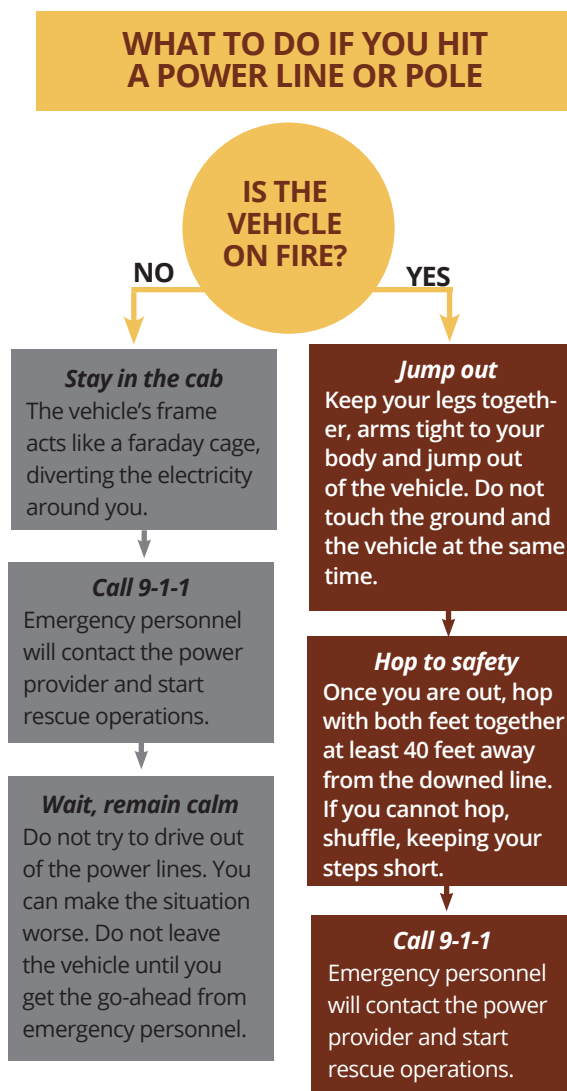
During hectic times, it's easy for safety to fade into the background. That's why it's important to remain power line ready. Look up, look around, and slow down.

Electricity can be deadly. It's why safety is one of Northern Electric Cooperative's core tenets, along with reliability and affordability. We have numerous safety measures in place to keep members and employees safe. We need your help to ensure everyone is safe this fall. Hitting electrical infrastructure can quickly become an emergency for both the operator and those around them.

When electricity goes to ground, it dissipates out and around, like ripples on water. This creates potential for electrocution for the operator of the vehicle and anyone within 40 feet of the downed infrastructure. Someone who doesn't know how to handle the situation can be seriously injured or killed.

Keep your family and friends safe by teaching them the correct way to handle a downed line. Stay in the vehicle and call 9-1-1. Trying to drive away can make the situation worse. More infrastructure could be dragged down, or the operator could come into direct contact with an energized portion.

Remember the phrase "slow is smooth and smooth is fast." Taking the extra couple of seconds



to check that your vehicle, equipment, and any extensions will easily clear electrical infrastructure will always be faster than forging ahead and snagging a line or hitting a transformer.

Have a safe fall!

NEC LAND FOR SALE

Northern Electric Cooperative is hereby soliciting Expressions of Interest (EOI) or Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding its desire to sell approximately 9.5 acres of real estate owned by the Cooperative located north of the Northern Electric office building located at 17140 N US HWY 281, Redfield, SD. The property is presently zoned Highway commercial.

Interested parties should contact Char Hager or Jerry Weber at 605-225-0310. Inquiries must be received by Sept. 30, 2026.

THIS IS A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS ONLY. SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL CONSTITUTES AN OFFER BY THE SUBMITTING PARTY AND DOES NOT CREATE ANY LEGAL OBLIGATION ON THE PART OF THE SELLER. THE SELLER IS NOT BOUND TO ACCEPT THE HIGHEST OFFER, ANY OFFER, OR ANY PROPOSAL SUBMITTED.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

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info@northernelectric.coop

Chief Financial Officer: Lorisa Rudolph

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Manager of Information Technology:
Derek Gorecki

Communications Specialist: Kathy Haas

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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AUGUST BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held Aug. 26, 2026, at the Agtegra Cooperative headquarters with all directors present. As the first order of business, the Board approved the July 31, 2026, 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 Aug. 6, 2026, meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the next SDREA board meeting will be held Sept. 17-18, 2026. Director Todd Hettich gave an update on RESCO board activities. Directors Kirk Schaunaman and Todd Hettich reported on the Basin Electric Annual Meeting, which was held Aug. 11-13, 2026, in Bismarck, N.D. Director Mike Traxinger reported on the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives Meeting held on Aug. 3, 2026. Director B.J. Hansen reported on recent activities of the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association Meeting. JDH Construction gave a progress report on the headquarters building project.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Reported on the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) revolving loan fund activities held on Aug. 4, 2026.
- Reported on the East River MAC

Meeting held on Aug. 4, 2026.

- Reported that former Northern Electric Director Donna Sharp was inducted into the South Dakota Cooperative Hall of Fame on Aug. 3, 2026.
- Reported on the employee meeting held on Aug. 10, 2026.
- Provided department updates.

