

Cooperative Connections



**Electric Co-op
Leaders Get
Involved
Locally**

Page 8

**Rounding Up
for a Cause**

Page 12

Study Projects Aberdeen Population Will Hit 40,000 Ready To Grow With You



Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

For several years, Northern Electric has worked to ensure new housing developments and new businesses around Aberdeen have the proper infrastructure in place to provide a safe and reliable source of power.

By the year 2045 experts believe the city of Aberdeen will be home to 40,000 residents.

Currently, estimates show the city of Aberdeen has more than 28,000 residents but the official population will be confirmed during the U.S. Census in 2020.

The City of Aberdeen is already preparing for that growth. On January 7, the Aberdeen City Council heard the results of a comprehensive study known as the 'Aberdeen Growth Plan.' The study was conducted by Stantec Consulting of North Dakota. This study is projecting Aberdeen will experience more than 1.5 percent growth per year until the population of the city reaches about 40,000 in the year 2045. The plan also identifies several growth areas around the city where consultants believe new homes and businesses will be built over the next 25 years.

Northern Electric Cooperative and our co-op partners are also planning and preparing for growth in this region. For several years, Northern Electric has worked to ensure new housing developments and new businesses around Aberdeen have the proper infrastructure in place to provide a safe and reliable source of power. In late 2018, the Northern Electric Board of Directors passed a new four-year work plan which will guide the co-op until 2022. Over the next four years, Northern Electric Cooperative plans to spend more than \$17 million to build or upgrade nearly 300 miles of overhead and underground line. The plan also includes more than 200 new connections to homes and businesses. The entire goal of the four-year work plan is to replace aging co-op infrastructure and build new infrastructure to developing areas in Brown and Spink counties.

East River Electric Power Cooperative – Northern Electric's wholesale power supplier – also has major projects planned in the Aberdeen area over the next several years. East River has approved its own transmission system upgrade plan that will build new high-voltage transmission lines and rebuild aging lines which deliver electricity to this area. East River also plans to build new substations and rebuild existing substations throughout its service territory as part of the ten-year upgrade plan. Through its transmission system upgrade plan, East River will implement system improvements throughout its service territory with targeted projects for the Aberdeen area as northeast South Dakota continues to grow.

Rural electric co-ops know a consistent and reliable source of electricity plays an important role in economic development in our rural areas. It is the reason electric co-ops are making long-range plans now so we can meet the demands of the future. As the City of Aberdeen and northeast South Dakota prepare for growth, your co-op is preparing to meet the needs of the new homes and businesses that will be built in this area. Northern Electric was the co-op that turned on the lights in rural Brown County more than 70 years ago and we are preparing to be the co-op that will keep the lights on for decades to come as we continue to grow together.



(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Donna Sharp

Board of Directors

- Randy Kienow – Vice President
- Nolan Wipf – Secretary
- Wayne Holt – Treasurer
- Fran Esser
- Victor Fischbach
- Ron Kaaz
- Josh Larson
- Mark Sumption

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

Chief Financial Officer: Cathi Podoll

Operations Manager: Mike Kelly

Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

Communications Director: Ben Dunsmoor - bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Executive Secretary: Kay Albrecht

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

www.northernelectric.coop

facebook.com/NorthernElectricCooperative



Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held January 24, 2019, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present except for Ronald Kaaz and Josh Larson. As the first order of business, the board approved the December 20, 2018, minutes and December expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management including details on financial, operations, member services, safety, communications and IT.

Directors viewed the East River Electric Power Cooperative video report. East River Director Mark Sumption reported on actions taken by the East River Board at its January 3, 2019, meeting. General Manager Char Hager reported on the January 2, 2019, East River MAC meeting. General Manager Char Hager and Manager of Member Services Russ Ulmer reported on the Basin Member Managers Conference which they attended via video conference, January 23, 2019. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA January 9-10, 2019, board meeting. Director Nolan Wipf, General Manager Char Hager and Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor reported on the SDREA Annual Meeting which was held January 10-11, 2019, in Pierre.

Manager's Report

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

- Update and discussion on development projects and activities taking place in the community and our service area.
- Legislative report.
- Reminder that the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Annual Meeting will be March 7-13, 2019, in Orlando, FL.

- Informed the board of the CFC Forum, July 1-3, 2019, in New York, NY.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

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, February 21, 2019.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,086.30.
3. Approved Work Order Inventories #18-12 for \$475,225.74 and #18-12MC for \$129,841.26 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Authorized attendance to Co-op Day at the Capitol, February 20, 2019, Pierre.
5. Authorized attendance to the 2019 NRECA Legislative Conference, April 28-30, in Washington, DC.
6. Authorized board attendance to the NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) Courses, March 26-27, 2019, in Pierre.
7. Tabled the Veterans cemetery donation request.
8. Approved the Northern Electric 2019 Operating Budget.

Please ask your cooperative manager or director if there are questions on any of these matters.

