

Cooperative Connections

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Celebrating Co-op Month During A Critical Time

Let's Power On



Ben Dunsmoor

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Let's work together to have a safe harvest and continue to keep the power on during this critical time.

As an electric cooperative, our job is to keep the power on. When the power is on our communities move forward. Electric co-ops keep the power on so farms can operate, businesses can run, and homes can be a place of comfort and convenience.

October is when we celebrate co-op month. It is a month to reflect on all the benefits provided by the different types of cooperatives in our communities. Electric co-ops were formed nearly 80 years ago to provide essential service to the rural areas of South Dakota that did not have electricity. Electric cooperatives were formed by the communities they serve and the farmers and rural residents who wanted to bring power to the countryside. This year, electric cooperatives are celebrating co-op month with the theme 'Power On.'

'Power On' is not just a theme for co-op month but it has been a theme throughout the year as your cooperative navigates the challenges of 2020. Northern Electric Cooperative took early action this spring to keep the power on when the first few positive cases of COVID-19 were reported in our area. Northern Electric took proactive steps to protect the health of the employees, line crews, and members who are dedicated to the cooperative. We know that keeping the co-op's workforce healthy will ensure crews are available to respond to emergencies, employees are available to respond to members' questions and concerns, and that the cooperative will continue to be a safe and reliable source of power.

Northern Electric has continued to take proactive steps to keep the power on throughout the spring and summer. We also need the help of our members to ensure a safe and successful fall. We know that everyone has a lot on their minds this year, but we are asking farmers to take a few extra minutes to look up and look around for power lines and electrical infrastructure as the harvest ramps up. Northern Electric Cooperative responded to several incidents of farm equipment contacting and damaging power poles and electrical infrastructure last spring and we want farmers to stay safe this fall.

Farm equipment is bigger than ever and contacting power lines is extremely dangerous and can even be deadly. Taking a few minutes to look for power lines and poles on the edges of fields and farmyards can be the difference between a costly accident or a successful fall. Watching out for electrical infrastructure - and keeping the power on - is especially important this year as more people are working remotely and more students are engaging in distance learning from rural homes. Avoiding accidents can help keep the lights on for all members.

Electric co-ops continue to provide essential service to the rural areas of our state several decades after co-ops were first organized. During co-op month let us think about the members who worked together for the benefit of the entire co-op to turn the power on. Let us also work together - again - to have a safe harvest and continue to keep the power on during this critical time.



(USPS 396-040)

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held August 20, 2020, via video conference with all directors present. As the first order of business, the Board approved the July 23, 2020, minutes and July expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board of Directors at the Joint Strategic Meeting and Board Meeting August 4-5, 2020, in Madison. The next East River Board Meeting will be September 10, 2020, following the East River Annual Meeting September 9, 2020, in Sioux Falls. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC meeting held August 3, 2020 and the Joint Strategic Meeting held August 4, 2020, in Madison. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA Legislative Committee Meeting held August 6, 2020, in Pierre. The next SDREA board meeting will be held October 1-2, 2020. Director Ronald Kaaz reported on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association Board Leadership Summit, July 27-28, 2020, in Pierre. Director Todd Hettich reported on the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation Special Membership meeting which was conducted in a virtual format on August 14, 2020. President Donna Sharp reported on the National Cooperative Services Corporation Annual Membership meeting which was conducted in a virtual format on August 6, 2020.

Manager's Report

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

- Update on development projects
- Legal and Legislative Report

- Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor reported that he was chosen to be the President on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association Editorial Board.
- Informed directors that the 33rd American Coalition for Ethanol Annual Business Meeting will take place virtually on September 15, 2020.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, September 24.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$4,405.32.
3. Approved Work Order Inventory #20-07 for \$730,802.34 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Set compensation for the Credentials Committee at \$100.00.
5. Authorized online board attendance for the NRECA Online Regional Week, October 12-16, 2020.
6. Authorized board attendance to the Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting, December 7-10, 2020, in Denver, CO.
7. Authorized board attendance to the Winter School for Directors, December 11-16, 2020, in Nashville, TN.
8. Held Executive Session.

Please direct questions to your cooperative director, manager, or a co-op staff member.

Financial Report	July 2020	July 2019
kWh Sales	24,146,021 kWh	21,660,923 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,369,703	\$2,207,264
Total Cost of Service	\$2,307,253	\$2,251,341
Operating Margins	\$62,450	(-\$44,077)
Year To Date Margins	\$525,532	\$348,285

Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill

	Usage (kWh)	Cost (\$)	Rate (per kWh)
July 2020	1,778 kWh	\$207.96	.1170 per kWh
July 2019	1,570 kWh	\$190.76	.1215 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 83.1% of NEC's total cost of service.