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 Monday, Sept. 28, 2026.
- Approved Work Order Inventories #26-07 for \$904,899.93 and #26-07MC for \$13,481.04 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Set the 2027 Northern Electric Annual Meeting date for June 15, 2027.
- Appointed Kirk Schaunaman as authorized representative and Char Hager as alternate representative for the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting, Dec. 8-10, Denver, CO.
- Appointed Todd Hettich as authorized representative for the 2026 CFC Manager-Director Election.
- Approved 2027 employee compensation plan.
- Held Executive Session.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

	JULY 2026	JULY 2025
kWh Sales.....	26,428,068	22,439,171
Electric Revenues	\$3,602,902	\$2,544,553
Total Cost of Service	\$3,123,173	\$2,611,274
Operating Margins.....	\$479,729	(\$66,721)
Year to Date Margins.....	\$1,391,592	\$86,994

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

JULY 2026	1,679 kWh.....	\$290.95	\$0.1733
JULY 2025	1,466 kWh.....	\$216.20	\$0.1475

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 85.6% of total cost of service.

SAFETY IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Fall hunting is a core memory treasured by many in South Dakota. It's a family and friend tradition that should be kept safe. This is your caring reminder to stay safe and enjoy a great hunt this season.

Simple Safety Rules for All Hunters

- Watch for posted warning signs and stay clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located on the land you hunt.
- Be careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be easy to see.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles; energized lines can shock or kill you.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment; they can block lines and create hazards for crews.

Pheasant hunting often takes place in open fields with hedgerows and grassy strips, while dove hunting centers on fast, aerial crossings across agricultural landscapes. In both scenarios, lines may be hidden by trees or tall grass, especially near field edges and canal banks. Staying alert in these transition zones reduces the risk of an accidental encounter with electrical infrastructure.

Practical Rules for Pheasant and Dove Hunts

- Plan ahead: Check maps or ask landowners where lines and equipment are located.
- Keep a safe distance: Stay away from overhead and buried lines near fields and edges.
- Hunt with a partner: A second person can help spot hazards.
- Speak up about hazards: If you see lines or equipment, treat it as a hazard and avoid the area.
- Follow rules: Respect any posted electrical safety warnings or access restrictions.
- Share safety: Tell fellow hunters and guests about these tips.

Why These Safety Tips Matter

Power lines conduct large amounts of electricity and contact with lines or equipment can cause serious injury or death. Maintaining distance, avoiding contact with poles or lines, and not placing gear on equipment are effective practices that protect you, your hunting partners, and the line workers who keep power on.

Your electric cooperative remains committed to safe hunting. We encourage members to stay informed about local electrical safety rules and to know line locations on the lands they hunt. If you encounter hazards, report them right away so they can be addressed. Sharing these safety practices help create a culture of safety that benefits everyone.



The poster features a green camouflage pattern at the top, followed by a yellow and black diagonal hazard stripe. Below this is a target icon with a crosshair. The title "Electrical Safety Tips for Hunters" is in large, bold, white text. Below the title, a paragraph encourages members to be aware of electrical equipment while hunting. A list of six safety tips follows in white text on a dark background.

Electrical Safety Tips for Hunters

We encourage all members to be aware of electrical equipment while hunting. Keep these safety tips in mind as you enjoy the great outdoors.

- Keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Know where power lines and equipment are located where you hunt.
- Be vigilant in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Never place deer stands on utility poles.
- Never place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment.



The drawing is a simple line drawing on a light blue background. It shows a person standing on the ground, holding a string that goes up to a kite. The kite is a diamond shape with a cross inside. Above the kite, there are several horizontal lines representing power lines. The text "Don't dig or fly kites by wires!" is written in a child's handwriting at the top of the drawing.

"Don't dig or fly kites by wires!"

Seth Raak, age 7

Seth cautions readers to not dig or fly kites around power lines. That is great advice, Seth! Thank you! Seth's parents are Nathaniel and Katie Raak, members of Central 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.

Let's Eat CAKE

SWEDISH PANCAKES

Ingredients:

1.5 cups flour, sifted
3 tbsps. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs
2 cups milk
2 tbsps. butter, melted

Method

Sift together flour, sugar and salt. Beat in 3 eggs until thick and piled softly. Beat in milk and butter until blended. Lightly grease griddle with butter. For each pancake, spoon about 1 tbsp. of batter on skillet. Cook over medium heat until lightly brown on each side.

Lois J. Larson
Clay-Union Electric

CREAM CHEESE CUPCAKES

Ingredients:

1 box chocolate cake mix, prepared
1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1/3 cup sugar
1 egg
Dash of salt
1 (6 oz.) package chocolate chips
1 can cream cheese frosting

Method

Mix cake mix according to package directions. Fill cupcake liners 1/2 full. mix the cream cheese with the sugar. Beat in egg and salt, then add chocolate chips. Drop a teaspoonful of cream cheese mixture into each cupcake. Bake as directed on package. Frost with cream cheese frosting when cool.

