

Cooperative Connections



Electricity in the classroom

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People behind the power

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Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.

Tips To Save Money And Stay Safe

Winter Survival Tips



Ben Dunsmoor

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When it comes to using energy, there are several safety precautions and steps you can take to be safer and more efficient during the coldest days of the year.

The bright lights of the holiday season have faded, and South Dakotans now face the cold and dark days of winter for the next few months. Winter provides the opportunity to participate in fun outdoor activities such as sledding, skating, skiing, and snowmobiling. But winter can also be harsh in South Dakota as it brings subzero wind chills and blizzards to the plains. When it comes to using energy, there are several safety precautions and steps you can take to be safer and more efficient during the coldest days of the year. Here are some tips to keep your family warm and safe all season long.

Electric Heat Rate Northern Electric Cooperative has an electric heat rate that is lower than the normal kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge. Co-op members who have a second meter – also known as a submeter - installed on their electric heating system only pay 4.7-cents per kWh for heat. If you have space heating equipment installed in your home that is 240-volts or more you could qualify for this rate. Call a Northern Electric Member Services Representative at 605-225-0310 to see if you qualify for this rate and can take advantage of the savings. There is no charge to investigate or install a submeter at a service location. However, there is a \$3 per month submeter charge for the equipment.

Turn Your Thermostat Down The recommended thermostat setting to keep you warm and comfortable during the winter without breaking the budget is 68 degrees Fahrenheit. According to the Department of Energy this is the optimal setting to save energy throughout the winter. It is also recommended to use a programmable thermostat to set the temperature even lower during the day when no one is home. The thermostat can be programmed to warm a home back up to 68 degrees before everyone arrives home at the end of the day.

Spin Your Ceiling Fan in Reverse Did you know that you can change the direction your ceiling fans spin? Ceiling fans are mostly used in the summer to keep you cool but you can also reverse the direction of the fan to push warm air into a room. You can reverse the direction of the fan by flipping a switch that is typically located on the motor housing above the blades. The fan should spin clockwise on the lowest setting in the winter to push warm air trapped near the ceiling down into the room. But do not forget to switch the direction of the fan in the spring so it keeps you cool during the hottest months of the year.

Be Aware When Plowing Snow It is also important to keep safety in mind during the winter. Make sure you are aware of any electrical cabinets, poles, or wires located on your property when you are clearing snow. Snow can bury electrical equipment which can lead to accidents with plows or tractors. Mark these electrical hazards and always shovel by hand around this equipment.

Following a few of these electrical tips can help you save money and stay safe as we hunker down for the next few months and look forward to warmer spring days.



(USPS 396-040)

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NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Bath, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held December 21 at the Dakota Event Center (DEC) in Aberdeen with all directors present. Power System Engineering Inc. Vice President of Economics, Rates, and Business Planning Rich Macke was a guest for the meeting. As the first order of business, the board approved the November 19, 2020, minutes and November expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Mark Sumption reported on the East River Board meeting held December 3, 2020. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC meeting held December 1, 2020. The next SDREA board meeting will be January 13-15, 2021, during the SDREA Annual Meeting which will be held January 14-15, 2021.

Directors Ronald Kaaz and Nolan Wipf reported on the Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting, which was held virtually December 9, 2020. Director Todd Hettich reported on the 2020 NRECA Board Leadership Course which he attended December 3, 2020, in Pierre.

Manager's Report

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

- Update and discussion on new and progressing development projects and activities taking place in the community and our service area.
 - Reviewed plans for the SDREA Annual Meeting in Pierre, January 14-15, 2021.
1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 A.M. on Thursday, January 21, 2021.
 2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,303.48.
 3. Approved Work Order Inventories #20-11 for \$430,860.62 and #20-11MC for \$20,842.13 to be submitted to RUS for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
 4. Approved the fourth quarter estate requests for early capital credit retirements in the amount of \$31,245.51.
 5. Reappointed Nolan Wipf to the SD Rural Electric Association Board.
 6. Authorized board attendance to the 2021 NRECA PowerXchange, February 23-25 and March 2-4, virtual event.
 7. Authorized board attendance to the East River Energize Forum, February 3-4, 2021, Sioux Falls.
 8. Authorized Board President to execute the 2021 Fee Schedule Amendment to the Dalager Engineering Services Contract.
 9. Reviewed cost of service study conducted by PSE Inc. and approved management recommendations.
 10. Held Executive Session.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

Financial Report		November 2020	November 2019
kWh Sales		27,253,710 kWh	33,321,668 kWh
Electric Revenues		\$2,445,292	\$2,847,362
Total Cost of Service		\$2,323,847	\$2,663,249
Operating Margins		\$121,445	\$184,114
Year To Date Margins		\$516,556	\$584,800
Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill			
November 2020	2,450 kWh	\$232.32	.0948 per kWh
November 2019	3,516 kWh	\$304.06	.0865 per kWh
Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 85.1% of NEC's total cost of service.			

