

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Gardening Greats

**Master Gardeners
Cultivating Community
Growth**

Pages 8-9

Bridging History
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Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.

We're Here to Help You Save



Matt Hotzler

Manager

First, I want to thank all of you who attended the H-D Electric Annual Meeting on March 25, 2025. We had a fantastic crowd on a beautiful March evening. We ended up having 199 registered members and nearly 300 in total attendance.

Director Roxanne Bass retired from the board and Sherwin DeKam was elected as her replacement for District 2, Incumbents Terry Strohufus and Kevin DeBoer were re-elected to new three-year terms for Districts 1 and 6. All of them ran unopposed.

A panel reported on the happenings, including the 2024 financials and the April 1, 2025, 8% rate increase. Some even won bill credits given away at the end of the meeting.

When summer heats up, our electric bills tend to increase as air conditioners are working overtime, driving up home energy consumption. H-D Electric Cooperative is your local not-for-profit electricity provider, and we are committed to helping you beat the heat without breaking the bank.

As the temperatures get hotter over the next few months, we want to make sure you know about a range of energy-saving offerings designed specifically with you in mind. You can manage your summer energy consumption and costs by taking advantage of these programs and services.

Levelized Billing

When you sign up for H-D Electric's budget billing plan, your energy bill is calculated by averaging your previous 12 months of use. With levelized billing, your monthly energy costs are easier to budget and manage, especially during seasonal fluctuations when bills tend to increase based on the weather. Levelized billing is a great option for anyone on a fixed income or those with highly variable seasonal needs.

Home Energy Audit

H-D Electric's member services personnel are available to discuss your usage or conduct an energy audit of your home to identify areas where energy is wasted and provide recommendations on ways to improve efficiency and lower your monthly bills.

Rebate Program

When you make upgrades or purchases to reduce home energy use, those smart decisions should be rewarded. H-D Electric offers rebates on heating equipment and Marathon water heaters. Visit www.h-delectric.coop/rebates-loans-other-incentives to learn about our rebate program and how to receive a rebate for making smart energy choices.

You Have the Power

Small actions combined can have a big impact on summer energy bills.

The best way to lower energy use during summer is to raise the thermostat to the most comfortable setting. Ceiling fans can also help you feel cooler, but remember to turn them off when you leave the room. On warm summer nights, fire up the grill to keep additional heat out of the kitchen. Remember to change air filters often so your cooling system doesn't have to work harder than necessary.

Visit www.touchstoneenergy.com/use-energy-wisely-energy-efficiency for additional energy-saving advice from Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

Don't let energy bills take a toll on your summer fun. H-D Electric is here to help manage your energy use through efficiency programs and services, or energy-saving advice from our local energy advisors.

Contact us to learn more about practical strategies to lower your use, trim your bills, and make this summer a breeze for both you and your wallet.

As you get outdoors or begin to plant in the fields, be aware of the electrical equipment around you, and if you see anything that looks unusual, please give us a call so we can take a look and fix it if necessary.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

H-D ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-905)

General Manager: Matt Hotzler

Headquarters Employees:

Annie Aberle – Finance and

Administration Manager

Michelle Prins – Billing Clerk

Heidi Brewer-Grimlie – Accounting Clerk

Jami Bolden – Receptionist/Cashier

Roger Cutshaw – Engineer

Darren Matthies – Building Property
Worker

Operations:

Troy Kwasniewski – Operations Manager

Todd Sprang – Line Foreman

Line Crew:

Pat Kirby – Operations Support

Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker

Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker

Derek Bille – Lineworker

Eric Page – Lineworker

Joseph Jordan Jr. – Lineworker

Jonah Paintner – Apprentice Lineworker

Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/
Mechanic

Brady Mellendorf – Equipment Operator/
Mechanic

Member Services:

Tom Lundberg – Member Services
Manager

Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman

Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician

Deaven Boots – Apprentice Electrician

Jon Zirbel – Meter/Load Management

Board of Directors:

President Bert Rogness – Astoria

Vice President Terry Strohhus – Hazel

Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake

Sherwin Dekam – Castlewood

Dale Williams – Estelline

Casper Niemann – Lake Norden

Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake

Calvin Musch – Revillo

Todd Moritz – Clear Lake

H-D ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 1007, 18240 SD Hwy 15, Clear Lake, SD 57226-1007 for its members. Families subscribe to H-D Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. H-D Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living. H-D Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Clear Lake, S.D., and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: H-D Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 1007, Clear Lake, SD 57226-1007; telephone (605) 874-2171; toll-free 1-800-358-7233; fax (605) 874-8173; e-mail info@h-delectric.coop

Design assistance by SDREA.

