

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

In pursuit of Walleye

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Yay! It is time to meet our members again at several upcoming area events



Ben Dunsmoor
Editor

I'm back into full event planning mode at the office.

For the last 16 months, there have been a lot of cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it has affected a lot of the public events we host every year. But, over the course of the next few months, those events are back on the calendar and we are ready to meet up with our members again!

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT - AUGUST 2

For the first time in two years, we will be participating in National Night Out at Melgaard Park in Aberdeen. This event was canceled in 2019 because of bad weather and it was canceled again last year because of the pandemic. National Night Out is hosted by the Aberdeen Police Department. It is an opportunity for the public to meet their local law enforcement officers and first responders and have some fun as a community.

One of the best parts of working for a co-op is meeting the members we serve. We have missed out on many of those opportunities over the past 16 months, but we are excited to meet up again.

Northern Electric participates in National Night Out to educate our members, and the public, about safety. National Night Out will be held on Tuesday, August 2, at Melgaard Park from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Northern Electric will have our new 'neon leon' power town

display at the park on August 2. The display uses light-up neon figurines to demonstrate the dangers of contacting overhead power lines. We look forward to showing it off and talking about safety.

BROWN COUNTY FAIR - AUGUST 19

Northern Electric Cooperative is teaming up with Lake Region Electric Association, FEM Electric Association, and Agtegra Cooperative to throw a Farm Safety Party at the Brown County Fair on August 19. We participated in this one-day safety event at the fair in 2019 and had a great turnout. We are excited to partner with these regional cooperatives again this year to teach kids and families about farm safety. More information about the Farm Safety Party can be found on **pages 6-7** of this issue.

74TH ANNUAL MEETING - SEPTEMBER 21

The 74th Annual Meeting of Northern Electric Cooperative will be held on Tuesday, September 21. We kept last year's meeting very basic to simply meet the requirements of our bylaws. However, this year we plan to bring back the meal and make the annual meeting a fun and family-friendly event again. We will be hosting this year's meeting at the headquarters building in Bath. This is a change from previous years, but we hope our members will find it convenient and interesting to visit the headquarters. There is still a lot of planning to do for the 74th annual meeting so we will fill you in on more of the details in next month's issue of *Cooperative Connections*.

One of the best parts of working for a cooperative is meeting the members we serve. We have missed out on many of those opportunities over the past 16 months, but we are excited to meet up again. See you soon!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Donna Sharp

Board of Directors

- Nolan Wipf - Vice President
- Ron Kaaz - Secretary
- Josh Larson - Treasurer
- Fran Esser
- Todd Hettich
- Kirk Schaunaman
- Mark Sumption
- Jeff Vander Wal

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

Chief Financial Officer: Cathi Podoll

Operations Manager: Jerry Weber

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.

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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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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held June 21, 2021, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Economic Development Manager Linda Salmonson and Business Development Director Mike Jaspers were guests for the meeting. As the first order of business, the board approved the May 20, 2021, minutes and May expenditures. The Board reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

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 the June 3, 2021, meeting. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC meeting held June 2, 2021. The next South Dakota Rural Electric Association Board Meeting will be June 24-25, 2021, in Pierre. Director Ronald Kaaz reported on the 2021 CFC Summer Summit, which was held June 14-16, San Antonio, TX.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Update on development projects.
- Update on Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) revolving loan fund.
- Reminded the board that nominating petitions are due July 23, 2021.
- Informed directors that they should choose a representative from each district for the Election and Credential Committee by the July board meeting.
- Calendar review of upcoming meetings and events.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Friday, July 30, 2021.
2. Approved payment of legal fees to Harvey Oliver for \$2,097.05.
3. Approved 13 estate requests for out-of-order capital credit retirements totaling \$30,999.61.
4. Approved Work Order Inventories #21-05 for \$858,708.40 and #21-05MC for \$7,609.94 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
5. Approved REED, Inc. Loan Application for Refuge Retreats, LLC.
6. Appointed director Todd Hettich to execute the ballot for the 2021 RESCO South Dakota Manager-Director Election.
7. Appointed Mark Sumption as Northern Electric's representative for the East River Resolutions Committee.
8. Authorized board attendance to the 34th American Coalition for Ethanol Conference, August 18-20, 2021, Minneapolis, MN.
9. Authorized board attendance to the 2021 NRECA Regional 5&6 Meeting, September 15-17, Minneapolis, MN and Online.
10. Authorized board attendance to the East River Annual Meeting, September 8, 2021, in Sioux Falls.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