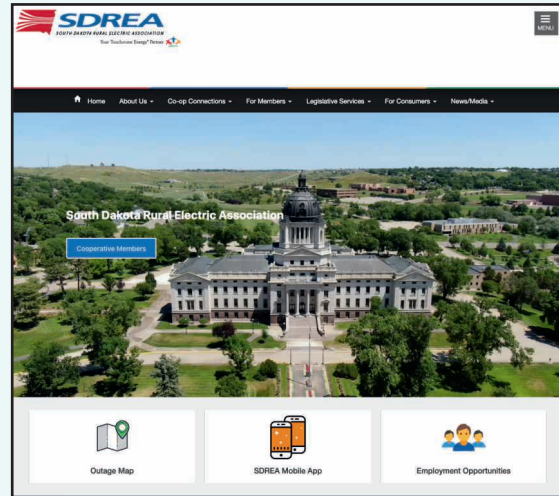
Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"

Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Recipes to Power Up Your Day

Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD

Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD

Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

culinary.net

Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD

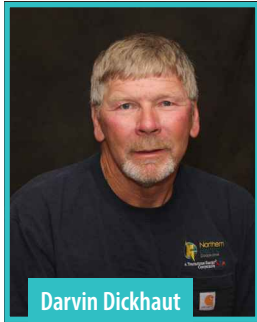
Please send your favorite seafood recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Darvin Dickhaut Retires After 38 years

Dickhaut Began Working For Spink Electric in 1982

Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop



Darvin Dickhaut

Darvin Dickhaut's love of being a lineman and serving the members of the co-op has been the key to his longevity with Northern Electric Cooperative.

"If you really enjoy what you're doing you don't really work a day in your life," Dickhaut said.

"I always felt when I started this was the job I was going to stick with because I enjoyed the work."

Dickhaut retired on January 4 after working as a lineman in the Redfield area for 38 years.

Dickhaut grew up in Redfield and started working for Spink Electric Cooperative in November of 1982. He never set out to do line work, but he said the work found him. Dickhaut was an employee at the Redfield lumberyard in the early '80s when Spink Electric lineman Bob Brugger asked



Darvin Dickhaut said the key to the longevity of his career was his love for the job.

Dickhaut if he had any interest in working for the co-op. There was an opening at Spink Electric and Dickhaut was one of 26 people who applied for the job. Brugger told Dickhaut he was hired for his work ethic despite not having any experience as a lineman. After he was hired, Dickhaut completed courses through Mitchell Technical Institute and began falling in love with the job.

"I always felt when I started this was the job I was going to stick with because I enjoyed the work," Dickhaut said.

Dickhaut is appreciative to all the members who helped the line crews during his career as they worked to restore power during blizzards and storms. He said members would always go out of their way to make the work of the line crews easier. And Dickhaut said helping the co-op members by restoring their power always brought a big sense of accomplishment.

"You throw that last switch in and all the lights come on. There is a lot of satisfaction that comes with that," Dickhaut said.



Redfield lineman Darvin Dickhaut retired on January 4.

Dickhaut continued serving the members of the co-op after Northern Electric merged with Spink Electric in 1997. He said there have been some ups and downs during his career, but he always enjoyed his job and that is what kept him motivated for nearly four decades.

"I love the work," Dickhaut said. "I still do."

Dickhaut plans to restore cars and do more hunting and fishing during his retirement. He will also spend more time visiting his four children and his five granddaughters.

William Torrence Hired As Apprentice Lineman



William Torrence

Northern Electric Cooperative has hired William Torrence as an apprentice lineman. Torrence will work with the Redfield crew out of the

Redfield shop and service center.

Torrence graduated from Mitchell Technical Institute with a degree in power line maintenance in May 2020. He worked in temporary positions with Northern Electric Cooperative during the summer of 2019 and most recently during the summer of 2020. Torrence started as a full-time employee on November 20, 2020.