H-D Electric Yard Light Program

Installing yard lights has been and continues to be an important service to our members. We repair yard lights at the cost of the parts and also install new yard lights.

We sell 40-watt LED lights for new yard light installations as well as for any existing yard lights that cannot be repaired. The cost of an LED light is \$287 (plus tax). For new installations, there may be additional costs for a pole and wire if required.

The warranty for the light is 10 years and has a savings of approximately \$53.64 a year.

Give us a call if you have any questions or are interested in purchasing a new LED yard light or replacing an existing yard light.

H-D Electric Membership Tour

For more than 30 years, H-D Electric Cooperative has offered H-D members a trip to North Dakota to tour Basin Electric's Coteau Freedom Mine, Antelope Valley Station Power Plant and Great Plains Synfuels Plant.

H-D Electric and Codington-Clark Electric will be joining together again this year for a two-day, one-night educational and fun getaway at the end of August.

Watch for more details to come and registration!

Operating Statistics

	February 2024	February 2025
Customers	3,831	3,876
Amount Collected.....	\$1,067,238	\$1,336,133
Average Bill	\$278.58	\$344.72
Average Kilowatt-Hour	2,704	3,565
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased.....	11,095,068	14,566,478
Kilowatt-Hours Sold	10,357,173	13,818,814

Power Life Safely

May is Electrical Safety Month

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. **Be vigilant.** Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.
2. **Use Surge Protectors.** Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.
3. **Practice Safe Power Strip Use.** Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. **Water and Electricity Don't Mix.** It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.
5. **Educate Family Members.** One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Jeremiah Barlow

Jeremiah cautions readers not to plant trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Jeremiah! Jeremiah's parents are Mosiah and Cristine Barlow, members of West River Electric Association.

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.



Delicious CHICKEN

CHICKEN BREAST SUPREME

Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts
(boned and halved)
8 strips bacon
2 pkgs. chipped beef
8 oz. sour cream
1 can cream of chicken soup
6 oz. evaporated milk

Method

Wrap each half of chicken breast in a piece of bacon. Place in a baking dish lined with two layers of chipped beef.

Blend sour cream, soup, and milk. Pour over chicken.

Bake uncovered at 300°F for three hours. Serve over rice.

*Makes 8 servings.

Sharon Houchin
Central Electric Member

CHICKEN ROLLUPS

Ingredients:

8 oz. tube crescent rolls
4 boneless chicken breasts
(cooked shredded and seasoned to taste)
8 oz. cheddar cheese
(finely shredded, divided)
10 1/2 oz. can cream of chicken soup
1 packet chicken gravy mix
1 cup water

Method

In a bowl, mix the shredded chicken and 1/3 of the cheese. Take a scoop of the mixture and roll it into a crescent roll then place in a greased 9" x 13" pan. Bake at 350°F until the crescent rolls look browned on top. Mix the soup, gravy mix, 1/3 of the cheese, and enough water to make the mixture pourable. Pour over the crescent rolls. Sprinkle the remaining 1/3 of the cheese on top and bake again until the cheese melts and starts to brown.

Nicole Einrem
B-Y Electric Member

SMOKY CHICKEN TACOS

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. oil
1 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into thin strips
1/4 cup Flavor Maker Taco Night Topping Seasoning
1/2 cup water
12 (6-inch) flour or corn tortillas, warmed

Method

Heat oil in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook and stir just until browned.

Stir in Flavor Maker Seasoning and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until sauce has thickened and chicken is cooked through, stirring occasionally.

Spoon chicken into warm tortillas. Serve with desired toppings, such as shredded lettuce, shredded cheese, sour cream, guac or salsa.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Tips to Beat the Energy Peak



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: What does “beat the peak” mean, and why should I care about it?