	May-21	May-20
kWh Sales	21,612,273 kWh	21,947,622 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$2,131,141	\$2,014,257
Total Cost of Service	\$2,128,914	\$2,039,877
Operating Margins.....	\$2,227	(-\$25,620)
Year to Date Margins	\$149,454	\$226,569

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

MAY-2021.....	1,259 kWh.....	\$168.45.....	0.1338 per kWh
MAY-2020.....	1,891 kWh.....	\$205.41.....	0.1086 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 83.4% of NEC's total cost of service.

Prepare to protect your devices from power surges

A power surge, or transient voltage, is a sudden and unwanted increase in voltage that can damage, degrade or destroy sensitive electronic equipment in your home or business.

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association estimates that 60–80 percent of power surges are created within a building, such as when large appliances, like air conditioners, turn on and off. Far less common are surges that originate from an electric utility during power grid switching. The most powerful surges can be caused by lightning.

A spike in voltage can be harmful to electrical devices in your home if the increase is above a device's intended operating voltage. This excess voltage can cause an arc of electrical current resulting in heat that damages electrical components. Repeated small-scale surges may slowly damage your electronic equipment and shorten its life span.

Surge Protection Options - Consider protecting your devices and appliances with surge protection. Several levels of protection are available to consumers.

Point-of-use surge protectors protect only the items that are directly plugged into the device. They do not suppress or arrest a surge but divert the

surge to ground. Use point-of-use surge protectors that have an indicator light or audible alarm that alerts you when the surge protector needs replacement.

Service entrance surge protection devices are mounted in or on your main electrical panel or at the base of the electric meter and provide protection for your entire electrical system. These devices cover components that cannot be connected to a point-of-use device, such as outlets and light switches.

Power strips do NOT provide surge protection. Be sure you are relying on the appropriate device for protection.

And remember, power strips and surge suppressors don't provide more power to a location, only more access to the same limited capacity of the circuit into which it is connected. Be careful not to overload the circuit.

Unfortunately, no surge protection device on the market can handle a direct lightning strike. The best way to gird against surges caused by storms is to unplug devices.

SUMMER MEMORIES

Send us your favorite summer photos!



As we approach the end of summer, *Cooperative Connections* would love to see your favorite memories of the season captured in pixels.

We're holding a photo contest called "Summer Memories." Send us your top shot and you could be eligible to win a \$50 gift card!

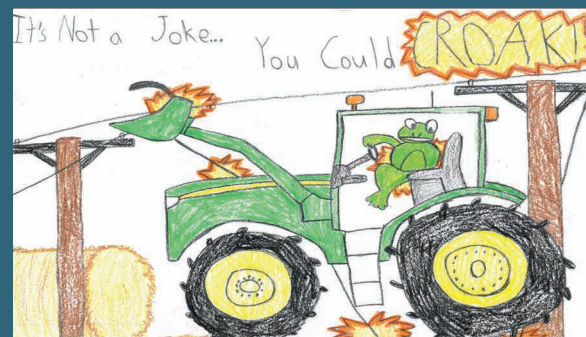
Here are the rules:

- One photo per entrant;
 - The deadline for entry is Aug. 27;
 - Finalist photos will appear in the October issue of *Cooperative Connections*;
 - Send your entry to editor@sdrea.coop.
- Good luck!

Hope Haven fundraising event Sept. 11

Hope Haven will hold a fundraising event on Sept. 11 at Talsma's Trail Park in Avon. The organization offers services and support for children, adults and families, including physical, mental, intellectual, residential, vocational and spiritual needs. For more information, visit www.hopehaven.org.

Hope Haven was misidentified in the July issue of *Cooperative Connections*.



It's not a joke...you could croak!

Creighton Werning, 4th Grade

Creighton is a fourth grade student at Parkston. He and his family live in Emery and are members of Southeastern Electric.

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.