Financial Report	December 2018	December 2017
kWh Sales	29,976,571 kWh	32,660,199 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,507,827	\$2,769,871
Total Cost of Service	\$2,415,269	\$2,697,105
Operating Margins	\$92,558	\$72,766
Year To Date Margins	\$745,889	\$1,886,956

Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill

December 2018	3,230 kWh	\$275.84	.0854 per kWh
December 2017	3,476 kWh	\$289.76	.0834 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 85.9% of NEC's total cost of service.

Protecting Your Home and Business

Every year, electrical equipment, wiring, appliances and tools cause injuries and fires at both homes and workplaces. Paying close attention to the condition of electrical equipment and taking appropriate and prompt action to correct electrical problems can help to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you. Below are guidelines to help identify and reduce electrical hazards.

Electrical Outlet Safety

- Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances and ensure that electrical loads are appropriate for the circuits.
- Unplug appliances when they are not in use to conserve energy as well as minimize the opportunities for electric shock or fire.
- Use outlets instead of relying on extension cords and power strips. Consider having additional permanent outlets installed where needed.
- Use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) in wet/damp areas like kitchens, bathrooms and outdoors.



Electrical Cord Safety

- Inspect electrical cords to ensure that they are not frayed, cracked or damaged.
- Do not place electrical cords in high traffic areas, under carpets or across doorways where they pose a potential tripping hazard or could be easily damaged.

Certification and Awareness

- Ensure that all electrical products and equipment are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Allow only trained and qualified electrical workers to perform work on electrical equipment.
- Be aware of signs of electrical problems such as flickering lights and/or buzzing, sizzling or humming sounds from electrical systems.

Source: www.acadiainsurance.com

Ladder Safety and How It Affects Everyone

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

+700

ladder injuries every day*

113

deaths caused by falls each year*

6-10 ft.

The **most common ladder falls** happen between 6 and 10 feet off the ground

WHETHER YOU'RE USING A LADDER AT HOME OR AT WORK, THESE NUMBERS AFFECT YOU.

2 most **common ladder accidents** include**:

1. **Missing the last step when climbing down**
2. **Overreaching**

**National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) 2017 Data Highlights*, 2017, CPSC

***ALI Ladder Safety Training and Citation Report* - United States, 2018, American Ladder Institute

Take safety into your own hands by taking ladder safety seriously. Visit www.LadderSafetyMonth.com to learn more.

National Ladder Safety Month is presented by



Thank you to our Top Cap sponsor



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER

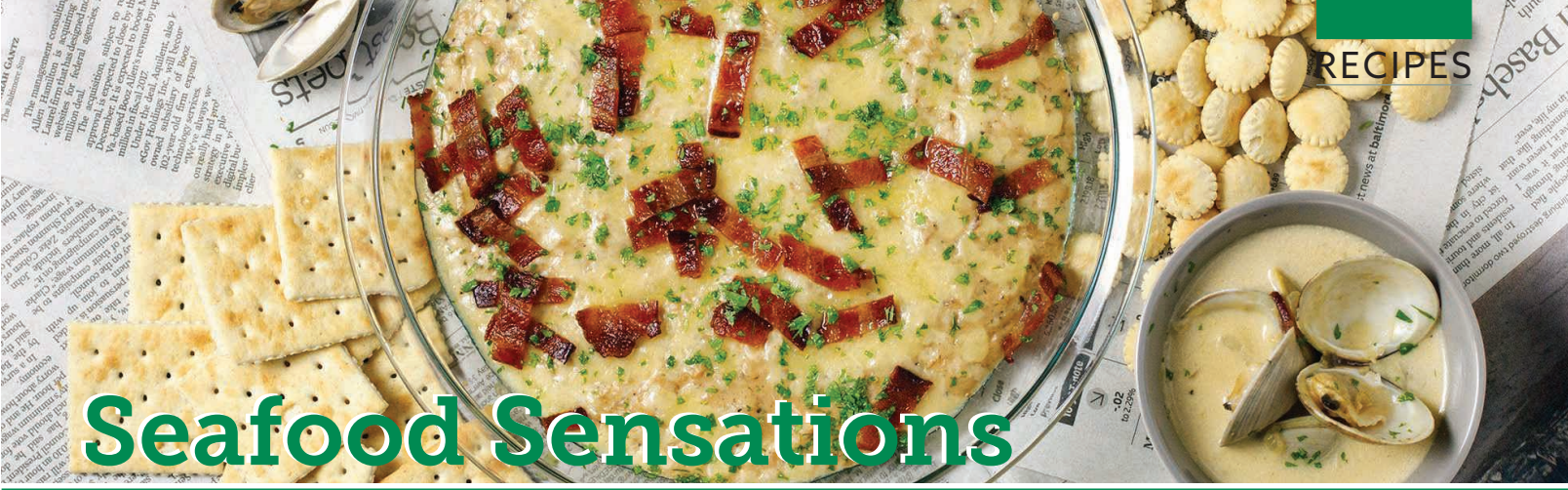


"Be careful with farm equipment around power lines."