A: When your electric cooperative talks about “beat the peak,” it is a call to action for energy consumers to reduce electricity use during periods of highest demand. Using less energy during peak times can ease the strain on the electric grid, benefit your cooperative and sometimes lower your electric bill.

Electricity generation and energy supply must match consumption in real time to ensure safe, reliable power. Every moment of every day, an entire workforce monitors energy use, adjusting power plant production up or down as needed to keep the grid balanced.

As energy demand grows, all of us can do our part to use less. To put this in perspective, peak electricity demand is expected to increase by 38 gigawatts over the next four years, according to the Energy Information Administration. That’s like adding another California to our nation’s power grid.

Peak time varies for each electric utility but typically occurs in the morning when people get ready for the day and in the evening when they return home from work and school. During these times, we turn on lights, cook, adjust the thermostat, run

the dishwasher and do laundry – to name just a few energy-consuming activities.

Typically, the price of power increases when demand is higher. Reducing your electric use during peak times can help lower market prices for everyone and lessen stress on the electric grid.

Electric cooperatives set electric rates to cover costs. Some utilities have time-of-use rates that reflect higher costs during peak demand periods. Whether you have time-of-use rates or not, these tips can help keep costs down for your utility and establish off-peak energy habits.

As a general rule, I try to spread out my use of equipment and appliances. For example, I avoid washing dishes and clothes, and cooking all at the same time. Running a lot of hot water will cause your water heater to use more energy, too.

Increasing the energy efficiency of your home can lower its impact on the grid. Weatherize windows and doors and add insulation to improve the comfort of your home. You can also consider upgrading to energy efficient appliances or using energy-saving features on your existing appliances.

If you haven’t already, switch your incandescent lighting to LEDs, which use at least 75% less electricity and last up to 25 times longer, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. There are many affordable options on the market.

Schedule your dishwasher run time. My dishwasher, which is several years old, has a “delay start” button. This is also handy if your dishwasher is loud. Setting it to start after you go to bed shifts that energy consumption to off-peak hours, and you don’t have to hear it.

Running your washing machine and dryer during off-peak hours can help, too. If you’re in the market for a new washer or dryer, look for a model with a high Integrated Modified Energy Factor and a low Integrated Water Factor to save water and energy.

Also, consider switching your charging habits for all devices to off-peak hours. If you have an electric vehicle, use the scheduled charge settings. You’ll plug in your vehicle when you get home, and it will start charging automatically during the off-peak hours you choose.

Small changes at home can make a big difference to the energy grid. Incorporate these energy-wise habits into your daily routine.



When the Lights Came On

Darrell Kirby Reflects on the Arrival of Electricity and How Co-ops Powered His Career

Erica Fitzhugh

Southeastern Electric Cooperative

Growing up on a farm northwest of Salem, Darrell Kirby was the second oldest of five children in his family. Their farm had dairy cows, hogs and chickens and they grew corn, oats and beans. “Before we had electricity, the memory that sticks in my mind is doing schoolwork with an old kerosene lamp with a wick, set in the middle of the table for light,” shared Kirby. “After that we switched to a gas light with two mantels. It was much brighter and more dependable. But when we got electricity... that was out of this world.”

The Kirby family was one of the original members of McCook Electric, now Southeastern Electric. Kirby remembers that his home was energized by the cooperative around the time he was a fifth grader. “My uncle came out to wire our house,” said Kirby. “It was really something to be able to turn on a switch and have all that light!” Before electricity, Kirby and his siblings would carry a lantern from their house to the barn. A long wire was strung the length of the ceiling - they would hang the lantern from the wire and as they moved down the aisle milking cows by hand, they would slide the lantern down to light their way. Using a hand cranked milk separator, they would remove the cream from the