Use Safety as Your Guide When Planting Trees

If the trees in your yard have grown so tall that they touch overhead power lines, they can cause all kinds of trouble. Branches that sway in the wind and rain can snap an electric line, sending a live wire to the ground, where it can electrocute anyone who touches it.

Plus, power lines that are broken by fallen trees will cause you and your neighbors to lose electricity and require a costly trip from your electric cooperative.

That's why any tree that poses a danger—even an old or favorite tree—could be slated for removal by your electric cooperative.

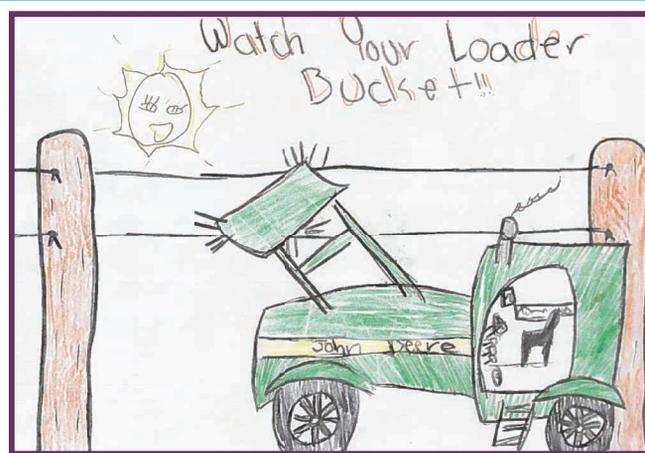
You can prevent problems on the front end by planting smart.

Here are a few tips:

- Do some research and learn all you can about the particular type of tree you want to plant. Learn how tall it will grow when it matures and how wide the full span of its mature branches will become. Use those dimensions to determine how far away from an existing power line you should plant it. Some trees are safe only when they grow 30 feet or more away from a line.
- If the landscape design you like requires you to plant trees in close proximity to electric lines, choose a low-growing variety that will never be tall enough to pose a hazard.
- Before digging any holes to plant trees, call 811, the state's "call before you dig" service. If you don't call and hit underground utility lines, you could be liable for damages.
- Avoid planting in the right-of-way on the edge of your yard or personal property. Your local electric cooperative and other utility companies must maintain that space and could wind up trimming trees out of the way of power lines, possibly leaving the tree looking lopsided.
- Don't plant shrubs too close to your home's outdoor air conditioning unit. AC units require breathing room and should never be crowded by shrubbery or debris.
- If your yard is already home to trees that are close to power lines, keep the trees trimmed so they don't touch any overhead wires. Hire a professional tree trimmer with the proper tools and training to provide this service for you. Don't risk doing it yourself.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Watch Your Loader Bucket!"

Adalin Homola, 11 years old

Adalin Homola is the daughter of Joe and Sonja Homola from Lake Nordin. They are members of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

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.

People-Pleasing Pasta

Pasta Florentine

16 oz. penne pasta	1 zucchini, cut in thin strips
1 red pepper, thin cut	2 cans mushrooms, drained
1 onion, chopped	1/8 cup butter
1 cup tomatoes, chopped	1/4 cup flour
1 cup skim milk	1 cup chicken broth
1/2 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 tsp. pepper
1 pkg. frozen spinach, thawed, drained	1/4 cup Parmesan

Prepare pasta, cooking 7 minutes. Drain. Spoon into greased 9x13 baking dish. Cook and stir zucchini, peppers, mushrooms, and onions for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in tomatoes. Spoon mixture over pasta and gently mix. Whisk flour with drippings in skillet. Whisk in milk. Add broth, nutmeg and pepper. Cook over medium heat and stir until mixture comes to boil and thickens. Add spinach and cheese. Pour sauce over casserole. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

Glen and Linda Erickson, Chester, SD

One Pan Chicken Alfredo

3 tablespoons olive oil	1/2 lb. penne pasta, or any bite-sized shape pasta, uncooked
1/4 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts	2 c. freshly shredded real parmesan cheese
2 cloves garlic, minced	Salt and pepper
2 c. low sodium chicken broth	Flat leaf parsley for garnish
1 c. heavy cream or half and half	

Cut chicken breasts into half-inch and 1-inch pieces. Season with salt/pepper. Brown chicken in olive oil over medium heat. It will finish cooking as it simmers. Add minced garlic and saute for 1 minute. Add broth, cream or half and half and uncooked pasta and stir. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce to a simmer. Keep pan covered while simmering. Simmer for 15-20 minutes or until pasta is tender. Remove from heat, stir in shredded parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

Judy Mendel, Doland, SD

Pizza Hot Dish

2 lb. hamburger - brown, sprinkle with onion and garlic salt	1/2 cup water
1 10-oz. can pizza sauce	1/2 tsp. salt
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce	1/4 tsp. pepper
	1 tsp. oregano