Carson Lee, 10 years old

Carson is the son of Chris and Marisa Lee, Fairfax, Minn. They are members of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, Danube, Minn.

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.



Seafood Sensations

Clam Chowder Dip

- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 pkg. McCormick® Original Country Gravy Mix
- 1-1/2 cups milk
- 1 cup shredded white Cheddar cheese, divided
- 1 (6.5 oz.) can chopped clams, drained
- 2 tsp. McCormick® Parsley Flakes

Cook bacon in large skillet on medium-high heat until crisp. Remove bacon, reserving drippings in pan. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until translucent. Stir in gravy mix, milk and 1/2 cup shredded cheese. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes or until gravy starts to thicken. Remove from heat. Stir in clams. Pour into 9-inch glass pie plate. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with bacon and parsley. Serve with toasted baguette slices or crackers. Makes 12 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 94, Total Fat 6g, Saturated Fat 3g, Protein 4g, Cholesterol 9mg, Sodium 278mg, Fiber 1g, Carbohydrates 6g,

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Shrimp Lover Squares

- 1 (8. oz) tube refrigerated crescent rolls
- 1 (8. oz) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 tsp. dill weed
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup seafood sauce
- 24 medium shrimp, cooked
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

In a greased 9x13-inch pan, unroll the crescent dough; seal seams. Bake at 375°F. for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely on a wire rack. In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sour cream, dill weed and salt until smooth. Spread over crust. Top with seafood sauce, shrimp, green pepper, onion and cheese. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Cut into squares. Makes 2 dozen.

Becki Hauser, Tripp, SD

Crab Quiche

- 4 beaten eggs
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground thyme
- 1 T. diced pimento
- 1-1/2 cups chopped broccoli
- 1 cup chopped imitation crab
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 T. minced onion
- 1 unbaked 10-inch pie shell

Mix together first 5 ingredients; set aside. Combine broccoli, crab, cheeses and onion; spread in piecrust. Pour liquid mixture over all. Bake at 350°F. for 50 to 55 minutes. Let cool 10 to 15 minutes before cutting.

Barbara Angerhofer, Hendricks, MN

Tilapia Parmesan

- 2 lbs. tilapia fillets
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 T. mayonnaise
- 4 T. butter, room temperature
- 3 T. finely chopped onions
- 1/4 tsp. dried basil

In a buttered 9x13-inch baking dish, lay fish fillets in a single layer. Do not stack fillets. Brush with juice. Bake at 350°F. for 10 to 20 minutes or until fish flakes. Meanwhile, combine cheese, mayonnaise, butter, onions and basil. Spread cheese mixture on fish fillets and bake an additional 5 minutes or until golden brown.

Cortney Reedy, Tea, SD

Please send your favorite appetizer, beverage, casserole or dairy recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3).

Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2019. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and co-op name.

Conde Ambulance Gets New Life

Three Electric Co-ops Provide Donations For New EMT Training and Equipment

Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Conde has a volunteer ambulance service. Just six months ago, that simple statement did not seem like it would be a reality in the small Spink County community. The Conde Ambulance service was faced with a shrinking number of trained volunteer Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). There was a real risk that the ambulance - which serves a 250 square mile area in Brown, Spink, Clark, and Day counties - would have to close. That is the reason Conde Fire Chief Dave DeBarge began an effort last August to breathe new life into the service.



Northern Electric CEO/General Manager Char Hager (left) and Board of Directors member Vic Fischbach (middle) present Conde Ambulance Administrator Cassie Haskell (middle) and Conde Fire Chief David DeBarge with three donations totalling \$6,700.

“We just did not want to lose the ambulance. That is what it boils down to.”

“We just didn’t want to lose the ambulance. That is what it boils down to,” DeBarge said.

DeBarge and Conde Ambulance Administrator and Registered Nurse Cassie Haskell began a campaign to tell local community

members that the service was at serious risk of shutting down. The news encouraged ten new volunteers to step up this fall and serve as volunteer EMTs.

“It was an opportunity to help out our local community along with the surrounding communities,” volunteer Justin Bucholz said.

Justin Bucholz, his dad Dave Bucholz, and his mother Lillie Bucholz live in Doland. They are among the ten volunteers who raised their hands to serve when they heard about the situation. Lillie works in Conde and all three Bucholz family members currently serve on the Doland Volunteer Fire Department so they wanted to help out in their neighboring community of Conde as well.



Conde Fire Chief David DeBarge displays some of the equipment purchased to train new EMTs.



Conde Fire Chief David DeBarge (right) talks to new volunteers Dave Bucholz (left), Lillie Bucholz (middle), and Justin Bucholz (middle) in the Conde Ambulance garage.

“It all comes down to looking out for your neighbor,” Dave Bucholz said. “It’s something that needs to be done so you do it.”