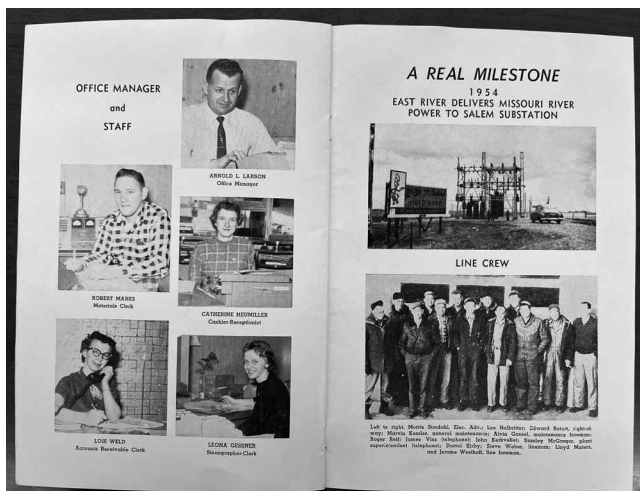


Photo by Erica Fitzhugh

milk. The milk would be fed to the hogs, and the cream would be kept in cream cans until it could be taken to town, usually twice a week, to trade for groceries and other goods at the K&K Store. “Electricity changed our lives,” Kirby exclaimed. “The yard light and lights in the barn, the milking machine, a cream separator with a motor instead of a crank, a refrigerator – the changes to our farming operation were remarkable.”

As Kirby finished high school, he had his mind set on farming. However, life had other plans for him. “I worked as a farmhand in the summer and as a mechanic in the winter. The next summer, McCook Electric bought property to build on and was looking for people to help with the construction. I assisted with the construction for a few months before I had to take a break due to a health issue,” said Kirby. He knew from that interaction with McCook Electric that he wanted to work for the electric cooperative. After Kirby recovered, he returned to McCook Electric and asked for a job as a lineman. He started in the spring of 1958 and spent the next 40 years powering the lives of his neighbors through his career at the co-op. “I was not scared of heights and liked working outdoors. I borrowed a set of hooks and belts and with no formal training or previous experience, I started my career as a lineman,” laughed Kirby.

Kirby held positions as a lineman, line superintendent and eventually as the general manager. He recalled experiencing ice and windstorms, working at annual meetings and witnessing several changes to the electric utility industry. “My fondest memories of working at the co-op included the people – our employees and our members. I got to know almost everyone because we were so small. I enjoyed visiting with and working for our members, helping them in any way I could,” smiled Kirby. “The co-op was so good to me and my family. I still miss the people after all these years.”



History is remembered in the 1959 McCook Electric Cooperative Annual Report, Years of Progress. It focused on the cooperative's growth from 1949-1959. Photo submitted by Erica Fitzhugh.

GARDENING GREATS

How Master Gardeners are Cultivating Community Growth

Frank Turner

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After years of tending to her garden, Codington-Clark Electric member Dianne Rider of Hazel can confidently say she is an expert in horticulture. However, her extensive experience of working with the earth isn't the only reason she is considered a soil savant.

In 2016, Rider earned the prodigious title of Master Gardener through the South Dakota State University Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program. This program provides in-depth horticultural training – covering topics like plant science, soil management and sustainable gardening practices – so enthusiasts like Rider can share their extensive gardening knowledge with their communities.

Becoming an Extension Master Gardener volunteer is a commitment. Applicants must complete horticulture classes, pass the course test and contribute 40 hours of volunteer service

during the first year of involvement. Despite the challenges, Rider had aspired to this achievement for decades, but it wasn't until she retired from her teaching career that she was able to dedicate herself fully and earn her place as a Master Gardener.

Reflecting the adage, “once a teacher, always a teacher,” Rider continues to educate and influence those around her, even after retirement, through gardening.

“Becoming a Master Gardener has always been on my bucket list since they organized,” Rider said. “I’ve always been a teacher, so finding a way to help others through gardening is probably what’s most rewarding.”

As a Master Gardener, Rider plays a key role in organizing annual gardening events for SDSU Extension, including the Master Gardener Annual Update Conference at Joy Ranch near Watertown. This event, attended by more than 125 Master Gardeners, serves as a thriving forum for gardening clubs to exchange ideas on the latest and greatest

projects they are tackling.

“The event is a lot of fun, because when you get 125 Master Gardeners in one room – let me tell you, the conversations are riveting,” Rider laughed.

Master gardeners also help SDSU Extension achieve its broader goal: to make cutting-edge research easily accessible to the people who can benefit from the findings. Master Gardeners have regular continuing education opportunities with experts from the SDSU Horticulture team, such as Professor John Ball, a SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist and South Dakota Department of Agriculture Forest Health Specialist. Once equipped with this information, volunteers can share the most significant takeaways from research being conducted across the state through the university, providing a bridge between research and practical application.