PERFECT PASTA

PAPPARDELLE

Ingredients:

Salted water
 3 tbsp olive oil
 3 tbsp shallots, minced
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1/4 tsp chili flakes
 1 cup white wine
 2 cups pappardelle noodles
 3/4 cup vegetable stock
 3 tbsp capers (optional)
 2 vine-ripened tomatoes, sliced in wedges
 1 handful baby kale
 1 fresh lemon, juice only
 2 tbsp butter (optional)
 sea salt, to taste
 fresh ground black pepper, to taste
 1 handful fresh basil, torn

METHOD

Bring large pot of salted water to boil. In fry pan on medium-high heat, add olive oil and onions; saute 2 minutes. Lower heat slightly and add garlic and chili flakes. Saute on medium heat 2-3 minutes. Add white wine and deglaze pan. Cook 3 minutes. Remove from heat, keep warm until ready to add freshly cooked pasta. In pot of boiling water, add pappardelle. Cook according to instructions then drain. Place fry pan back on medium heat. Add drained pasta; vegetable stock; capers, if desired; tomatoes; baby kale; and lemon juice. Add butter, if desired, toss well. Cook 2-3 minutes, tossing occasionally, and season with salt and pepper, to taste, and basil. Toss again, remove from heat and serve.

Rouxbe.com

SUMMER GARDEN PASTA SALAD

1 # thin spaghetti, broken into 1" pieces
 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
 2 zucchini, peeled & diced
 2 cucumbers, diced
 1 green pepper, diced
 1 red pepper, diced
 1 (16 oz.) can sliced black olives, drained

Dressing:

1 (16 oz.) bottle Italian dressing
 1/4 c parmesan cheese
 1 T sesame seeds
 1 tsp paprika
 1/2 tsp celery seed
 1/2 tsp garlic salt

METHOD

Cook pasta and drain. Drizzle with small amount of olive oil to prevent sticking and stir to combine. Combine pasta with veggies and black olives. Whisk dressing ingredients together. Pour over salad ingredients and toss until coated. Cover and refrigerate 3 hours or overnight.
Jane Ham, Rapid City

PIZZA NOODLE HOT DISH

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
 1/2 c. chopped onion
 1 jar pizza sauce
 Salt and pepper to taste
 3 c. noodles, cooked and drained
 1 jar spaghetti sauce
 1 pkg. pepperoni slices
 Mozzarella cheese for top

METHOD

Mix ingredients together and put in a greased 9 x 13 pan. Bake at 350* for 20 minutes. Sprinkle 8 oz. of mozzarella cheese on top and place back in oven to melt.

JOAN ANTONEN, ARLINGTON

SPAGHETTI PIZZA

Ingredients:

1/2 lb spaghetti
 4 eggs
 1 c. milk
 Salt & pepper
 7 oz. pepperoni
 1/2 lb hamburger
 1/2 lb pork sausage
 1 onion
 1 lg jar spaghetti sauce
 2 c. mozzarella cheese

METHOD

Cook spaghetti, drain, and put in the bottom of a 9x13 casserole dish. Mix eggs, milk, salt, and pepper to taste and pour over noodles. Spread pepperoni over the above. Brown hamburger, sausage, and onion and put over pepperoni. Pour spaghetti sauce over all. Sprinkle mozzarella on top. Bake at 350° for 45 min.

Ruth Morman, Volin

Please send your favorite 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 December 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Farm safety at the fair

Electric cooperatives teaming up with Agtegra Cooperative to host farm safety event for kids at the Brown County Fair on Thursday August 19

Large equipment, big grain bins, and high-voltage electricity can be found on the typical family farm in South Dakota. All those things play a key role in increasing efficiency and productivity, but farm machinery also needs to be treated with respect and operated in a safe manner. It is the reason Agtegra Cooperative and three local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are

teaming up to host a Farm Safety Party for kids and families at the 2021 Brown County Fair.

Northern Electric Cooperative along with FEM Electric Association and Lake Region Electric Association are partnering with Agtegra Cooperative to bring an electrical safety component to the four-hour farm safety event on August 19.

“Electricity powers many aspects of farm life but it is also a major

hazard on the farm,” Northern Electric Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor said. “We hope to teach kids about the importance of staying safe around power lines through several fun and interactive demonstrations.”