Elaine Rieck
Southeastern Electric

CHOCOLATE ZUCCHINI CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tsps. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. espresso powder (optional)
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup canola or vegetable oil
1 cup granulated sugar
3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
4 large eggs, room temperature
1/3 cup sour cream or Greek yogurt, room temperature
2 tsps. vanilla
3 cups shredded zucchini (about 3 medium)
1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Method

Preheat oven to 350 °F. Grease two 9x2 inch cake pans (make sure they're at least 2 inches high or one bundt pan). Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, baking powder, espresso powder (if using) and salt together in a large bowl. In another large bowl using a handheld or stand mixer, beat the oil, granulated sugar, brown sugar, eggs, sour cream, vanilla and zucchini together until combined. Pour dry ingredients into the wet ingredients and beat on medium speed until completely combined. Beat in chocolate chips. Batter will be thick. Pour batter evenly into cake pans. Bake for around 25-32 minutes for round pans; 45 minutes for bundt pans or 9x13 pan; 18-22 minutes for cupcakes (24-30 cupcakes). To test doneness, insert a toothpick into the center of cake. If it comes out clean, it is done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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

RECIPE CORRECTION THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

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

Topping (makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups brown sugar
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder
3 cups oatmeal

Method

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

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy



Donna Sharp first woman inducted into Hall of Fame

Kathy Haas

khaas@northernelectric.coop

Donna Sharp has made history again. In 2017, Donna was elected as Northern Electric Cooperative's first woman Board President. Now, she is the first woman inducted into the South Dakota Association of Cooperative's Hall of Fame.

Four people were inducted this year: Donna, Northern Electric; Ken Schlimgen, Central Electric Cooperative; Jeff Lakner, Agtegra; and Todd Oster, CHS River Plains. In order to be considered for the honor, each person must first be nominated by a cooperative. Those selected to be inducted have demonstrated commitment to cooperative community and made lasting changes to improve and promote

cooperatives. Only two other people from Northern Electric have been inducted into the Hall of Fame: Wayne Wright, former Board Member; and Dennis Hagny, former General Manager.

"I really appreciate whoever nominated me. I am very humbled," Donna said. "I believe in cooperatives and in the cooperative model, because we're not here for myself. I'm here to make it better for the members. And my fellow directors that I served with, we had to make tough decisions sometimes, as part of the cooperative model, you always put the community first. The decisions you make are to benefit the members, not yourself."

Donna has certainly demonstrated commitment to both cooperatives and her community.



TOP: Donna Sharp, center, was inducted into the Co-op Hall of Fame. From left: NEC Board Member Mike Traxinger, General Manager Char Hager, Board Member Nolan Wipf, Board President Todd Hettich, CFO Lorisa Rudolph were at the ceremony.

ABOVE: Donna Sharp gives an acceptance speech.

In addition to nine years on Northern's board, Donna has served on numerous local, state, and national boards, including the National Dairy Board, the National Cattlemen's Beef Board, the United Dairy Industry Association, the United Dairy Export Council, and more. Donna supported 4-H for 18 years, co-founded the Brown County 4-H 4-Ever Fund, and earned multiple recognitions for service. For a couple of years, Donna was gone one week out of every month, she said.

"It's just being a public servant, giving back. I was raised that way to do that," Donna said. "None of these things pay much at all, but it's community service, you know, giving back."

Donna and her husband, Gary, both served full nine-year terms on Northern's board and were elected board president. Gary was instrumental in getting Donna involved. Not only did Donna attend the energy conferences with Gary, when his term was ending, he convinced Donna to run for the board spot.

"That was about the time I was getting off of my national dairy board and my beef promotion. I thought, ah, that's enough. I was in my late 60s. And he says, 'No, you would like being on this board.' So, I applied and served nine years. I loved it," Donna said.

Donna went into her first term with more knowledge than the average member because of the meetings she went to with Gary. When he first got on the board, Donna said she didn't know anything about electricity beyond flipping the switch on. She was also already familiar with the duties and responsibilities of a board member due to her numerous years on other boards.

For anyone wanting to get more involved but not knowing where to start, Donna recommends finding something that interests them or

affects their life. All the boards that Donna has served on were directly tied to her life and livelihood. As third-generation farmers with children, the Sharps served on school boards, county fair boards, and worked to promote farmers across the nation.

"We believe in public service and community service. These boards also affected our livelihood," Donna said. "Let's go promote what we do for a living. Let's get involved and go to the meetings."

Donna is not currently on any

boards, but she is still very busy. She helps with the farm and, of course, the grandchildren. In addition, Donna is a member of the local chapter of P.E.O. Sisterhood, a national and Canadian organization that helps women with education opportunities. Donna and Gary's public service legacy is continued in their children: Brian, Brad, and Kristin. They have already served many years on various local boards.

"It's important to get involved if you want to help make decisions that affect the other members and yourself," Donna said.



ABOVE: Donna Sharp, left, talks with members at an annual meeting. LEFT: Donna Sharp, center, on a tour to a coal processing facility.



PICK OF THE PATCH

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sirea.coop

South Dakota Pumpkin Patches Offer Plenty of Reasons to Get Outside this Fall

Cooler air, changing leaves and the search for the perfect pumpkin all mark the arrival of the autumn season. Across South Dakota, fall weekends bring families to farms and orchards for corn mazes, apple picking and hayrides.

But putting together a few weeks of fall fun takes months of work behind the scenes.

Pumpkin patches and orchards are preparing to welcome visitors for another season of pumpkins, games and family traditions.

Country Apple Orchard – Harrisburg, S.D.

By the time visitors arrive at Country Apple Orchard near Harrisburg, owner Greg Jones and his crew have already brought in three semi loads of straw bales and about 6,000 bushels of corn.

It's all part of preparing for a fall season

that lasts just a couple of months but requires work throughout the year.

"The property is kind of a full-time, year-round job," Jones said.

The orchard has been around for more than 30 years, and Jones is six years into owning the operation. Since taking over, he has expanded the pumpkin patches and added many of the attractions that now make up the orchard's fall festival.

The season opens Sept. 4 and runs through October, beginning with apple picking in September before pumpkins take center stage in October. Weekend festivities include zip lines, apple cannons, hay bale mazes, corn mazes, corn pits and, new this year, fresh-cut flowers.