As volunteers began to step up to fill the gap, the focus shifted to raising money to pay for the training and equipment for the new EMTs. Nearly \$20,000 in donations was needed by the end of 2018 to ensure the new volunteers would have all the necessary resources to serve the more than 250 square mile coverage area. More than \$5,000 was raised from community members in the Conde area and the Spink County Commission approved a \$10,000 grant in December. The rest of the money was donated by three local electric co-ops including Northern Electric Cooperative.

“I’m grateful for those who stepped up and especially grateful for those who stepped up to fund this,” Haskell said.

Northern Electric, East River Electric Power Cooperative, and Basin Electric Power Cooperative teamed up to contribute \$6,700 to Conde Ambulance to train and equip the new volunteers. It was an important donation to support a critical service.

“Safety is a top priority for our local electric co-ops,” Northern Electric Cooperative CEO/General Manager Char Hager said. “We have members, employees, and linemen who live and work in the

areas served by the Conde Ambulance. It was absolutely important to support ambulance service in this rural part of our service territory.”

The money will be used to cover the cost of EMT training courses, personal protective equipment (PPE), and medical bags for the ten new volunteers.

According to ambulance officials, if there was not a service in Conde patients would have to wait 45 minutes or more for an ambulance to respond from Aberdeen, Redfield, or Webster.

“I have three kids at home and I guarantee someday we’ll need the ambulance,” Haskell said. “To see the volunteers step up has been overwhelming.”

The new volunteers are currently going through a ten-week training and certification course on Saturdays and Sundays with an instructor from Aberdeen Fire and Rescue. The volunteers are expected to finish their training by the middle of March. Conde Ambulance officials are grateful their community stepped up to save the service.

“We have that second chance now,” DeBarge said.

A second chance to serve their neighbors and save lives.

“I have three kids at home and I guarantee someday we’ll need the ambulance. To see the volunteers step up has been overwhelming.”



Rushmore Electric's Mike Bowers, fifth from left, is one of 17 members of the Rapid City YMCA board of directors.

LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Co-op Leaders Contribute to Local Boards, Youth Programs and More

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sdrea.coop

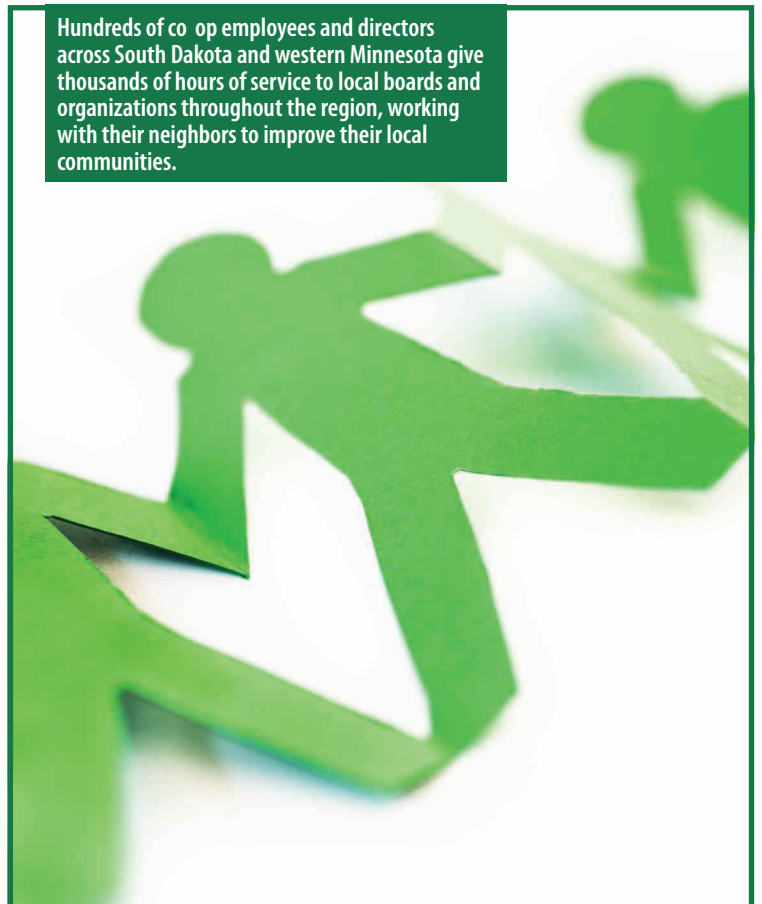
When cooperatives say they are committed to their communities, it's not just lip service. It's service rooted in fact.

From city councils, township boards and county commissions to school boards, church boards and other community organizations, co-op employees and directors are answering the call to serve on boards of various shapes and sizes.

Some specialize, focusing their involvement in one arena. Others are generalists, taking the skills and lessons they've learned through their roll at their local electric cooperative and translating it to benefit their local community through involvement on several boards and groups.