Simmer above ingredients 20 minutes. Add 1-1/2 cup grated American cheese (Velveeta) and 8-oz. package of wide noodles, cooked. Put 1/2 of sauce in 9x13 cake pan. Top with noodles. Add rest of sauce. Top with mozzarella cheese and sprinkle generously with parmesan cheese. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

Shirley Miller, Winfred, SD

Shrimp Scampi

8 ounces pasta linguine	1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons butter	1 dash crushed red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	1-1/2 pounds large or extra-large Aqua Star shrimp, shelled
4 garlic cloves, minced	1/3 cup parsley, chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine or seafood broth	1/2 lemon, juice only
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt	

Cook pasta according to package directions. In large skillet, melt butter and oil. Add garlic and saute until fragrant. Add wine or broth, salt, red pepper flakes and black pepper. Bring to simmer and reduce by half. Add shrimp and saute until shrimp turn pink and opaque, approximately 2-4 minutes depending on size. Stir in parsley, lemon juice and cooked pasta. Provided by www.aquastar.com.

Please send your favorite vegetarian, garden produce and pasta 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Make your basement more efficient



Pat Keegan

Collaborative Efficiency

As you look at the ductwork, ask yourself if rooms throughout the home are heated or cooled unevenly.

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency.

For more information on making your basement more energy efficient, visit: www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips.

Dear Pat and Brad: I've heard that energy can be lost through my home's basement. Is that true? If so, what can I do to make my basement more efficient? – Andy

Dear Andy: Yes, basements can account for a large portion of your energy use, especially in colder climates. More importantly, basements are often a key area when you're looking to improve energy efficiency.

Moisture is a common problem in basements and crawl spaces, and can lead to mold, rot and lowered effectiveness of insulation. As you make efficiency improvements, you can solve moisture problems, but you could make them worse if you're unsure of the work you're doing. Look for signs of water damage or moisture buildup, such as rotting wood, mold, a stain on a wall or floor or a musty smell. Any untreated wood in contact with a cement floor or wall could be rotting. Search online for "test basement walls for moisture" and you'll find a simple test you can conduct.

Before making improvements, consider whether radon or carbon monoxide could be a problem. If you live in an area where radon has been a problem, you should conduct a radon test through a licensed professional or purchase a DIY home test kit. Carbon monoxide problems can be deadly. If you have any type of combustion, whether it's a furnace, water heater or even a fireplace, make sure they have adequate ventilation and that you have working carbon monoxide detectors nearby.

If you have a forced-air heating system, your basement is abundant with opportunities for improving ductwork. Unless you're in a newer home or the ductwork has been tested and sealed in the last decade, your ductwork is likely leaking. Sealing these leaks helps your system distribute air more efficiently and should make your home more comfortable. The best way to seal ducts is with duct mastic. Metallic tape is the next best solution. Do not use duct tape. An energy auditor or HVAC professional can test your home's ductwork and identify any leaks.

As you look at the ductwork, ask yourself if rooms throughout the home are heated or cooled unevenly. If so, you'll want to enlist the help of a professional. Sometimes minor modifications to the ductwork can make a big improvement in comfort.

You'll find lots of air leaks in basements and crawl spaces, particularly where pipes and wires enter or exit the space. Air often enters the home around the sill plate, which sits on top of the foundation. If you can get to the sill plate, apply caulk around it. You can also increase efficiency by sealing any gaps or leaks around basement windows.

Insulation is an effective tool for reducing energy use and improving comfort, but the applications are quite different in basements and crawl spaces. In both cases, the insulation strategy and the installation must be done correctly to prevent mold or exacerbate moisture problems. The place to begin in basements is the rim joist, which is right above the sill plate on the top of the foundation wall. Rigid foam board can be carefully fitted between the joists.

Insulated basement walls make a room more comfortable. If you're building a new home, there are advantages to insulating the outside of the foundation wall, but this isn't practical for most homes. You can insulate the inside of the foundation wall if you're sure moisture is not leaking through the wall from the outside. Experts do not recommend fiberglass insulation in contact with the foundation, which was a common practice for decades. Instead, they prefer sprayed-on foam or rigid foam board applied directly to the foundation wall. A wood-framed wall can be butted up against the rigid foam and insulated with fiberglass or mineral wool batts. The bottom plate of the wall, which sits on the concrete floor, should be pressure treated wood.

There are two ways to insulate crawl spaces. Over the past several years, the most common approach was to insulate under the floor with fiberglass batts. This allowed the crawl space to be vented to the outside, which alleviated any moisture buildup. If all the right moisture control and drainage steps have been taken, the crawl space can be unventilated, and the insulation can be applied to the foundation walls instead of underneath the floor. That said, there are pros and cons to this strategy, so do some research online or consult with a local expert.