The Farm Safety Party will feature a ‘power town’ display. The display depicts a rural farm scene and uses small figurines and toy tractors to demonstrate the dangers of contacting power lines.

“The ‘power town’ display is a good way to show kids and families the importance of keeping a safe distance from overhead lines,”

LEFT: Brett Kwasniewski of Lake Region Electric Association (right) shows a family the importance of staying safe around electricity with the 'power town' display at the 2019 Farm Safety Party. RIGHT: A Farm Safety Party participant tries on safety gear. BELOW: Families enjoy the Farm Safety Party at the 2019 Brown County Fair. **Courtesy: Agtegra Cooperative**



Dunsmoor said. The free Farm Safety Party includes several other activities to teach families about safety and the various hazards they can encounter on the farm. The Farm Safety Party will feature an ATV safety simulator, a safety gear dress-up booth, and a grain sensory station.

“Throughout our territory, children are surrounded by farms, equipment and livestock. By throwing a Farm Safety Party, we created a fun environment to educate hundreds of children on the basics of farm safety,” Brittney Bulson with Agtegra Cooperative said.

The Farm Safety Party will be held in the ‘Kid’s Zone’ at the Brown County Fair which is on the southwest side of the Holum Expo Building. There will also be face painting and several safety-themed giveaways available for kids and adults. The party gets started at 10 a.m. on Thursday, August 19, and it will continue until 2 p.m. in the afternoon. The event is free and is open to anyone who is attending the Brown County Fair.



FARM SAFETY PARTY

@ THE BROWN COUNTY FAIR



AUGUST 19

Kid’s Zone @ Brown County Fair

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

- **Electrical Safety**
- **ATV Safety**
- **Safety Gear Dress Up**

presented by:



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

In hot pursuit of Walleye



Aydan Johnson landed this Walleye on his 12th birthday at Cow Creek north of Pierre. Photos by Billy Gibson

SD anglers pursue walleye for fun and charity

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Walleye fishing isn't always all about fishing for walleye.

That was the case at the annual SDREC Employee and Vendor Walleye Fishing Tournament held earlier this summer at the Cow Creek Recreation Area north of Pierre. For most of the more than 100 walleye whisperers who participated, the event was mostly about hanging out together, swapping fish tales - some of them true - and catching up with one another.

The tournament also raised \$500 for the state's rural electric cooperative Line Patrol charity.

For Evan Buckmiller, general manager at Kingsbury Electric Cooperative in DeSmet, the tournament presented a prime opportunity to spend time with family and interact with his cooperative colleagues. While his team failed to place, he enjoyed being out on the water with his wife and dad.

"It was a little hot, but we had beautiful weather and caught a lot of fish...just not as many as we wanted," said Buckmiller. "I'd never been a part of this event, so it was fun seeing all the boats taking off at the same time. It was also good to see people you don't normally get to see, or you haven't seen since you worked a storm together years ago. You get to connect with your friends and linemen you went to school with. That's the fun part about events like this."

Roger Crom, former manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, served as a volunteer to help coordinate the event. Crom said while he likes to fish, he takes satisfaction with staying on dry land and meeting the competitors as they come in to weigh their catch and tell of their exploits on the lake.



The dawning of a new summer day brings the promise of fun and a full string of walleye by the afternoon.

“I just enjoy being a part of it every year,” Crom said. “It’s a lot of fun getting together with old friends and meeting new friends and getting to know the young linemen that are now part of the program. It’s not just one or two co-ops, it’s like a big family that comes out year after year. There’s a lot of camaraderie. Everybody works together and we also have a lot of fun together.”

For the record, the winning team of Roger Squires, Ryan Squires and Ron Koosman took top honors, despite temperatures soaring into the 90s and water levels that were unusually low. The crew representing H-D Electric and Dueco prevailed over a field of more than 30 teams with a total weight of 18.03 lbs. Their largest walleye weighed in at 3.05 lbs.

The East River Electric team of Tim Dockendorf, Doug Engbrecht



Crew members of the Captain Crawdaddy prepare to launch at Cow Creek.

and Robert Hanson landed the largest walleye at 4.04 lbs. (Search YouTube for Cooperative Connections Plus to see a video of the event.)

It’s no secret that the Missouri River system boasts some of the best walleye fishing in North America and is one of the top walleye habitats on the continent.