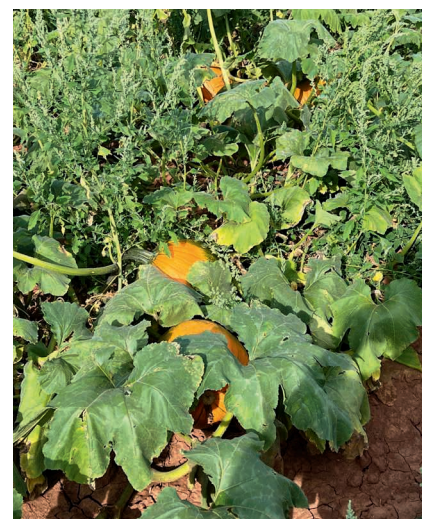
Country Apple Orchard is also a member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative, which helps power the operation through the busy fall season. Keeping everything running takes about

Lucas Hartshorn, owner of Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch, and his family opening the patch for last year's fall season.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

60 seasonal employees. Once the crowds disappear, that workforce drops to Jones and one other worker.

The effort appears to keep families coming back.

"They love coming out and they come out multiple times," Jones said, adding that some families with season passes



Pumpkins grow in the field at Lil' Harvester's Pumpkin Patch near Rapid City.
Photo submitted by Lucas Hartshorn

return nearly every weekend throughout the season.

Mazing Acres – Yankton, S.D.

What started as a small family project has grown into roughly 35 acres of fall festivities outside Yankton.

Scott and Molly Nedved opened Mazing Acres with their family in 2020. At the time, the idea was to create a small hobby farm that could teach their children the value of hard work while giving the community something new to enjoy.

“It’s grown more than we thought it would,” Molly laughed.

Today, Mazing Acres, a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, includes six acres of pumpkins, a five-acre corn maze, a flower patch and several attractions. Visitors can take a hayrack ride, watch pig races, play in the corn pit or try the apple cannons.

The corn maze, sponsored by First Dakota National Bank, changes design each year. For 2026, the design celebrates the nation’s 250th anniversary.

Although the festival lasts only several weekends, planning starts almost as soon as the previous season ends. The family reviews what worked, attends industry



A family poses for a photo in the giant pumpkin chair at Mazing Acres.

Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

conferences and selects the next year’s pumpkin varieties in late fall. By August, Scott said preparing the farm becomes “an all-day affair every day until we open.”

Visitors will notice a few changes this year. Saturday hours are being extended until 8 p.m., allowing families to experience the farm after dark, and a new tiny-town area will feature themed playhouses for younger children.

Mazing Acres opens Sept. 19 and runs through Halloween.

“We want to be something for every age,” Molly said. “Not just for the kids.”

Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch – Rapid City, S.D.

At Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch south of Rapid City, the Hartshorn family’s fall tradition started in 2013 with pumpkins planted by hand.

Since then, owner Lucas Hartshorn said the patch has grown to about 11 acres.

Hartshorn started the pumpkin patch with his parents, Lyle and Donna, after his father retired. The family wanted a way to keep farming while creating an event they could enjoy with their children.

“We were looking for something to do with the kids in the fall,” Hartshorn said.

At the time, pumpkin patches were harder to find around Rapid City. After

visiting one themselves, the family decided they could create a similar experience on their own farm.

Each year brought something new. Planting pumpkins by hand eventually gave way to a planter, while the patch grew to include a petting zoo, bounce houses, wagon rides, a sandbox and other activities.

Lil’ Harvester’s, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, also opens during the week for school field trips, where students get a closer look at agriculture. Hartshorn said demonstrations may focus on pumpkins or the differences between sweet corn, field corn and popcorn, including how each is grown. For Hartshorn, that mix of farming, education and family time remains at the heart of the patch.

“They get to come out to the farm and learn something,” Hartshorn said.

Across South Dakota, there are several more pumpkin patches and fall festivities similar to those put on by Country Apple Orchard, Mazing Acres and Lil’ Harvester’s Pumpkin Patch. Whether it’s a small hobby farm or a dedicated agritourism operation, each one offers its own take on fall traditions that continue to draw families back year after year.



Visitors of all ages can find something to enjoy at Mazing Acres near Yankton, including the farm’s giant slides.