For much of his co-op career, Mike Bowers has also served on boards associated with the Rapid City YMCA. Bowers, the manager of Rushmore Engineering, a part of Rushmore

Hundreds of co-op employees and directors across South Dakota and western Minnesota give thousands of hours of service to local boards and organizations throughout the region, working with their neighbors to improve their local communities.



Electric Power Cooperative in Rapid City, has spent 20 years on the YMCA building committee. He's also been a part of the YMCA board of directors for 10 years, serving as secretary and board chairman.

But, his Y involvement has even deeper roots.

"I grew up with the Y," said the Wisconsin native. "I've been a Y member here for 42 years. I joined the Y the first month I was in town and never looked back."

Bowers said the YMCA's commitment to people in the community is appealing and resonates well with the work of electric cooperatives.

"Both invest in the community, absolutely," Bowers said. "The YMCA is very much a cooperative structure; not-for-profit, open to all and every member is an owner, if you stop to think about it."

The Rapid City YMCA and the Rapid City Area Schools are in the midst of a \$10 million renovation of a 68,000 square foot building in downtown Rapid City that once housed an electric and gas utility company. When completed, the facility will house YMCA early childhood development and also provide

infant childcare as well as hold school district administrative offices.

The facility, which is slated to open in August, will be known as the Rapid City Education Center. It recently secured \$1.1 million in funding from the Rapid City Vision Fund.

We all need to be involved and give back to the community.

"The Rapid City Education Center will more than double our capacity for childcare," Bowers said.

Bowers sums up his work with the YMCA succinctly.

"This is the way I want to be involved and give back," said Bowers.

Bowers is not alone in his commitment to his local community.

From youth wrestling, basketball, baseball and football programs to coaching varsity-level sports and serving as

referees, co-op employees and directors are working alongside their neighbors to ensure these programs succeed.

You'll also find co-op employees and directors setting aside their co-op hats to take on the work of members of school boards at several districts across the state.

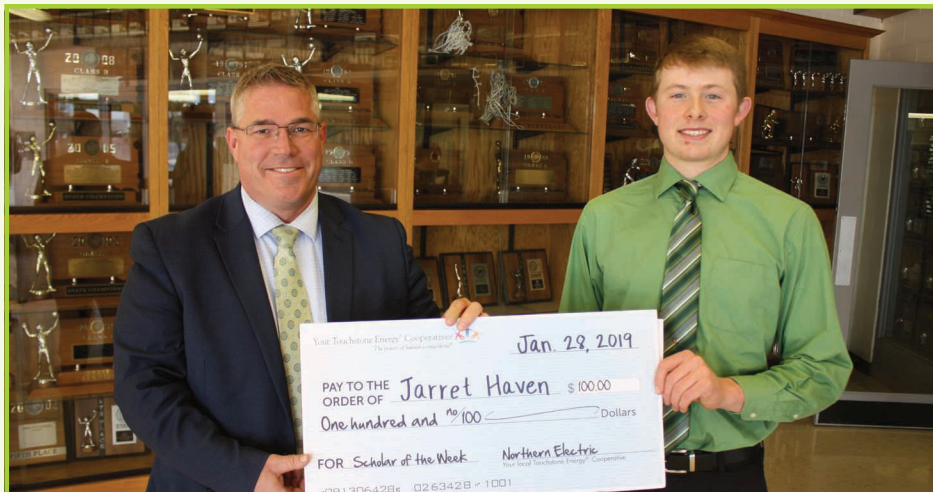
Dozens of co-op employees serve as trustees and council members of towns and communities across the state. More than a dozen township boards are comprised of officers who work for electric cooperatives or who serve as a director for an electric cooperative. County commissions from Custer County in the west to Grant County in the northeast – and a few counties in between – have co-op employees and directors serving on their governing boards.

And, the work doesn't stop there. You'll find co-op directors and employees in service organizations like Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis, on in veteran's organizations like the American Legion and VFW, church boards, airport, library and transportation boards.

As Bowers notes, "We all need to be involved and give back to the community."



Chris Larson, General Manager of Clay-Union Electric Corporation in Vermillion, moderates the District 17 Legislative Public Forum held in October. Larson is member of the VDCD Governmental Affairs Committee, which hosted the candidate forum. Candidates present were, from left, Gregory Baldwin, Ray Ring, John Gors and Howard Grinager. Arthur Rusch attended by phone.



Northern Electric Board of Directors member Vic Fischbach presents Northwestern Area High School senior Jarret Haven with a \$100 check for being named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week on January 28.

Jarret Haven Named Scholar of the Week

Northwestern Area High School senior Jarret Haven would like to own and manage his own farm someday, but right now he is focusing on his studies.

“The best investment I can make is in myself,” Haven said. “So, I have to focus on school while I’m still young.”

Haven is excelling at school with just four months left before high school graduation. The Brentford senior has a 4.0-grade point average and was named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week on January 28. Haven participates in several extracurricular activities at Northwestern Area High School including cross country, basketball, track, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), and the Future Farmers of America (FFA).