While there are many other walleye fishing tournaments held throughout the state in the spring and fall, one that stands out is the Tom and Matt Hill Memorial Tournament.

The fifth annual event, set for July 31 at the West Whitlock Recreation Area near Gettysburg, is held each year in honor of the Hill brothers who died in a boating accident on Brush Lake in December of 2016.

Born and reared in Volga, the siblings were avid hunters and fishermen. They were finishing up a day of duck hunting and were heading back to the landing to meet their father when their boat suddenly capsized.

The tournament is held to raise funds to support local youth outdoor programs in honor of the brothers. Proceeds have gone toward purchasing safety hunting vests for youngsters, hunting gear and safety training.

Sheila Gross, Energy Services Specialist at Sioux Valley Energy in

It’s no secret that the Missouri River system boasts some of the best walleye fishing in North America.

Colman, lost her brother and great-nephew in a fishing accident in January. As word spread, friends and family of the Hill Memorial Tournament and Fishing 4 Miracles jumped into action with an outpouring of support to the Berwald family. To express their gratitude, several of Gross’ family members plan to participate in the tournament to help contribute to the safe enjoyment of fishing and hunting.

“The Hill Brothers Committee is an amazing group of people and they do so much to support the community and those who have been impacted by tragedy. They have blessed my family in our time of loss and have brought great comfort,” she said.

A rules meeting will take place on Friday, July 30, at the Whitlock Bay Supper Club. An open house will be held from 1-5 p.m. with a meal from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.



BUILD BINS SAFELY

It is important to build new grain bins the proper distance from nearby power lines

Electrical power is an indispensable part of modern agricultural operations. In fact, electricity is such a common part of a farm operation that it can all too easily become a part of the scenery and its hazards overlooked. One often overlooked safety consideration is the power line clearance required for grain bins.

Electrical hazards include large equipment and farm structures near overhead power lines. The best way to avoid problems is to keep equipment and new constructions a safe distance from power lines.

Equipment and vehicles, such as augers and grain trucks, around grain bins are particularly at risk of coming into contact with overhead power lines. It is important that bins be built a safe distance from power lines to help ensure the safety of all farm workers.

The National Electrical Safety Code sets the minimum distance that power lines must be above and around grain bins. It is best to contact Northern Electric Cooperative before construction of a

new grain bin begins.

Keep these additional safety tips in mind anytime you are operating large farm equipment around power lines.

- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from lines—at all times, in all directions.
- Inspect the height of the

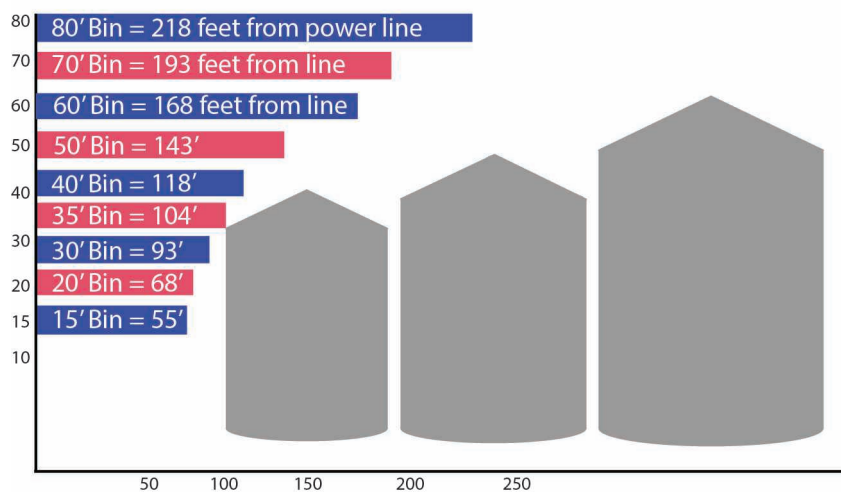
farm equipment to determine clearance.

- Always remember to lower extensions when moving loads.
- Use a spotter when operating large machinery near lines.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
- If a power line is sagging or low, contact Northern Electric Cooperative.

If equipment does come into contact with a power line, remember, stay on the equipment until co-op crews have arrived to de-energize the lines. Warn others to stay away, and call Northern Electric at 605-225-0310 immediately. The only reason to exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the ground and vehicle at the same time. Then, still keeping your feet together, ‘bunny hop’ away 40 feet to safety.