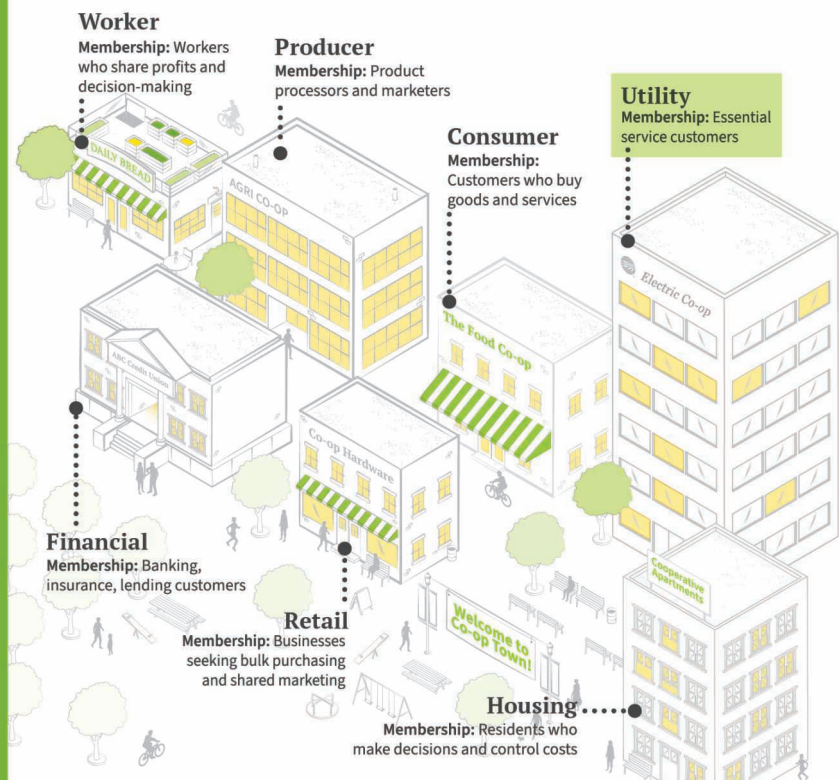
Photo submitted by Molly Nedved

KINDS OF CO-OPS

Cooperatives come in many forms—from electric utilities and credit unions to farm supply stores and housing co-ops—but all cooperatives are built with a common purpose: to meet the needs of the members they serve.

Co-ops strengthen local communities, keep decisions close to home and invest in long-term success.

October is National Co-op Month.



CELEBRATING CO-OPS

This October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

All co-ops, including Northern Electric Cooperative, are guided by seven cooperative principles that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

- 1. Open and Voluntary Membership:** Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.
- 2. Democratic Member Control:** Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.
- 3. Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. Any profits are returned in the form of Capital credits..
- 4. Autonomy and Independence:** Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

5. Education, Training and Information: Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

6. Cooperation Among Cooperatives: Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.

7. Concern for Community: All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

Our mission has always been to provide you with safe and reliable power. We care about your quality of life and, because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home. Whether it's Northern Electric, your local credit union or ACE Hardware, cooperatives prove that when people work together, everyone benefits.

CONSTRUCTION STILL ON TRACK



Todd Hettich
Board President,
Building
Committee Chair

Your new headquarters building is nearing completion. Construction on Northern Electric's headquarters continues to be within the budget and on schedule. As of July 31, 2026, 41% of the \$7.1 million budget has been expended. Interior work has progressed within the expected timeline and JDH Construction still expects the building to be ready by November 2026. As taping and texturing wraps up, the ceiling grid and overhead lights will be installed.

We will continue to provide highlights as the project continues. For more information about your new headquarters, please talk to your director or co-op manager.