Sam Cahoy enjoys pursuing hunting and fishing and other outdoor activities with his family. Shown here, left to right, are Haley, Michyl, Camden and Sam Cahoy. Camden bagged this turkey during last spring's Mentor Hunter Program. Photos provided by Sam Cahoy

The Right Stuff

Aberdeen Taxidermist Sam Cahoy Earns International Recognition

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Sam Cahoy is in a heated competition with himself. As the owner of Showpiece Taxidermy in Aberdeen, Cahoy's personal goal is to make the next mount better than the one before.

For Cahoy, every job presents its own set of challenges because the animals that come through his door to be mounted aren't exactly in pristine condition. The first step in the process is to determine how much damage was done during the harvesting.

"In taxidermy, you're always brainstorming and trying to find a way to work around the damage and other obstacles because you never have an animal that comes in without some kind of problems," Cahoy said. "You have a lot of options."

Multiple containers of Bondo come in handy and a creative approach also helps in delivering a product to the customer that will be associated with a lifetime of memories. And that, Cahoy said, is the reason he began pursuing taxidermy first as a high school student and then later after college when he looked toward making it a career.

"The thing I enjoy most about taxidermy is trying to reproduce nature and satisfying the customer," he said. "The goal

is to return to them an animal that will remind them of an experience that they'll remember the rest of their lives."

Cahoy grew up loving the outdoors and always enjoyed hunting, fishing and camping. As a high school sophomore, he became interested in the species he would see mounted in museums and tried his hand at tanning hides. He came across a series of pamphlets that showed the steps in tanning deer hides and mounting ducks. The more he read, the more interested he became.

After that, it was off to college at South Dakota State University where he earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees in wildlife and fisheries. He took a two-week summer course in taxidermy before enrolling in graduate school and began learning the finer points of the craft.

Cahoy relocated to Denver, where he worked for the state Division of Wildlife and later went on to work at Coors as a brewhouse specialist, using his minor concentration in microbiology and chemistry.

"I moved back to Aberdeen in 2015 to see if I could make a living out of doing this. Fortunately, I haven't had to find a 'real' job yet," Cahoy joked.

All the years of honing his craft have paid off for Cahoy.

In 2017, his mount of a sandhill crane was proclaimed "Best in World" in the upland game bird category at the Taxidermy World Championships in Peoria, Ill.

Cahoy has completed high-quality mounts of African lions, brown bears, bison, white-tail deer, pheasants, fish, ducks and even a bongo antelope.



Cahoy has won numerous awards for his work.

His wife, Michyl, also enjoys outdoor adventures along with daughter Haley, 9, and son Camden, 7. The siblings have both participated in the South Dakota Mentor Hunter program. Daughter Mikelyn, born in July, has yet to don camo, but Cahoy said he'll be looking to teach his youngest the joys of outdoor recreation.

For more information on Showpiece Taxidermy, call Cahoy at 605-228-0661.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS



While the ag markets have experienced shifts and changes, rural South Dakota continues to offer a favorable business climate for many industry sectors.

S.D. IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

REED Fund supports business growth in rural areas

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

The old adage about making hay while the sun is shining is not lost on the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

During the summer months, the department launched an aggressive regional advertising campaign called "South Dakota Means Business," aimed at encouraging companies from surrounding states to relocate to a more business-friendly environment.

The timing of this marketing strategy was intended to take advantage of the favorable national publicity the state has received for its response to COVID-19 and also to lure disaffected businesses weary of increasingly onerous and burdensome regulatory policies in other states.

The promotional initiative was based on a long list of advantages that make it easier in South Dakota for companies to maximize positive margins and plan for future growth.

The campaign featured Gov. Kristi Noem emphasizing the fact that South Dakota has been ranked best in the nation in several categories: lowest business costs; most accessible financing; two-year college graduation rates; lowest regulatory restrictions; lowest state tax revenue volatility; and more.

"We hear over and over from business owners in other states that increased government regulations are making it difficult to earn a profit and plan for growth," said Commissioner Steve Westra. "We want to get the word out that it doesn't have to be this way."

"As out-of-state businesses become more frustrated with

Dakota Style is a thriving business that has received REED funding through Codington-Clark Electric.



overreach by their state governments, they're turning to South Dakota," said Gov. Noem. "The number of new businesses interested in moving to South Dakota has increased dramatically. We're ready to show these businesses what South Dakota can do for them."

While Gov. Noem pushes to attract more businesses to South Dakota, the state's rural electric cooperatives continue to be engaged in efforts to spark community development. Twenty of the state's electric cooperatives collaborate with five western-Minnesota co-ops to support local business growth through the Rural Electric Economic Development, Inc. (REED) Fund. The non-profit corporation provides financing in all or parts of roughly 70 counties in the two states.