For more electrical safety information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Grain Bin Distance From Power Lines



*For bins filled by portable augers, conveyors or elevators



RE-ENERGIZING RENEWABLES

A GROWING GENERATION OF RENEWABLES

During 2020, your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative celebrated an exciting milestone: over 40% of our power generation came from renewable sources, including over 25% from wind energy.

And there's more to come! We're partnering with Basin Electric Power Cooperative to bring more solar projects to the region in the coming years.

We're committed to the future of carbon-free renewable energy, continuing to add new sources of reliable power while still providing some of the most stable rates in the area.



DID YOU KNOW: You can use up to 100% carbon-free renewable energy to power your home or business? Ask your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative about our Renewable Energy Credit program.



RV TRIPPING

RV campers make new friends and enjoy new experiences on the open road. *Photo by South Dakota Travel*

Vic and Barb Simmons adopt the RV lifestyle when visiting new places and creating lasting memories on the road

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Decisions, decisions...

When Vic Simmons starts to sense the allure of the open road, he has some decisions to make. He can crank up his Jeep Cherokee and join all the brand loyalists out there who rally around the phrase, "It's a Jeep thing: You wouldn't understand."

Or he could go grab his gloves and his riding gear, fire up his orange 2017 Harley-Davidson Street Glide and experience the wind rush and beauty of the natural landscape on two wheels. Or he can climb into the command-and-control center of his massive 40-foot Meridian "diesel pusher" motor coach.

But who wants to be burdened by making tough decisions when the highway is calling? Most of the time he makes it a little easier by attaching the bike or the Jeep and

heading out into the great wide open.

Simmons, who just turned 65, serves as general manager of Rushmore Electric in Rapid City. But he has plans of retiring early next year and that means lots of travel time in the future with his wife Barb and whoever else wants to join the adventure.

The passenger list usually includes a host of grandchildren as it has from the beginning of Simmons' foray into the world of recreational vehicles and RV life.

He and Barb invested in their first RV about 12 years ago by purchasing a pre-owned 32-foot Class C model Jamboree, the kind that's built on a truck chassis and resembles a van with a large camper shell and a sleeping chamber over the roof.

"When our three girls were little, Barb's parents used to take them

camping, and to this day they always talk about how much they enjoyed those trips," Simmons said. "So, when it came time for us to have grandkids, we wanted to have a way to create those same kinds of memories for our own grandchildren."

Inevitably, as the family grew the smaller that 32-foot camper became. Besides, the vehicle was a bit top-heavy and caused some white-knuckle driving in high winds, and according to Vic, "Barb's idea of roughing it is staying at a hotel without a swimming pool." So, after three summers an upgrade with more space and more amenities was in order, and Simmons graduated to a 37-foot motor coach.

After a few years, he sold that RV to Lacreek General Manager Josh Fanning, who used it for family vacations and to take his daughter to weightlifting and track competitions in far-flung places.

Soon afterwards, Vic and Barb acquired their "forever RV," a 40-foot Meridian they purchased



Vic Simmons of Rushmore Electric enjoys climbing behind the wheel and piloting his 40-foot recreational vehicle.

a few years ago when Vic began planning out his retirement.

Simmons, who prides himself on always buying pre-owned vehicles, purchased the RV sight-unseen... well almost.

"I found it at a dealership in Lincoln," he recalled. "It had 17,000 miles on it and looked like it was in good shape. My son-in-law was in Lincoln, so he went to the dealership and Facetimed me and walked through it and it looked nice. It was set up to pull the Jeep or the trailer for the motorcycle, so we got it. I don't usually do business like that, but..."

With Vic soon retiring and Barb already retired from her



Vic and Barb Simmons use their RV to visit new places and create lasting memories.

job as the pharmacy technician program director at Western Dakota Technical Institute, the two have lots of traveling plans in their future.

One hitch, however, is finding places to park. RV sales shot through the roof nationally last year as people sought to escape the confines of their homes under lock down conditions and explore the outdoors.