“Dr. John Ball’s presentation on how to trim a tree after planting it is one of the best things that I’ve learned that I can now share with others,” said Rider. “He says that raising a tree is just like raising a kid: you have to shape your tree when

Missouri Valley Master Gardeners remove invasive bellflower and other non-desirable plants at the Dorothy Jenks Memorial Garden in Yankton.
Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.

they are young, otherwise they turn into ugly adults.”

Master Gardener Field Specialist Prairey Walkling emphasizes that the connection between research-based information and enthusiasts is what the Master Gardener Volunteer Program thrives on. And the research goes far beyond just trees. SDSU’s horticulture research also extends into innovative mulching techniques, soil care and even studies on the growth and quality of four popular zinnia varieties.

“SDSU Extension wants to empower individuals to reach their gardening goals through providing science-based information. Each person has different pieces of land, resources and goals for their gardens and landscapes,” she said. “We strive to provide them with trusted, research-based information to help them make decisions.”

Walkling said the impact of these volunteers cannot be understated. According to Walkling, there are more than 400 Master Gardeners across the state and 14 Master Gardener clubs. In 2024, these vital volunteers hosted 153 gardening events, including farmers market booths, gardening workshops and demonstrations, reaching nearly 10,000 South Dakotans. Regardless of the event or what is being discussed, Walkling said Master Gardeners carry an infectious love of digging in the dirt.

“These volunteers help get people excited about gardening,” she said. “There are so many volunteer opportunities – teaching youth, teaching adults, maintaining demonstration gardens, answering questions, organizing events, engaging in horticultural research, writing horticulture articles – the sky is the limit.”



SDSU Extension Master Gardeners host an educational booth at the SD State Fair. From left: Lael Abelmann, Sharelle Meyer and Nancy Kadous.



Coteau Prairie Master Gardener Club (Watertown area) hosted the 2024 state conference at Joy Ranch. | Photos courtesy of SDSU Extension.

2025 Student Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the 2025 Scholarship recipients. These awards are offered as part of our commitment to developing and educating future leaders. This scholarship program is open to dependents of H-D Electric members.

Hailee Raasch, a senior at Castlewood High School, is the 2025 recipient of H-D Electric/Basin Electric Power Cooperative's \$1,000 scholarship. Hailee is the daughter of Robert and Amber Raasch. She plans to attend University of Sioux Falls to pursue a degree in English.



Hailee Raasch



Jaxon Peterreins



Talayna Opdahl



Braxton Jongeling

The 2025 recipients of H-D Electric \$500 scholarships are: Jaxon Peterreins, a senior at Deuel High School, Talayna Opdahl, a senior at Hamlin High School, and Braxton Jongeling, Estelline High School.

Jaxon Peterreins is the son of Jon and Amber Peterreins. He plans to attend Mitchell Tech to pursue a degree in Powerline Construction and Maintenance.

Talayna Opdahl is the daughter of Troy and the late Heater Opdahl. She plans to attend South Dakota State University in Brookings to pursue a degree in Pharmacy.

Braxton Jongeling is the son of Brad and Shelly Jongeling. He plans to attend Lake Area Technical College in Watertown to pursue a degree in Diesel Technology/Tractors.

Touchstone Scholar of the Week

Congratulations to Ava Gunderson, a 2024-2025 Touchstone Energy Scholar of the week in March. Ava is a senior at Estelline School District and is the daughter of Mike and Audra Gunderson. She plans on attending Lake Area Technical College in Watertown, S.D., for her associate's degree in Dental Assisting in the fall of 2025.

The Scholar of the Week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now and your local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that honors the region's accomplished high school students. Each weekly winner receives a cash award from their local Touchstone Energy Cooperative and is featured on Dakota News Now. All winners are

also eligible to receive one of the three scholarships that are given away at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet. Nominations for the weekly awards are submitted by area school principals and faculty, whose selections were based on excellence in the classroom and service in the community.





ANNUAL MEETING

Pictures, Prizes and Fun!

Several display tables, with H-D employees, were on hand. Popular displays included the LED all night yard light, and the Water Heater Display.

The business meeting started with Board President Bert Rogness announcing a quorum and called the meeting to order. Manager Matt

Hotzler, Board President Bert Rogness and Treasurer Steve Hansen presented a review of 2024 and insight on what 2025 will bring.