The REED Fund was created in 1997 to boost business growth in small communities and has issued nearly 400 loans totaling more

than \$102 million. That financial support has resulted in more than 9,000 jobs.

While the fund is used by rural electric cooperatives to boost economic activity in their service areas, it is not restricted to co-ops. Many loans have gone to retail entities, manufacturing facilities, agriculture processing and marketing and support services. The fund has also been used to support rural health care, education, recreation, arts, public safety, community infrastructure, housing and office space.

The fund is supported by state and federal government entities, including the Governor's Office of Economic Development and the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, and also private groups such as Dakota Resources, Basin Electric Cooperative and banking institutions.

The REED Fund had a record year in 2019, with \$12.8 million in new loans. REED and Avera Health also signed a new workforce housing development financing partnership as Avera committed to a \$2 million investment in the fund. This investment, along with an additional \$1 million pledge from SDN Communications and another \$1 million from First Bank & Trust, will expand efforts to finance workforce housing.

Two loans issued in August went to Lesterville Fire and Rescue from Bon Homme Yankton Electric, and to 605 Sires, LLC, from Southeastern Electric.

Bon Homme Electric Manager Stephanie Horst said the money would go toward the purchase of new air packs and a new building addition for the local volunteer fire department.

"A big part of our guiding principles as locally-owned, locally-controlled electric cooperatives is to do whatever we can to improve the quality of life in our service areas and to expand the range of economic opportunities available to our members and our communities," Horst said. "It's very gratifying for us to know we're making a positive impact."

She noted that more than 80 percent of the REED Fund's lending is established in communities of fewer than 4,000 people and 98 percent of REED-financed projects have local ownership.

At Southeastern Electric, General Manager Brad Schardin said 605 Sires, LLC, used its financing to expand its family-owned, full-service bull collection and donor facility. The company opened in 2017 and delivers its products to customers both domestically and internationally.

According to Schardin, "Delivering electrical power that is safe, affordable, reliable and accessible is a tall order in itself. But our commitment goes beyond providing electricity. We also have an obligation to enhance and improve the communities we serve. The REED Fund is an excellent resource to help us fulfill that commitment."

For more information on the REED Fund, visit www.reedfund.coop or call 605-256-8015.

Future of Energy Storage

Energy storage technology is extremely versatile - it's small enough to fit in your phone, or large enough to power your entire home.

Many people are familiar with small-scale batteries for handheld devices, but utility-scale batteries take energy storage to a whole new level. The ability to store energy helps to ensure that energy demand meets supply at any given time, making electricity available when you need it.

The most widespread form of energy storage in the U.S. is through pumped hydropower, a form of mechanical energy storage. Pumped hydropower has been used for several decades now, and currently makes up about 97 percent of the country's utility storage capacity.

Energy is stored by pumping water uphill from a lower elevation reservoir to store in an upper water basin. When energy is needed, the water is allowed

to flow through an electric turbine to generate energy, the same way it flows through a hydroelectric dam. This method is largely dependent on surrounding geography and any potential resulting ecosystem issues.

Battery technology is also gaining a lot of ground. In 2018, the power capacity from battery storage systems more than doubled from 2010. The most common type of battery chemistry is lithium-ion because of a high-cycle efficiency and fast response time. Some less-common battery types for utility storage include lead acid batteries, nickel-based batteries and sodium-based batteries. However, each chemistry has varying limitations. Beyond pumped hydropower and batteries, there are a few other forms of energy storage used at the utility scale: thermal, hydrogen and compressed air.

Energy storage currently plays a crucial role in incorporating renewable energy into our electric grid. Solar and wind energy are weather-dependent, so when energy demand is low but energy supply is high from the sun or wind, storing the excess energy makes it possible to use it later when demand is higher. As renewable energy becomes more prevalent, energy storage will help to create a more resilient grid.

Although battery prices have been decreasing steadily over the last several years, energy storage can be expensive to attain. Currently, there are 25 gigawatts of electrical energy storage capacity in the U.S., and many experts expect capacity to grow.



Energy storage plays a crucial role in incorporating renewable energy into our electric grid. Photo by Dennis Gainer



Have an idea for a business or development story?

Submit your ideas to editor Ben Dunsmoor at bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop or call 605-225-0310.

ESCAPE THE ORDINARY

Creative Puzzles Provide Alternative Entertainment at Aberdeen Escape Room



Unravel owner Jessica Fischer is the creator of the puzzles and themes inside the Aberdeen escape room. (Photo Courtesy: Jessica Fischer)

Ben Dunsmoor

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The clock starts when the door closes.

Once the door is closed at Unravel Escape Room Experience in Aberdeen it is a race against time to work with your closest family and friends to find all the clues and solve the puzzle.