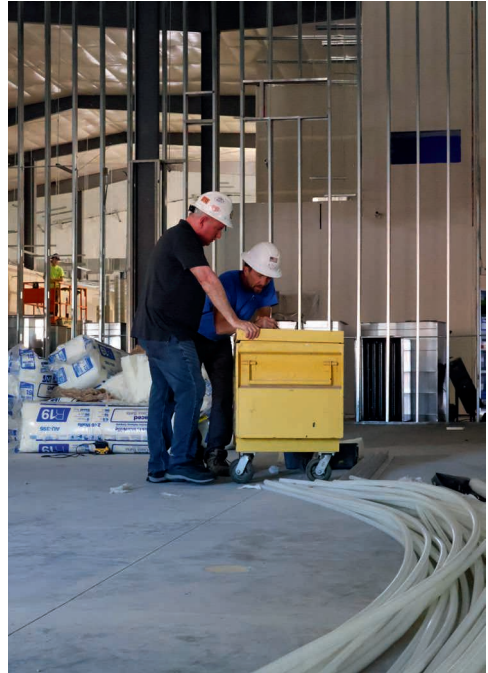
HEADQUARTERS CONSTRUCTION BUDGET

Total Project Budget: 7.1M

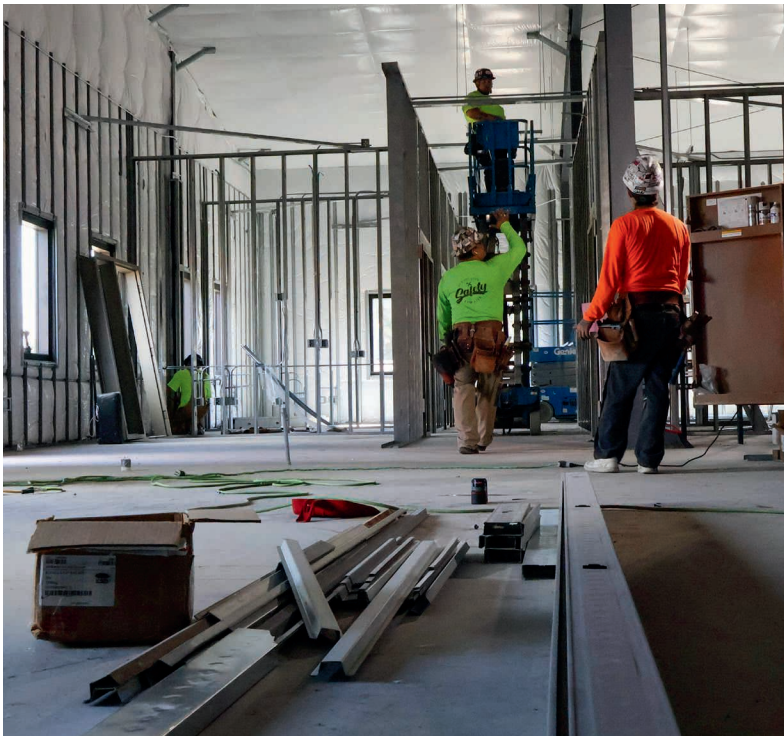
Expended: 41%

Remaining: 59%

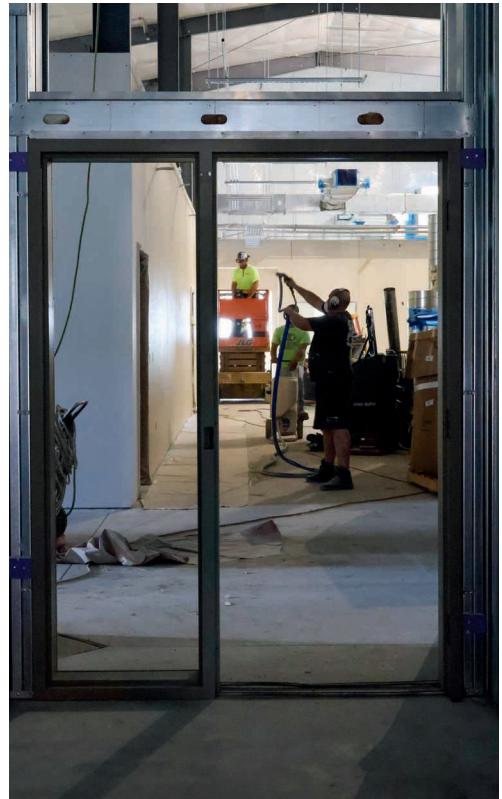
As of July 31, 2026



ABOVE: Northern Electric IT Manager Derek Gorecki, left, meets with JDH's Project Manager to go over details for the multi-use room.
BELOW: Texture is applied to the walls.



Framing materials were laid out as crews finish the east side of the new headquarters building.





LOST BENEATH OAHE

The Rise, Fall and Disappearance of a South Dakota Ghost Town

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Beneath the waves of Lake Oahe lies more than dead trees and walleye. Just below the surface near Akaska sit the remnants of LeBeau, an early 1900s railroad town once filled with immense promise and prosperity, whose story is worthy of its own Wild West feature film.

For years, Caroline Thorsen has collected the history of her great-grandfather, Antoine Le Beau, and the town that bore his name. Through Thorsen's collection and research by railroad historian Don Hofsommer in "A Promise Broken: LeBeau and the Railroad," we can dive beneath the waters of Lake Oahe and dredge up the story of LeBeau's dramatic rise and fall.

A French Fur Trader

The story of the ghost town of LeBeau begins with Antoine Le Beau Sr., a French fur trader whose journey in the mid-1800s took him from France to Quebec, Canada, then to St. Louis, Missouri and eventually up the Missouri River to what is now South Dakota.

"As I unfortunately did not know [Antoine], I hope he is remembered as being a brave gentleman who crossed the ocean from France to come to America and eventually become friends with the Native Americans, married in Native Tradition," said Thorsen, Le Beau's great-granddaughter.

The woman Antoine married was Mary Little Thunder, a member of the Two Kettle Band of Sioux. Antoine himself was later one of several Frenchmen adopted

into the Sioux Tribe at a Great Sioux Council, where he was given the name "Ogless," or "Red Shirt."

Le Beau worked with the American Fur Company before establishing a trading post along the Missouri River near present-day Akaska. The post became the foundation of a small town that would eventually bear his name and become a brief, yet bright, gateway to the West.

The Railroad

By the time the railroad arrived, Antoine Le Beau Sr. was gone, but the town was quickly gaining the reputation of a small metropolis. In 1907, the Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL) reached LeBeau, connecting the small Missouri River settlement to Watertown and markets farther east.

"As LeBeau prospered, so did the M&StL's westernmost extension; as LeBeau withered, so did its railroad," Hofsommer writes.

Cattle companies from Texas had taken notice of both LeBeau and the grasslands west of the Missouri. Once they learned cattle thrived west of the river, they began moving large herds into the region. Through its railroad, LeBeau offered those ranchers a new route to market.

The next trick was getting the cattle across the river. On the west side of the Missouri, large holding pens could accommodate as many as 3,500 animals. From there, cattle crossed the river aboard the Scotty Philip, a steam-powered ferry. Once across, they could be loaded directly onto eastbound rail cars.

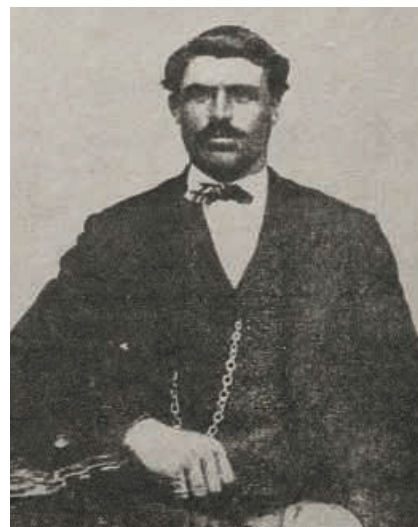
The mouth of Swan Creek on Lake Oahe where the ghost town of LeBeau resides under the waves. *Photo by Frank Turner*

In 1908, roughly 24,000 cattle passed through LeBeau on their way to and from the West River ranges, representing about \$1 million in livestock at the time. The feat helped cement the town's place as a major cattle-shipping point on the Missouri.

A Bustling Town

By the end of the season, LeBeau featured two banks, a newspaper, a drugstore, a general store and a local saloon. The growing town also boasted two lumberyards, a grain elevator and a livery, along with prominent businesses like the Idle Hour billiard and pool parlor, the Hotel LeBeau and Arcade Hotel. For entertainment, residents could even catch a show at Zimmer's Opera House.