After a chance for questions on old or new business the meeting was adjourned. To finish the night there were two drawings for two \$500 bill credits and ten \$100 bill credits drawn

from everyone that was present. The two \$500 bill credits went out to Arline Johnson and Wesley Pegors. The ten \$100 bill credits went out to Wallace Weber, Roger Fritz, Greg Blum, Lois Hyde, Donna Miller, Jay Prouty, Doug Gantvoort, James Buchholz, Jerry Resmen and June James. Keith Gould won a lunch box that was donated from East River Electric.

Thanks again to all who attended. Plan to attend next year's annual meeting that will be held at the Hamlin Education Center in Hayti, S.D.

Announcing Youth Excursion 2025 to Bismarck, N.D.

Calling all high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors! Is your parent or guardian an active member-owner of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc? If so, you're eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion 2025!

If chosen, you will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 21-23, participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from.

Once participants arrive on the campus, they can look forward to building friendships, taking in the sights of North Dakota's capitol and learning "The Story Behind the Light Switch." During their stay, students will get to hear

from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. Students will be given the opportunity to tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, visit local attractions and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers.

To be eligible for Youth Excursion, students must be in high school, and their parent or guardian must be an active member-owner of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.

To apply for the Youth Excursion, applications are available with your School Counselor or visit our website at www.h-delectric.coop, applications are available under the 'Community' section.

Please contact H-D Electric for more information at 605-874-2171 or 1-800-358-7233.

Application deadline is May 16, 2025.



Local, state and federal officials celebrate the ribbon-cutting of the new Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge, March 25, 2025. Photo by Marcy Anderson, Courtesy of the Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce.

BRIDGING HISTORY

The Demolition of the Waldron Memorial Bridge

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Tons of concrete and steel came crashing down in a planned demolition of the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge that connected Pierre and Fort Pierre over a half mile stretch of river. The planned explosion marked a significant historic moment for not only Pierre and Fort Pierre, but also eastern and western South Dakota.

The demolition of the bridge unfolded in seconds. A plume of black smoke erupted from the detonating cord placed at key points in the bridge, quickly followed by a bone-rattling shock wave. Paul Nelson, a recently retired employee of the South Dakota Department of Transportation, witnessed the end of the bridge's 63-year lifespan. Nelson, a member of Oahe Elec-

tric, spent over 40 years with the SDDOT, serving most of that time as the regional bridge engineer. In this role, he was responsible for the maintenance, inspection and upkeep of the very bridge that he saw demolished.

As legacy bridge engineer, this was not Nelson's first experience with such a demolition. "I had actually witnessed the 1986 demolition of the old truss bridge that was just downstream of the current railroad bridge – so I have been around something of this magnitude before," he explained.

Even still, Nelson laughed that the modern demolition had a "pretty good report when it went off."

Although the bridge has been decommissioned, its history endures. In 2002, the bridge was dedicated to Lt. Cmdr. John C.

Waldron, a naval aviator from Fort Pierre who led a torpedo squadron during the Battle of Midway in World War II. His actions proved pivotal in the battle, but led to death of himself and most of his squadron. Of the 30 men who served under his command, only one survived the Battle of Midway.

Waldron's legacy is still commemorated through the new Pierre-Fort Pierre Bridge, which had its ribbon-cutting ceremony last month.

Construction of the new bridge began in 2020, just yards from the old bridge's location. In total, the bridge cost nearly \$50 million and is designed to last a century.

"This bridge is going to be a beautiful and wonderful enhancement to the communities and something that will last more than a hundred years," South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden said at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new bridge that now connects the two halves of the state.

BRIDGE DEMOLITION



The Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge comes crashing down at 9:03 a.m., on March 13.
Photos by Frank Turner.





Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.

PROTECT AND SERVE

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Police Officers Memorial Day and the week as National Police Week.

As we pay special recognition to our law enforcement officers, we want to spotlight some of the selfless work police officers do to better serve communities and make positive impacts in people's lives.

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In Belle Fourche, it's fun to hang out with the cops.

That's the consensus among fifth graders in the Kids-n-Cops programs when officers from the Belle Fourche Police Department arrive at kids' homes early in the morning to pick them up for an unforgettable Christmas shopping spree.