“It’s a lot of time management. I’m always busy with something. There is never a dull moment,” Haven said.

Haven is also getting a jump start on his future career. In January, he received the FFA District 6 Star Farmer award and will move on to compete for the South Dakota

Star Farmer Award from FFA later this year.

Haven also manages a herd of 30 meat goats. He raises the goats and shows them for 4-H or sells them to other farmers. Haven says fitting in all of his school work, extracurricular activities, and responsibilities on the farm can be challenging.

“It’s pretty tough. I’ve got to be pretty good with managing my time,” Haven said.

After high school Haven will pursue a degree in Farm and Ranch Management from North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton, North Dakota. He hopes to come home to work on the family farm in Brentford after college with the goal of owning and raising his own crops and livestock in the future.

Haven received a \$100 check from Northern Electric Cooperative and was featured on KSFY News for being named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week. Haven is the second student within the Northern Electric service territory to be named the Scholar of the Week for the 2018-2019 school year.

2018-2019 Scholar of Week Winners

(March - May 2019 Winners TBA)

- **Kim Weber (Sept. 3)**
Parkston High School
- **Faith Tyler (Sept. 10)**
Wagner High School
- **Abby Dethlefsen (Sept. 17)**
Corsica-Stickney High School
- **Lexi Larsen (Sept. 24)**
Lake Preston High School
- **Jack Olson (Sept. 31)**
Rutland High School
- **Morgan Roe (Oct. 8)**
Florence High School
- **Katie Wollschlager (Oct. 15)**
Milbank High School
- **Lucas Breske (Oct. 22)**
Waubay High School
- **Audrey Cihak (Oct. 29)**
Aberdeen Central High School
- **Olivia Gohl (Nov. 5)**
Ipswich High School
- **Kelsi Nooney (Nov. 12)**
Scotland High School
- **Alex Maas (Nov. 19)**
Dakota Christian School
- **Justin Sorensen (Nov. 26)**
Vermillion High School
- **Brayden Schneider (Dec. 3)**
Chester Area High School
- **Allison Young (Dec. 10)**
Sioux Falls Christian High School
- **Jayla Porsch (Dec. 17)**
Elkton High School
- **Sydney Tlam (Jan. 7)**
Mount Vernon High School
- **Kassidy Clark (Jan. 14)**
Corsica-Stickney High School
- **Maggie Huizenga (Jan. 21)**
Platte-Geddes High School
- **Jarret Haven (Jan. 28)**
Northwestern Area High School
- **Janae Kolden (Feb. 4)**
Clark High School
- **Codi Schmidt (Feb. 11)**
DeSmet High School
- **Jamie Bludorn (Feb. 18)**
Webster Area High School
- **Antonia Block (Feb. 25)**
Wilmot High School
- **Lauren Wittler (March 4)**
Sully Buttes High School
- **Alyssa Meyer (March 11)**
Faulkton High School



South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem addresses co-op members gathered at the SDREA Annual Meeting in Pierre on January 11.

Images Courtesy: SD Rural Electric Association

SDREA Annual Meeting

New Governor Kristi Noem Addresses Co-op Members

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem talked about economic development and the future of the state when she addressed a crowd of more than 300 electric co-op leaders at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association Annual Meeting in Pierre. The new South Dakota governor spoke to those attending the SDREA meeting on January 11, which was less than a week after Noem's inauguration.

Governor Noem stressed the important role electric co-ops play in bringing new value-added agriculture and economic development projects to rural areas. Noem said her administration will target those projects during her time in office.

"You are a key part of that plan," Noem told the electric co-op members attending the SDREA Annual Meeting.

Noem stressed the important role electric co-ops play in bringing new value-added agriculture and economic development projects to rural areas.

United States Senator Mike Rounds also addressed the co-op members gathered



U.S. Senator Mike Rounds addresses members at the SDREA Annual Meeting.

in Pierre for the meeting. Rounds said electric co-ops improve rural living in South Dakota.

"You serve a huge and significant portion of the entire state," Rounds said. "Can you imagine what the quality of life would be in South Dakota if it wasn't for rural electrics? Think of how many families would see their children wanting to return to the farm if we did not have that quality of life."

Co-op leaders gathered for the meeting also met with state lawmakers during the SDREA Annual Meeting which was held on January 10-11.

Northern Electric Line Foremen David Appel and Jerry Weber were recognized during the meeting for their 35 years of service to the cooperative.

Kimball School received \$1,000 from Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program to update their former playground for safety, entertainment and school pride.



MAKING CHANGE

Contributions by Co-op Members Add Up for Good

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sirea.coop

Thirty years ago, South Carolina's Palmetto Electric Cooperative conceived of an idea to benefit residents in the three counties it serves. By having members round up their monthly electric bills, co-op members could have a lasting impact on charitable groups in the area.