He said he pursued a career in line work so he can enjoy the outdoors and serve the members of the co-op.

“(I’m looking forward to) the scenery and being in new places every day and not always doing the same thing,” Torrence said.

Torrence is also looking forward to some of the new things he will learn on the job as a full-time lineman for Northern Electric Cooperative. He will be filling a vacancy on the Redfield crew following the retirement of Darvin Dickhaut.

Torrence has purchased a home in Redfield and enjoys hunting and fishing when he is not on the job.



5 WAYS TO STAY COZY IN THE WINTER

Baby, it’s cold outside! When you’re feeling chilly at home, there are several budget-friendly ways you can stay comfortable without turning up the thermostat.

Here are five easy ways to stay cozy this winter.

- 1. Electric Blanket** Whether you’re experiencing extremely cold winter temps or you simply “run cold,” an electric blanket can deliver quick warmth like a regular throw or blanket cannot. Electric blankets can include a variety of features, like timers and dual temperature settings (if your cuddle buddy prefers less heat). This winter, consider an electric blanket instead of turning up the heat, and your energy bill will thank you.
- 2. Keep Your Feet Warm** One of the easiest ways to stay cozy at home is to keep your feet warm. Our feet play a critical role in regulating body temperature, so when your feet are warm, your body automatically feels warmer. Try a pair of comfortable wool socks or house slippers to stay toasty.
- 3. Harness The Sun** On winter days when the sun is shining, take advantage and harness natural warmth from sunlight. Open all curtains, drapes and blinds in your home to let the sunshine in—you’ll be able to feel the difference.
- 4. Use A Humidifier** Another way to make your home cozier is to use a humidifier. Cold air doesn’t hold water vapor like warm air, so by adding humidity inside your home, you can feel a little warmer. A favorable level of humidity inside your home can also help clear sinuses, soften skin and improve sleep.
- 5. Area Rugs** Beyond adding visual appeal to your home, area rugs can also provide extra insulation and a warm surface for your feet on cold winter days. Use large area rugs in rooms where you spend the most time. You’ll enjoy the new colors and textures of the rug, and the additional warmth will help keep your home comfortable.

These are just a few ways you can stay cozy this winter without turning up the thermostat. Don’t forget the hot chocolate!



Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

Billy Gibson

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Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

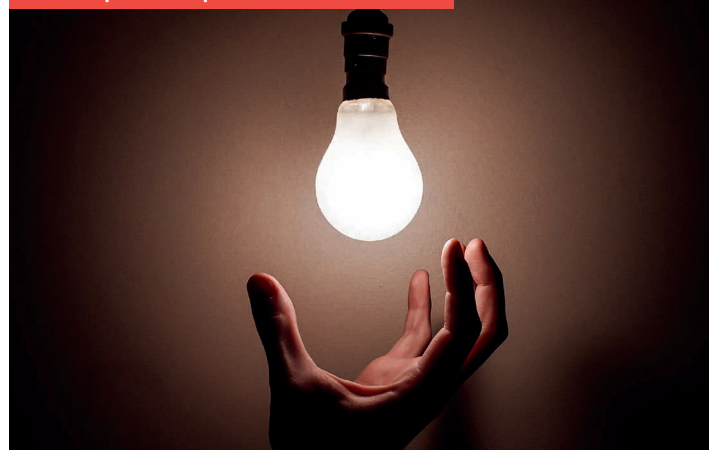
"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