As the town grew, M&StL officials planned to continue the rail line west of the



French fur trapper Antoine Le Beau Sr.
Photo submitted by Caroline Thorsen

Missouri by building a bridge across the Missouri, hinting at a long expansion all the way to the West Coast. The excitement only reinforced the idea that LeBeau was destined to become the gate to the west.

The buzz captured the attention of Murdo MacKenzie, general manager of the Matador Land and Cattle Company, and his wealthy son, Dode. Described as a likable and fine young man – while sober – Dode moved to LeBeau in his early 20s to oversee Matador's South Dakota operations.

A Questionable Killing

At the end of the 1909 shipping season, Dode MacKenzie began frequenting LeBeau's saloons. On Dec. 11, he was shot and killed by Bud Stephens, who was tending the bar that morning at Phil DuFran's saloon.

Local accounts of what happened that day – and of Dode MacKenzie's character – differ greatly. One local official described MacKenzie as a stand-up individual, while another local woman said he was known to shoot behind the heels of women in the town when "spirits took him."

Exactly what happened on Dec. 11 will never be known, but according to the version later presented by Stephens' defense at trial, MacKenzie became furious when Stephens failed to hear him order a drink. Rebuffed, MacKenzie crossed the street to purchase what he believed were



The paddle-wheeler Scotty Philip loads cattle at LeBeau, S.D., to be fattened on grasslands west of the Missouri River. For about three years, LeBeau was one of the Northwest's most important cattle-shipping towns.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society

.45-caliber shells, loaded his gun, walked back, pointed it at Stephens and pulled the trigger twice. As the story goes, MacKenzie had accidentally purchased .38-caliber shells, which failed to fire and instead plopped onto the floor. It was then that Stephens reached for his gun and began firing, killing the young MacKenzie.

A Dying Town

The trial resulted in Stephens' acquittal, drawing the ire of Dode MacKenzie's father and the Matador Cattle Company. The company effectively boycotted LeBeau, and no Matador cattle ever entered the town again.

Within months of the trial, a suspicious fire made matters worse. Although fires weren't uncommon in the Wild West, townsfolk discovered that the fire hose, telephone and telegraph lines had all been cut prior to the fire. No arsonist was ever caught.

The bad luck didn't stop there. A competing rail line to the north completed a bridge across the Missouri at Mobridge, undercutting LeBeau's stream of West River cattle. By 1924, M&StL abandoned the town, tearing out its segment of rail line. Within a year, the post office closed.

Beneath Lake Oahe

LeBeau had been a ghost town for decades when Lake Oahe came for what was left.

Construction of Oahe Dam near Pierre began in 1948 as part of a massive federal effort to control flooding and generate hydroelectric power along the Missouri River. In August 1958, the river was closed at the dam and the newly created reservoir began to fill.

As the water rose, it eventually covered the old LeBeau townsite near the mouth of Swan Creek. The empty foundations, cellar holes and remnants of the once-bustling railroad town disappeared beneath Lake Oahe. Unlike most ghost towns in South Dakota that faded away with time, LeBeau vanished beneath the Missouri.



A crowd gathers around a band near the railroad in LeBeau, S.D., with the depot and Missouri River visible in the distance. About a year after this photo was taken, the town installed 10-foot-wide concrete sidewalks along Main Street.

Photo courtesy of the South Dakota Historical Society.



A PRETTY SWEET IDEA

Doland Teen Finds Success as Ice Cream Entrepreneur

Jacob Boyko

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Noah Felderman has long enjoyed staying at his grandparents' cabin at Lake Poinsett, north of Arlington, S.D. But during the summer of 2020, the 12-year-old faced a dilemma many kids did during the COVID-19 era.

What is there to do today?

"I was there every weekend – almost every day – and people were talking about ice cream," Noah said. "I thought, 'Hey, I could try to make something out of this.'"

After drawing up a business plan with his grandparents and borrowing their orange side-by-side, Noah drove – or, rather, had an adult drive him – around to sell ice cream bars out of a small chest freezer.

"He was 12 years old and not able to drive, so this was a family event," Noah's dad, Chad, said with a chuckle.

Driving to different campgrounds and neighborhoods around the lake, Noah's business – Feldy's Ice Cream – became a hit with residents, cabin owners, and weekend campers.

The next summer, hoping to keep the momentum going, 13-year-old Noah found and purchased a retired school bus.

"We found a really good deal – this bus needed some work just to get going and be operational so that's how we snagged it," Noah explained. The Feldermans completely overhauled the bus to turn it into a fully-equipped ice

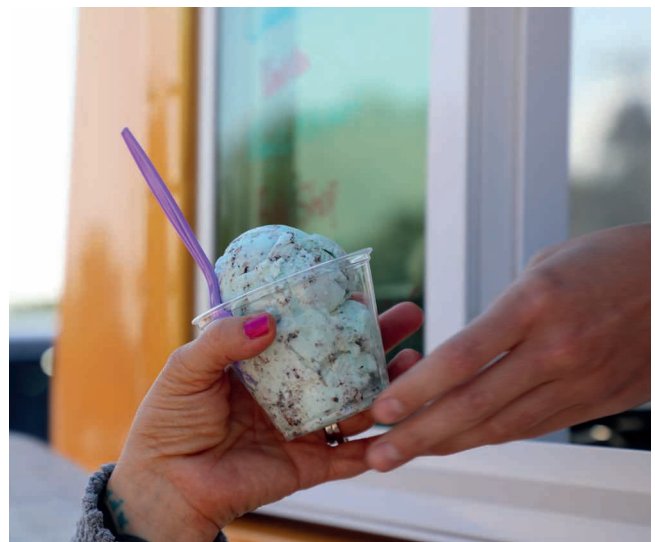
cream truck, even giving it a custom orange paint job to craft a recognizable brand and pay homage to his grandparents' orange side-by-side that started it all.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

cream truck, even giving it a custom orange paint job to craft a recognizable brand and pay homage to his grandparents' orange side-by-side that started it all.