“You are working together as a family the whole time,” Unravel Escape Room owner Jessica Fischer said. “You are communicating, you are solving things together, you are talking and interacting. It is meant to be an activity that is fun – but also challenging.”

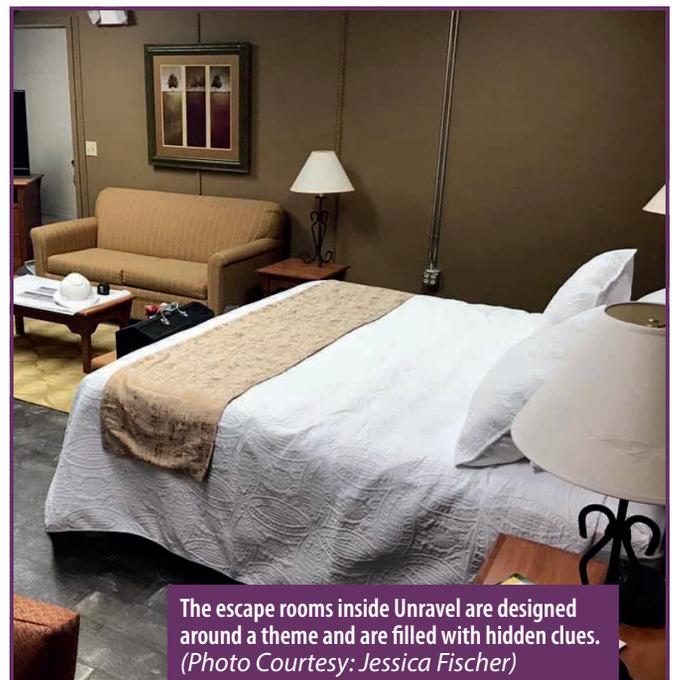
Unravel combines riddles, mystery, and adventure with physical clues that are planted throughout a locked room. Participants need to find all the clues and escape the room within 60 minutes. Northern Electric member Jessica Fischer got the idea to open Unravel a few years ago after visiting a similar business in another state.

“I came home thinking, ‘Aberdeen needs one

of these,’” Fischer said. “I couldn’t stop thinking about it for the next couple of months and finally decided to go for it and open one.”

Fischer opened Unravel in late 2018 in the basement of Karisma Boutique in downtown Aberdeen. The business has two rooms with two different themes along with a third room geared toward kids. Fischer’s inspiration for the rooms comes from her own interest in mystery.

“I read a lot and have been a mystery book and movie buff my whole life. I usually try and pick a theme that I can design room décor around pretty easily and simply.”



The escape rooms inside Unravel are designed around a theme and are filled with hidden clues. (Photo Courtesy: Jessica Fischer)



A family tries to solve a mystery inside one of the escape rooms at Unravel in downtown Aberdeen. (Photo Courtesy: Jessica Fischer)

Unravel Solves Its Own Mystery

This spring, however, Unravel was presented with its own mystery to solve. As the pandemic forced businesses to close their doors to the public Unravel started searching for a way to continue offering challenging puzzles to the community. Fischer was inspired by her family as she decided to escape her downtown location and offer a scavenger hunt throughout Aberdeen.

“I had the idea out of sheer boredom,” Fischer said. “My kids and I were all going

stir crazy from watching TV and being stuck in the house in the spring. I mentioned the idea to my husband, and he said he thought it could be a big hit. It was.”

Unravel offered the first ‘Great Hub City Escape’ in late April to help families get out of the house. The first driving-scavenger hunt was so popular that Unravel created two more ‘Great Hub City Escape’

scavenger hunts. Both activities are still available for problem-solving participants on the business’s website. Fischer also created a custom scavenger hunt for the Elm Lake area in September.

“The Elm Lake Association contacted me looking for something fun to do for their association members as a way to celebrate their members and have something fun for families to do over Labor Day weekend.”

Fischer is open to doing more community-wide scavenger hunts and said the Elm

Lake hunt could easily be adapted for Mina and Richmond lakes.

New Puzzles for The Fall

Unravel is preparing some new ideas and puzzles for the fall. One of the rooms in downtown Aberdeen is going to be turned into a Harry Potter-themed escape room for October. Unravel plans to do a holiday-themed escape room for November and December. They also have a Wizard of Oz room in the works for 2021.

Fischer plans to offer another escape room alternative for those who would like to stay at home this fall and winter.

“I am also working on some ‘escape room in a box’ take-home games for people to rent. I am hoping to launch that as we go into the winter months,” Fischer said.

New options that Fischer hopes will be an avenue for the community to escape their ordinary routines during a unique time as Unravel continues to evolve its business.

To learn more about Unravel Escape Room Experience or book a time to solve one of its puzzles visit aberdeenescaperoom.com



Problem-solving participants sign their name on a wall inside Unravel after they have escaped a room. (Photo Courtesy: Jessica Fischer)



Life on farms and in small towns changed for the better when electric co-ops brought power to the countryside.