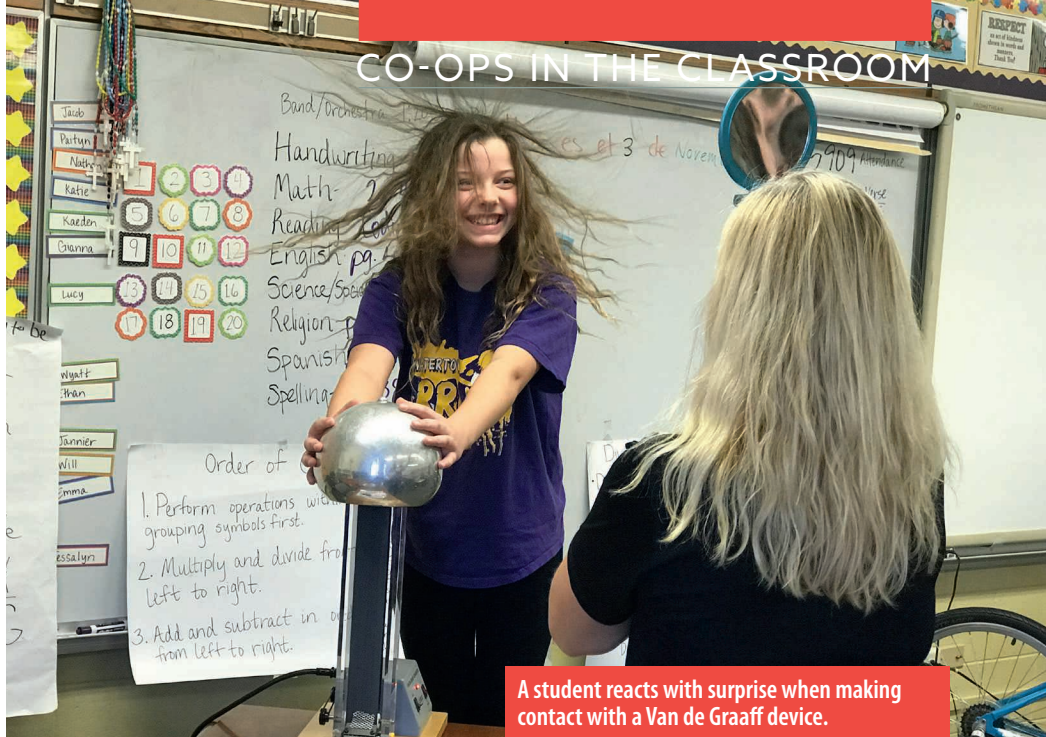
The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.



**"These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."
- Jennifer Gross**



A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.

just provide electrical power. We're here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we're always here for them if they have questions about electricity."

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

"It's something that's always around them and they deal with all the time," Heinrich

said. "It's good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents' cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, 'So, this is a bad idea.' It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices."

South Dakota's electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unharmed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s).

Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country's rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite's economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: "Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call 'Neon Leon,' and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, 'I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year's demonstration, my husband is alive.' That really shows how important it is."



Students Can Apply Now For \$1,000 and \$500 Co-op Scholarships

2021 Scholarship Applications Being Accepted

Students of Northern Electric Cooperative members who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary school - or plan to enroll in the fall of 2021 - can now apply for two co-op-sponsored scholarships.

Bismarck-based Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates electricity for Northern Electric Cooperative, is awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a student within the Northern Electric service territory. Northern Electric is also awarding a \$500 scholarship to a student of a co-op consumer. Students can apply for both scholarships by filling out one Basin Electric 2021 scholarship application which can be found on the Northern Electric website at www.northernelectric.coop/scholarships. Applications can also be picked up at a Northern Electric office.

In 2020, Christine Stoltenberg of Stratford was awarded the \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship and Matthew Sperry of Bath was the recipient of the \$500 Northern

Electric scholarship. Stoltenberg enrolled at Northern State University and Sperry is enrolled at South Dakota State University.

The scholarship application includes information about the student's academic record, ACT/SAT test scores, work experience, an applicant appraisal from an advisor or supervisor, and a one-page essay on the topic: 'Describe how cooperatives can be economic engines for their local communities.' The entire application must be completed and turned into one of the Northern Electric Cooperative offices in Bath or Redfield by the **February 12, 2021** deadline.

A committee of cooperative employees will critically evaluate the applications and award both the \$1,000 and \$500 scholarship from the pool of applicants. Scholarships will be directly paid to the institution where the recipient is enrolled in the fall of 2021.

How to Apply

- **Scholarship Eligibility**

Applicants must be U.S. citizens, under the age of 25, and natural or adopted children of Northern Electric Cooperative consumers/members. Any applicant must be a student who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

- **How the Selection Process Works**

All applications are critically evaluated using a combination of several criteria including: SAT/ACT scores, grade-point average, work experience, participation in school and community activities, a statement by the student explaining his/her educational and career goals, financial need, and a written recommendation by a third party.

A committee of cooperative employees will evaluate the applications and submit the entry to Basin Electric for scholarship distribution and select the winning entry for the Northern Electric scholarship.

- **Application**

Applications are available from local high school guidance counselors, on the Northern Electric Cooperative website at www.northernelectric.coop/scholarships, or directly from the Northern Electric offices in Bath or Redfield.