"You can hardly find any good camping spots," Simmons said. "Camping just became something that people felt safe doing, and it got them out of their homes. A neighbor of mine had a travel trailer for sale and it sold in just a few minutes after he posted it."

Simmons said his travel adventures have taken him from North Carolina on the eastern seaboard to Washington state on the Pacific, and also all the way down to El Paso.

His plan is to "go to places I haven't been," although when asked if there's one place he would like to re-visit he's quick with an answer.

"Door County in eastern Wisconsin. I just fell in love with the place," he said. "It's on the peninsula above Green Bay and is just gorgeous

'GREAT 8' UNIQUE RV CAMPGROUNDS IN SD

Here are the state's top eight unique campgrounds, according to the state Department of Tourism:

Wessington Springs City Park Campground

Wessington Springs

Castlewood City Park Municipal Campground

Castlewood

Lake Carthage Campground

Carthage

Custer's Gulch RV Park

Custer

Cedar Pass Campground

Badlands National Park

Rafter J Bar Ranch

Hill City

Fish 'N Fry Campground & RV Park

Deadwood

Rocky Point Recreation Area

Belle Fourche

with a beautiful campground and a friendly community and shops and restaurants on Sturgeon Bay. The sunrises and sunsets are awesome."

His plans for himself and Barb are the same he had for his grandchildren when he invested in his first RV: meet new people, explore new places and make lasting memories.

Oddly enough, many of those new people are encountered not at state parks, camp sites or in restaurants, but at the fuel pump.

"When you're driving a car and stop for gas, nobody will come up and talk to you," he said. "But if you're on a motorcycle or in an RV, it's amazing how many people want to come up and talk to you all the time about where you're going and where you've been. They also like to talk a lot about gas mileage."



South Dakota trucking industry keeps rolling along despite challenges

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

While the two major political parties bicker back and forth about addressing the nation's crumbling infrastructure, substandard roads and other federal issues can be a real problem for people like Mick O'Connor.

Owner of Mick O'Connor and Son Trucking operating out of Mitchell, he oversees a fleet of 11 haulers and dump trucks along with his wife, Carla, and his son, Mike.

Mick launched the business in 1972 and has faced all manner of obstacles and challenges dating back to the Middle East oil embargo back in the 1970s that brought fuel shortages and high prices.

Over the years, there have been strict permitting regulations, soaring insurance premiums and economic downturns. Having cleared all of those hurdles in the past, he was braced to contend with any problems brought by last year's global pandemic. Fortunately for O'Connor and others in the trucking industry in South Dakota, there were a few figurative bumps in the road but business soon kept rolling right along.

"We kept people socially distanced like everybody else," O'Connor said. "Our business wasn't impacted as negatively as some industries, so we were lucky in that regard."

The industry hasn't been completely unscathed, however. Like other business owners navigating

through the post-pandemic environment, O'Connor is having to face challenges such as finding qualified employees and dealing with supply shortages and kinks in the supply chain.

Specifically, O'Connor is keeping his attention focused on the tire market. With big rigs that have up to 18 axles and can weigh up to 195,000 lbs., O'Connor and other trucking company owners purchase plenty of tires.

For Barry Selland, owner of the family-owned Selland Trucking company out of Woonsocket, the immediate need is for vehicle parts. Looking to expand his fleet of 30 flatbed and step-deck rigs, Selland is awaiting delivery on three new Kenworth trucks.

"We're waiting on certain parts to arrive before we can get them here," said Selland, whose company specializes in hauling structural steel



More than 8 million workers are employed in the U.S. trucking industry.

and manufactured goods all across the country and into Canada. “A representative at Kenworth told me there are some headlight parts that have been on order since the first of the year. We had a water pump go out and there was only one pump in the six-state area.”

Selland admitted being surprised that the pandemic wasn’t more disruptive to his industry. At first, he said, he felt the situation was going to impact trucking as heavily as the economic recession did in 2008.

“Things quickly started to slow down and it felt like another recession was coming,” he said. “But

then, just as quickly as it slowed down, it picked back up again and just took off. And it’s been going great ever since. We’re getting good loads and doing a lot of business.”

Both O’Connor and Selland said a national dearth of qualified drivers and general labor shortages are problems not particular to the post-pandemic business world. One concern they share, however, is that the average age of available drivers is rising. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median age of a private fleet driver is 57 years old while drivers in training are at a median age of 35.