CO-OP HISTORY

Co-op legacy provides a road map to success

Billy Gibson

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On Nov. 29, 1935, a handful of local farmers huddled together in a nondescript general store near Vermillion.

They knew that six months earlier President Franklin Roosevelt had signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). They knew the purpose of this new federal entity was to provide low-interest loans so that small communities all across the nation could build the power delivery infrastructures required to bring power to the countryside. And they knew this would be their best opportunity to accomplish something for themselves that the for-profit corporate utilities were unwilling to do: energize rural America. They were all in.

While there were a few fits-and-starts along the way, what emerged out of that meeting was South Dakota's first rural electric cooperative, Clay-Union Electric Corp.

Meanwhile, this exact scenario was being replicated in other small towns and villages from coast-to-coast as the rural electrification movement gained momentum and transformed the lives of millions. From those humble beginnings, the movement has swelled to more than 900 locally-owned and locally-controlled cooperatives serving 42 million Americans in 47 states.

The improbable feat of individuals coming together, organizing, planning and building such a vast power delivery system through the most sparsely populated and inhospitable landscapes has been recognized as one of the country's crowning achievements.

America's electric cooperatives take a great deal of pride in their legacy of service, their spirit of independence, their ability to work together for a common purpose and their democratic system of control and decision-making. It's a system rooted in the



Local citizens got together in the 1930s to organize electric co-ops.

very ideals that made the country great.

So why should today's generation care about this legacy?

Dan Lindblom thinks he knows. Lindblom, along with his fellow co-op leader Verdon Lamb, recently received the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's (SDREA) Legacy of Leadership Award for 2020. He said the rich history of the cooperative movement is important because it provides a model for success that both current and future generations can use to overcome obstacles and challenges, to help navigate through difficult and seemingly intractable situations.

Having served 27 years on the board at Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer and 23 years on the SDREA board, Lindblom certainly knows about how to approach difficult dilemmas. As a statewide board officer, Lindblom found himself in the middle of many imbroglios and political squabbles over the decades.

Whether the battleground was in Pierre or Washington, Lindblom fought to protect the interests of electric cooperative



Co-ops led the way in energizing rural America and today lead the way in developing new technologies such as electric vehicles.

members through a wide range of issues such as service territory disputes, state and federal environmental regulations, taxation, transportation and more.

In the process, he learned the art of compromise and the virtue of demonstrating mutual respect. He recalls the not-too-distant past when political



Co-ops improved the lives of all citizens in their communities.

opponents maintained personal, respectful relationships despite any ideological or policy differences they may have had. He also learned the meaning of the old axiom, “United we stand, divided we fall.”

“Speaking with one voice pays off, especially in the political arena,” Lindblom said. “We had situations where an issue may impact one or two co-ops, but we all had to stand together to provide the strength we needed to win. It’s a difficult decision to engage in a fight when you think you don’t have a dog in the hunt, but it’s necessary if you’re going to do what’s good for co-op members across the state. The next time, it may be your issue that comes up and you’ll need the support.”

Lindblom said the secret sauce of success is adopting a posture of give-and-take while standing in solidarity behind a set of shared values.

Verdon Lamb, the other 2020 Legacy of Leadership recipient, served 40 years on the board at Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative in Watertown and also served on the SDREA board. He said the history of the electric co-op movement is a prime example of what can be accomplished when people work together.

“It’s about leadership, sacrifice and working in harmony to do something that’s worth doing for other people,” Lamb said. “I always felt it was worth the sacrifice of giving up my personal time and my farming time to represent the members who put their faith in me and elected me to serve on the board.”

While some say the sense of community, sacrifice and selflessness are lost on the current generation, Lamb said he has hope that young adults will come to understand those ideals exemplified by electric co-ops.

“You know, people said the same things about us when we were kids,” said Lamb, who graduated from high school in 1953. “They said we weren’t going to amount to much, but we turned out okay.”

Chris Larson is manager at Clay-Union Electric Corp., where South Dakota’s electric cooperative system began. He pointed out that the legacy of electric cooperatives is rooted in friends, family and the community. Because cooperatives have always been owned, operated and controlled independently, and have always been geared for local service, they demonstrate the power of human connections and the strength that comes with

teamwork. He said this is especially clear to see as cooperatives and their members deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

“When times get tough, you look to your family and friends, and those are the people who make up our cooperative,” Larson said. “Cooperative communities work together to accomplish things that would be impossible to do alone. That’s what the cooperative legacy is all about, and we see how it lifts us up and sustains us through troubling times.”