Completed applications MUST BE RETURNED BY FEBRUARY 12, 2021 to:

Northern Electric Cooperative
ATTN: Kay Albrecht
PO Box 457
Bath, SD 57427

For more information contact Kay Albrecht at: **605-225-0310**

WATCH OUT *THIS WINTER!*

- *When plowing, avoid electrical cabinets, poles, wires and other equipment*
- *Never touch a downed power line*
- *Treat everything near downed power lines—such as trees or debris—as dangerous*





Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

The People Behind the Power

Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power

of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

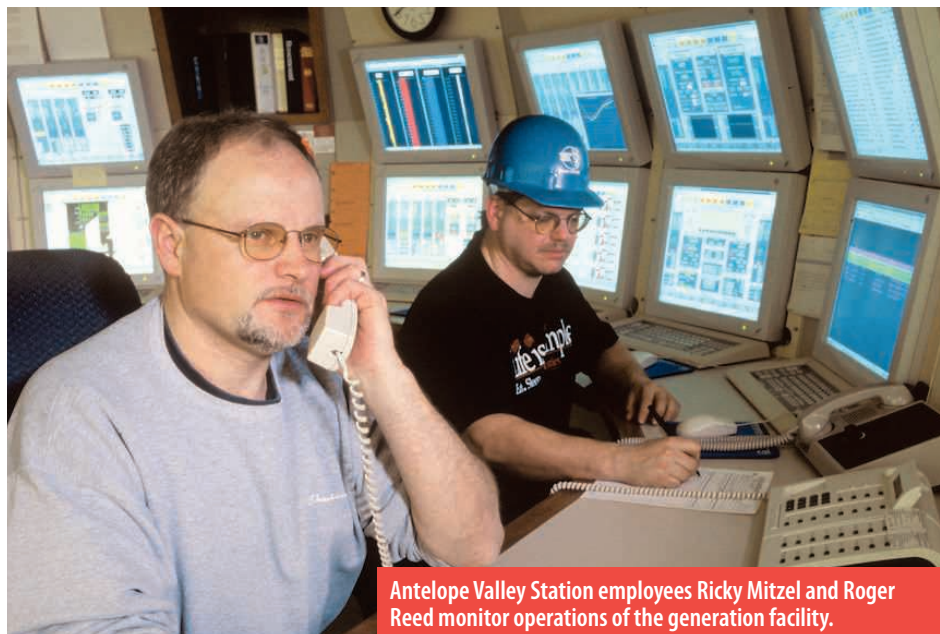
"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."



Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

DE-STRESSING

Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

Billy Gibson

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Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."

Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration

down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.

- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

“When you achieve food freedom, you don’t have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet.” Ching said. “Stress can

lead to overeating. If you’re under stress, don’t reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion.”

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

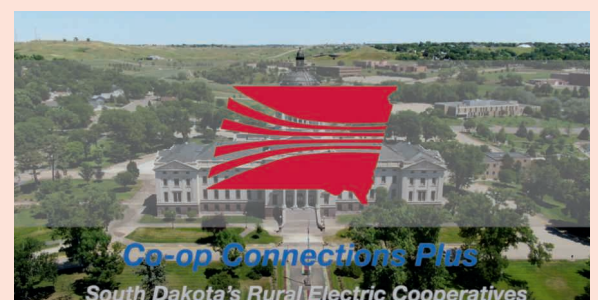
“Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere,” she said. “I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!”

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes.

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



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

January 18-25

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD
605-717-9294

January 21-24

Elf The Musical, Area
Community Theatre,
Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

January 23

Treasured Lives Presents:
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
1-800-468-6463

January 29-30

Pro Snocross Races, Days
of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

January 29-February 6

Black Hills Stock Show &
Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-335-3861

January 29-31

Winterfest, Lead, SD
605-335-3861

February 5-6

Mardi Gras Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

February 10-13

Watertown Winter Farm
Show, Codington County
Extension Complex,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

February 12-13

SD High School State
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

February 18

The Q's High Line to
Deadwood – A 130-year
Retrospective, Homestake
Adams Research and Cultural
Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills
Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20-27

SD State High School
Wrestling Tournament,
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood
Live: Neighbor Day,
Washington Pavilion, Sioux
Falls, SD
605-367-6000

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate
& IE Tournament, Central
High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride
and Tour, Spearfish Canyon
Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration,
Knights of Columbus Hall,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun
Show, American Legion Hall,
Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

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

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center Fine Arts
Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead
Hills, Homestake Adams
Research and Cultural Center,
Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

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.