That was the summer things really started to take off for Feldy's Ice Cream.

"I called the State of South Dakota asking about tax law, and they said they didn't have time for prank calls," Noah laughed.



Feldy's Ice Cream serves stocks many flavors – vanilla, caramel, raspberry chip, Oreo, and classic mint chocolate chip, to name a few.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Covering more ground in the bus than he could with the side-by-side, the determined teenager became a familiar face and started building connections in the Lake Poinsett area.

"Someone said if I ever want to do an event, I could come cater the staff at the Madison hospital," Noah recalled. "So that's what I went out and did."

Word spread quickly. After Madison Regional Health, Noah visited Prairie Lakes Hospital in Watertown, then Huron Regional Medical Center.

He continued, "Once we were there, we served staff that were having their own private events, like weddings, so then they'd reach out to us and see if we'd want to cater their wedding. It just kind of kept growing."

As demand for ice cream grew, Noah purchased a small building at Lake Poinsett to open a permanent ice cream shop and also allow them the space to expand their offerings, serving Saturday morning waffle breakfasts and statewide favorites like Black Hills Bagels and Flyboy Donuts.

Six years since starting the business, Feldy's Ice Cream has become a seven-days-per-week summer commitment for Noah. Today, the 18-year-old operates an ice cream truck, ice cream trailer and the Lake Poinsett location.

For staffing, Noah turned to area high schools.

"We hit hard at the local schools – Castlewood, Estelline, Arlington, Hamlin, Watertown, Brookings," Noah recalled. "We'd go to the school, give them some free ice cream coupons, and encourage them to apply for a summer job."

Noah currently employs 17 part-time summer workers.

"I never imagined that (the business) would grow into what I'm doing now on a day-to-day basis," he reflected. "I've learned that you can have a plan, and the plan's not always going to go how you want. A machine will break down, and then you're sitting there fixing it and figuring out how you're going to get to this event on time. You learn to take things as they come."

After graduating this past spring, Noah enrolled at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown to pursue training in law enforcement. He hopes to pair that training with a pilot's license and pursue a career in aviation law enforcement.

But that doesn't mean he's finished with ice cream.

"I'll take it year by year," Noah said. "I don't have any plans to shut down or slow down operation. It's definitely something I'm going to continue doing."

Noah's dad, Chad Felderman, who also serves as CEO at Dakota Energy Cooperative, praised his son's work ethic and thanked the surrounding communities for supporting the business.

"You can't not be proud of Noah," Chad said. "With all of the connections he's made in different communities and businesses, when I introduce myself, I don't introduce myself as Chad – I introduce myself as Noah's dad or Feldy's Ice Cream's dad."



Spink County Sheriff's Deputy Wyatt Anderson visits Feldy's Ice Cream at a stop at the Spink County Courthouse in Redfield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Chad assists Noah as he prepares a large order of ice cream cups at Eastern Star retirement home in Redfield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Twelve-year-old Noah started his business at Lake Poinsett.

Photo submitted by Chad Felderman



OCT. 31
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
 Yankton, SD
www.harvesthalloween.com

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.

OCT. 2-3
Public Ghost Investigation
 Fort Sisseton State Park
 Langford, SD
 605-910-4465

OCT. 2-3
Pumpkin Festival
 Vendor Fair & Lighted Parade
 Webster, SD
 605-345-4668
wac@webstersd.com

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

OCT. 3
Fall Harvest Farmers Market
 9 a.m.
 Centennial Park
 Hot Springs, SD

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

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

OCT. 10
Tabor Church Quilt & Craft Auction
 Sandwich & Pie Supper
 620 E. Hwy. 12
 Webster, SD
 605-880-3377

OCT. 16
Eureka Chamber Open House
 1:30-3:30 p.m.
 707 G Ave.
 Eureka, SD
 605-230-1777

OCT. 16-17
Haunted Fort
 Sat: Trick or Treat
 Fort Sisseton State Park
 Langford, SD
 605-910-4465

OCT. 17
Faulkton Area Arts Council Craft Fair
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Faulkton School
 Faulkton, SD
 605-380-8444

OCT. 30
Downtown Trunk or Treat
 Groton, SD
 605-397-8422

OCT. 31
Treat Street
 Main Street
 Milbank, SD

OCT. 31
Lantern Tour
 Fort Sisseton State Park
 Langford, SD
 605-910-4465

NOV. 12
The Satin Dollz
 Patriotic Female Vocal
 & Dance Quintet
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
aberncommunityconcerts.org

NOV. 14
Kick-Off to Christmas & Santa Shop
 10 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
 7 p.m. Parade
 Eureka, SD
 605-230-1777

NOV. 16-21
5th Annual FEZtival of Trees
 Mon.-Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
 802 S. Main St.
 Aberdeen, SD
 605-225-4841
yelduz.com

NOV. 20
Aberdeen University Civic Symphony Concert
 7:30 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD
aberncommunityconcerts.org

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