Larson said electric co-op history points back to a time in the 1930s when the country was racked by a slumping economy. Co-op organizers went door-to-door to rally support and ask for a membership fee. It was money that many households simply didn’t have. He noted that the first attempt at forming the co-op failed because the start-up funds weren’t there. But by working together and staying focused on the goal, the community accomplished the mission of energizing homes, farms, schools and businesses.

“Friends and families in the Clay County area pulled together and found a way to improve the quality of life for all,” Larson said. “The result is that today we provide power to water districts, banks, grocery stores, elevators, hotels, ag supply stores and more. Electricity is the life blood that makes our local economy run. That’s why our history is so important – it shows the possibilities of what can be done. It’s a road map for achieving what some think is impossible. That’s a message we can all learn from and has no expiration date.”

Larson said that by being attentive to the legacy of electric cooperatives, members of the younger generation can make a real difference in the future of the country.



Preparing for the Big Hunt: Consider Electrical Safety

As you prepare for hunting season, keep in mind that along with general hunting safety, electrical safety should also be top of mind.

You might be preoccupied and excited about the big hunt but be sure to look up and look out for power lines. Never place a tree stand near a power line. Contact with the power line, utility pole, or related equipment can alter the path to ground, sending electricity through anyone or anything that comes too close or in direct contact with the power source. (Even coming within 10 feet can cause an arc, transferring energy from the power line to an object or person.)

In addition, do not shoot near or toward power lines, utility poles, transformers, or substations. Stray bullets or pellets could damage equipment, possibly interrupting electric service. Even more concerning, they could drop a power line to the ground, causing a hazardous scenario because those who get within 50 feet of the downed line could be shocked or electrocuted.

Northern Electric Cooperative and Safe Electricity remind hunting enthusiasts of these electrical safety tips this season:

- Familiarize yourself with the area before heading out to hunt. Take note of power lines and equipment, especially when hunting in densely wooded areas.
- Observe all signs or postings that advise electrical safety, especially when scouting out a location for your tree stand.
- Do not use power poles to support a tree stand.
- Do not locate a tree stand near a power line or pole.
- Be in the habit of looking up and out for power lines and do not come within 10 feet of an overhead line or pole when setting up or taking down a stand.
- Never climb a utility pole.

Please report any damage to a line or other

related equipment to Northern Electric Cooperative so crews can address it. Although co-op crews perform routine maintenance, damage may not be noticed for weeks or months unless an outage occurs due to the thousands of miles of lines that cover the Northern Electric service area.

Of course, always take the time to observe general hunting safety measures as well.

For more information about safety around power lines and other sources of electricity, go to SafeElectricity.org.



LOOK UP AROUND OUT

Farm equipment and power lines can be a lethal combination. Look for overhead power lines and plan safe routes for moving your equipment. Keep equipment, antennas and people away from power lines and power poles. And never touch a downed line. Contact your local electric cooperative if you have questions.

RE-ENERGIZING FARM SAFETY



**Northern
Electric**
Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

September 24-26

Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival, Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

September 25-27

Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Massey Harris Tractors, Meadow, SD 605-788-2229

September 26

Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival, 526 Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

September 26

Chamberlain/Oacoma Harvest Festival, Chamberlain, SD, 605-234-4416

September 26-27

Menno Pioneer Power Show, 616 N Fifth Street, Menno, SD

September 26

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD

October 2-3

First United Methodist Church Rummage Sale, 629 Kansas City St, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-4294

October 2-3

Oktoberfest, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

October 3

Cruiser Car Show & Street Fair, Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

October 3

Cowboys, Cowgirls and Cowcatchers Soiree, 6 p.m., South Dakota State Railroad Museum, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



Sept. 26
Wheelin' to Wall, Wall, SD,

October 3-4

Marshall Area Gun Show, Red Baron Arena, 1651 Victory Dr., Marshall, MN, 507-401-6227

October 3-4

Harvest Festival, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

October 3-18

Pumpkin Festival, Canton, SD, 605-987-5171

October 10

Annual Fall Festival, 4-6 p.m., Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD 605-255-4329

October 10

Groton's 5th Annual Pumpkin Fest, Groton City Park, Groton, SD, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch Served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

October 10-11

Pumpkin Festival, 27249 SD Hwy 115, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

October 24

Ladies Day Shopping Extravaganza, The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

October 29-30

Helping with Horsepower's Phobia - A Haunted Trail, Reclamation Ranch, 40789 259th St., Mitchell, SD, 7-11 p.m. 605-770-2867

October 31-November 1

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

November 7

Silver Star Bazaar, Lake Norden Community Center, Lake Norden, SD, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

November 7

Helping with Horsepower's RibFest, 4 p.m., Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, Contact mattcarter1421@gmail.com to Register Your Team

November 14

Annual Holiday Extravaganza, Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters, Sisseton, SD, 605-698-7425

November 21-22

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S Washington Street, Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

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.