More than 3.5 million U.S. workers are employed as professional drivers with nearly 8 million employees in the industry, accounting for almost 6 percent of the workforce. Truckers log a combined 300 billion miles every year.

“There are always things to deal with,” Selland said. “But we’re optimistic about the future. People in this industry in South Dakota all work well together. We work with our state officials, law enforcement and others involved to make sure we continue to get products delivered where they need to be as safely and as efficiently as we can.”

QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLAR ENERGY? THE PUC HAS ANSWERS

Seeking answers about state laws and regulatory policies regarding solar energy and electric vehicles?

The South Dakota Public Service Commission (PUC) has put together a list of frequently asked questions on these topics and more.

PUC officials have indicated that ratepayer inquiries on these topics have increased over the past several months, so they drafted a document entitled “South Dakota Electric Service Laws” to edify utility customers and cooperative members.

Under the heading “Solar Energy” some of the subjects include:

- Solar leasing
- Solar power for your home

- What are the benefits of solar energy?

- What challenges does solar energy face?

- What do I need to know when considering or installing a solar energy system?

- What will I get paid for my solar generation?

The document also provides information on electric vehicle charging, such as where existing EV charging stations are located throughout the state and a summary of rules governing the establishment of charging stations by independent business owners.

According to Trevor Jones, general manager of the South Dakota Rural

Electric Association in Pierre, the PUC’s document will help deliver useful information to electric cooperative members.

“The legislature and the PUC are working very hard to establish rules and regulations in an industry that’s continuing to evolve at a very rapid pace,” he said. “They’re focused on making sure the guidelines are fair and consistent and take into consideration the challenges faced by utility providers to deliver affordable, accessible power balanced against the needs and expectations of consumers.”

The document can be found at <https://puc.sd.gov/Publications/electricsolarfaq.aspx>.

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August 26-29
58th Annual Steam
Threshing Jamboree
Photo by Travel South Dakota



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.

JULY 24
Make-A-Wish 18th Annual
'On the Road to Wishes'
Poker Run
Biegler's C&S Motorsports,
Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-7262

JULY 27-31
Days of '76 Rodeo & Parades
Various Locations, Deadwood,
SD, 605-578-1876

JULY 29, AUGUST 5, 19
The 1880 Train Old West
Shootout
222 Railroad Avenue,
Hill City, SD, 605-574-2222

JULY 31
Richmond Lake Association
Pontoon Poker Run
Richmond Lake, Aberdeen, SD,
605-377-4114

AUGUST 5-7
90th Anniversary Union
County Fair
The Fairgrounds, Alcester, SD,
605-356-2321

AUGUST 5-14
Sioux Empire Fair
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7178

AUGUST 6-7
Huron Senior Games
Various Locations, Huron, SD,
605-491-0635 or 605-353-8533

AUGUST 6-7
Potato Days
Citywide, Clark, SD,
605-360-7672

AUGUST 6-8
Annual Sioux River Folk
Festival
Newton Hills State Park,
Canton, SD, 605-261-7414

AUGUST 6-15
Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
Citywide, Sturgis, SD,
605-720-0800

AUGUST 11
Willie Nelson & Family
824 32nd Avenue, Brookings,
SD, 605-692-7539

AUGUST 12-15
Annual Custer County Fair
Custer County Fairgrounds,
Hermosa, SD, 605-255-4145
or 605-393-7055

AUGUST 13-15
Fort Pierre Trader Days &
Backyard BBQ Competition
Various Locations, Fort Pierre,
SD, 605-223-7603

AUGUST 17-19
Dakotafest
2300 E Spruce Street,
Mitchell, SD, 877-611-8161

AUGUST 20-22
Yankton Riverboat Days
City-wide, Yankton, SD,
605-665-1657

AUGUST 21
Dakota State Fair Speedway
Stock Car Races
South Dakota State
Fairgrounds, Huron, SD,
605-352-4848

AUGUST 25-29
Corn Palace Festival
604 N Main Street,
Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

AUGUST 26-29
58th Annual Steam
Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village, Madison, SD,
605-256-3644

SEPTEMBER 11
Lions Club Fall Rummage
Sales
City-wide, Groton, SD,
605-846-7607

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