Since that beginning in 1989, Operation Round Up® has been an incredibly successful way in which the co-op and its members have been able to help the less fortunate in their community. Through Operation Round Up, Palmetto Electric automatically rounds up a participating member's electric bills to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumer's monthly bill of \$52.73 would be automatically rounded up to \$53, with the additional 27 cents going to the Operation Round Up fund. On an annual basis, the co-op is able to donate roughly \$6 for each participating customer – and that pool of money is then allocated to a variety of worthy causes throughout their service area.

The concept spread nationwide and today, several cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota have the program.



Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program awarded \$2,300 to Helping with Horsepower, a therapeutic riding program at Reclamation Ranch outside of Mitchell, S.D., for a lift that allows wheelchair-bound clients to ride horses.

Since 2000, members at Sioux Valley Energy have awarded more than \$1.5 million to community groups, including funding more than \$10,000 in scholarships each year to members and their children.

Across the border at Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative in Tyler, Minn., their Operation Round Up board funds grant requests ranging from fire department requests to school and other educational requests.

Danube, Minn.-based Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association is launching its Operation Round Up in June.

“All co-ops adhere to the seven cooperative principles, including “Concern for Community.” The Operation Round Up® program is the perfect embodiment of this core principle,” said Lenae Wordes, Renville-Sibley’s communications manager. “The average co-op member donates \$6 with a maximum possible contribution of \$11.88 per year. This may not seem like a large amount, but when combined with nearly 1,900 of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power member accounts, it adds up to make an impact.”

“Renville-Sibley’s program will operate



with a board of trustees that is different from the board of directors for the electric co-op. This allows a group of members to focus on the mission of representing our communities,” said Wordes.

In the Watertown, S.D., area, Codington-Clark Electric’s Operation Round Up has helped 4-H clubs, a child hunger group and a local living history fair.

Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., awarded \$12,500 to 10 groups in November 2018. Among the groups receiving funding were community improvement associations and community centers, speed meters for two cities, 4-H, Habitat for Humanity and other groups. Since launching the program in 2015, the program has made \$72,500 in awards.

“Applications typically come from volunteers in your community who feel strongly about a project and making a difference,” said Courtney Deinert, Central’s manager of communications.

For the past 10 years, members of Oahe Electric Cooperative in Blunt, S.D., have distributed more than \$92,000 to groups and organizations in Hughes and Sully counties. The money raised has helped volunteer fire departments, animal rescue shelters and other groups selected by the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees.

At Elk Point, S.D., Union County Electric Cooperative started its program in 2018. This year, it awarded \$4,000 to four organizations including the local historical society, the Boys and Girls Club, an animal rescue and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars group.

Co-op members at West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D., are also involved. In 2018, the Operation Round Up fund awarded more than \$8,200 to groups ranging from rodeo booster clubs and cemetery associations to ambulance services, athletic groups and pre-school and community groups. One award helped purchase a heater for the New Underwood city pool.

Contact your local cooperative to find out what ways they are involved in their communities and how to participate.



The Letcher, S.D., 4-H “Kids Kountry Club” breaks ground on their new playground area after receiving a \$3,500 Operation Round Up grant from Central Electric Cooperative members.

Fighting to Keep the Lights On

Paul Wesslund

NRECA

Did you know squirrels, lightning and trees have something in common? They can knock out your electricity.

Electric cooperatives work hard to keep your lights on all the time, but “you’re going to have power outages, and that’s just the way it is,” says Tony Thomas, senior principal engineer with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

An electric utility’s basic job of keeping the power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also means battling the unpredictable. Thomas cites the top three troublemakers to electric reliability as trees falling on power lines and other interferences from vegetation, lightning strikes and animals going about their daily routines, especially squirrels chewing on electrical equipment.

“Utilities do an awfully good job,” says Thomas. “But Mother Nature gets in the way sometimes.”

Humans contribute to power outages as well, with vandals deliberately damaging electrical equipment and drivers accidentally crashing into utility poles.

Statistics say the lights are almost always on.

Numbers collected from electric utilities show that power in the United States is incredibly reliable. According to these figures, the percentage of time that the average American has electricity at the flip of a switch is 99.97... oh forget it, you get the idea. Thomas says what’s most important to know about those numbers is that they don’t change much.

“I don’t see big swings from year to year,” says Thomas. “If things are fairly consistent, that means the utility is operating about as efficiently as it can.”

But utilities still try to improve on that reliability. Among the techniques being used to foil critter catastrophes are snake



When it comes to electric reliability, the biggest challenge is maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation’s electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines.

barriers around substations, buzzard shields on transmission towers and mesh coverings on wood poles to protect them from woodpeckers.

For some of the other causes of outages like trees and lightning, there’s now an app for that.

Utilities operate extensive right-of-way programs to keep vegetation away from power lines, from clearing underbrush to publicity campaigns asking people not to plant trees where they can fall on power lines. These days, those efforts can be aided by digital software that forecasts the growth of trees and other plants so that utilities can prune branches before they cause a problem.

Other software tries to manage lightning by analyzing the age and wear on the utility’s equipment that minimizes the damage from lightning strikes so it can be

replaced before it fails.

Fighting storms and squirrels are two ways to keep the power on, but by far the biggest part of reliability comes from the decades of building, maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation’s electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines. Banks of substations and transformers step-down that voltage to send it to homes and businesses through 5.5 million miles of local distribution lines.

Keeping that network up and running calls for a lot of planning among utilities to anticipate how electricity will be used in the future. Part of that reliability planning has focused on protecting the electricity system from computer-based digital attacks.



Electric cooperatives' top priority of keeping power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also requires preparing for the unpredictable. Electric co-ops are winning the reliability battles against the top three troublemakers: storms, squirrels and hackers.

The never-ending job of cyber security

Bridgette Bourge is among those over-seeing how digital technology affects reliability for electric co-ops and their consumer-members. As director of government affairs for NRECA, she sees both the positives and the negatives to the latest internet-based, or cyber, technology.

“Cyber helps a lot on reliability because it gives us the ability to monitor and know everything right away,” she says. “But whenever you increase reliability through a technology, you do potentially open up vulnerabilities as well from the security angle.”

For any organization, including electric utilities, the benefits of the internet come infested with mischief makers. Bourge says it's routine for a company to receive tens of thousands of attempts each day to break into its computer network. Those “knocks” at the cyber door can come from individuals, countries and organizations, or from the army of automated “bots” roaming the internet worldwide, testing for weaknesses where a hacker could enter.

For a utility, a troublemaker inside the computer network could affect electric service, and that's why NRECA has organized a variety of cyber reliability programs.

Bourge says those cyber reliability programs aim to help protect against a range of threats, from broad attempts to shut down parts of the electric grid, to more focused efforts to corrupt pieces of software used by electric cooperatives.

As community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.

NRECA's cyber protection efforts include a national program of working closely with the nation's electric co-ops to share the techniques for protecting utility systems from internet invaders. NRECA also works closely with federal government cybersecurity groups in the Department of Energy and the Department of Homeland Security.

NRECA is also part of a national program to create a cyber mutual assistance agreement. Much like how groups of line-

workers from an electric co-op travel to help restore power after a hurricane, these cyber agreements would be able to utilize teams of information technology experts in the case of a cyber incident.

“You can't solve cybersecurity,” says Bourge. “No matter what you do today, the bad guys are going to figure out a way around it tomorrow. You have to keep thinking about the next step.”

Bourge sees electric co-ops as well-placed to pay attention to cybersecurity. She says as community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.

“Electric cooperatives take cybersecurity very seriously,” says Bourge. “It's built into their DNA.”

Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

December 15-March 31

South Dakota snowmobile trails season, Lead, SD, 605-584-3896

February 23

Annual Outhouse Races and Chili Cook-off Contest, Nemo, SD, 605-578-2708

March 1-2

Mardi Gras Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

March 9-10

2019 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD, 605-441-8466 or 605-441-1216

March 9-10

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Davison County 4-H Grounds, Mitchell, SD, 605-630-2199

March 9-12

Summit League Basketball Championship, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

March 14-16

SD State Class A Boys Basketball Tournament, Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD

March 14-16

SD State Class AA Boys and Girls Basketball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD

March 16-17

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Codington City Ag Building, Watertown, SD, 605-793-2347

March 22

SPURS Spring Dance, 7 p.m., Dakota Event Center, Aberdeen, SD, To purchase tickets, call 605-226-1099 or stop by the Hitchin' Post, facebook.com/spursTRC



March 15-16
28 Below Fatbike Race,
Lead, SD, 605-584-3435

Photo courtesy: travelsouthdakota.com

March 22-23, 29-30

Mystery Dinner Theater, Legion Hall, Faulkton, SD, 605-380-1556

March 23

Ag Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

March 29-30, April 5-6

Annual Schmeckfest, Freeman, SD, 605-925-4237

March 29-31

Black Hills Home Builders Home Show, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-7850

March 30-31

29th Annual Hats Off to the Artist Art Show, Community Center, Faulkton, SD, 605-598-4482

April 4

McCrossan Banquet Auction featuring Loop Rawlins and the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena, Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets: \$75 each, 605-339-1203, www.mccrossan.org

April 4-5

Holiday Arts Spring Craft Show, Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

April 5-6

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

April 5-7, 11-14

Green Earth Players presents Drinking Habits, Palace Theatre, Luverne, MN, 507-283-9226

April 5-7

Professional Bull Riders Unleash the Beast Tour, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

April 13-14

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Rushmore Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-270-0764

April 18

John Mellencamp, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

May 1-5

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9454

May 11

Rescheduled Make-a-Wish Benefit Featuring Dueling Duel, Silent Auction and Wine Pull, Ramkota, Aberdeen, SD, 605-370-4588

July 27

16th Annual Make-a-Wish Poker Run, Starting at Biegler Motor Sports and ending at Harley Davidson, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-7262 or 605-228-0604

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.