"We pick up the kids from their houses, drive them around for about a half hour and let them activate the lights and sirens, then we bring them to Runnings and go on a shopping spree for their family," explained Police Chief Ryan Cherveney. "They can buy shopping cart loads of gifts for everyone in their house, and then still buy some gifts for themselves."

The outing continues with games, gift wrapping and a pizza party. At the end of the day, officers drop the kids off at their

homes, leaving behind not only presents but a lasting friendship.

The police department works with the school to target children who may be going through something at home or could otherwise benefit from a friendly acquaintance with some of Belle Fourche's finest.

The program is supported by donations from community – last year, the community sponsored \$500 shopping limits for 16 kids.

Cherveney, who's headed the program for more than a decade, says it's as big of a hit with his officers as it is with the fifth graders.

"It's one of the things every year the officers look forward to," Cherveney explained. "We never have to ask for volunteers because just about everybody volunteers. Even the guys working the overnights come in, do the event, and then

go home and try to get the last two hours of sleep before they come back to work."

Knowing the community members they serve and making a difference in the life of a kid boosts officers' mental health "tremendously," he added.

"It helps keep the officers grounded – they know the people that they're serving and that they're there to protect. [Knowing community members] can help alleviate a really stressful situation into a much more manageable one where we're able to work with people to resolve things."

He continued, "Our main focus is just being out there in the community, helping kids recognize that when we show up to their houses during negative events, we're there because we have a job – it's less scary for the children and they see we're people they can always come to when they need somebody"

The success of the program and the outpouring of community support has led the department to expand their community involvement beyond Christmas shopping, according to Police Administrative Technician Mardi Reeves. The police force also distributed grocery

cards, gift bags, food and blankets to families in need. Reeves estimates a community-wide impact of nearly 200 people in 2024.

Police officers and other first responders also coach little league sports, with plans to soon offer registration fee and equipment “scholarships” so any kid can get involved.

“There are a lot of under-privileged children who can’t be in sports that end up wandering around town with nothing to do and trouble tends to find them,” Reeves said. “Having them participate in a sport really helps with that.”

Cherveney says he is grateful for the continued community support that not only makes the Kids-n-Cops program possible, but also creates lasting friendships and memories for kids and their families.

“We had a kid that went shopping with us, and he ended up buying a popcorn popper, oil, butter, cheese, and the different popcorn toppings along with gifts for his other siblings,” Cherveney remembered. “The family had never been able to go to a movie – the parents worked rough schedules – so this was the opportunity. The kid bought some movies and a Blu-ray player and the whole purpose was so that they could sit down and watch movies as a family.”

Gregory Police Chief Ryan Cook also believes in the merits of community

involvement. In Gregory, he spearheads multiple community initiatives including the popular bike rodeo.

A partnership between the police department, Avera Health and Gregory’s volunteer ambulance and fire services, the bike rodeo teaches kids – and anyone else interested – the rules of the road for kids on bicycles as well as other safety tips.

“We have volunteers at different stations and the kids go around to each station and participate in whatever event that is,” Cook explained. “One of the stations is helmet sizing and we hand out free helmets, other stations make sure the bicycle chain is lubed up and tight and the different parts are working correctly, and so on.”

The department is involved in other ways, too. For example, the officers work with the post office to ensure children’s letters to Santa Claus are delivered to the North Pole and receive a response.

The involvement is a necessity, explained Cook, because police can’t do their jobs and serve their communities without building relationships first.

“You need to be someone the community trusts,” he said. “You want folks to be comfortable approaching you, knowing there’s an open door, knowing they’re welcome to make the phone call or stop in. And obviously, when our officers are active and out doing stuff, it’s that much easier.”

Women in Law Enforcement



Metzger

Public service knows no gender, and neither does a career in law enforcement. That’s the message South Dakota Highway Patrol

deputy Emily Metzger wants to send to young girls with a passion for public service.

Originally from Kansas, Metzger attended the University of South Dakota in Vermillion to study criminal justice and public administration.

“I wanted to be in law enforcement since I was very young,” Metzger explained. My grandfather was in law enforcement, and in college I worked for the fire department and ambulance and really decided being a first responder was something I wanted to do.”

After college, she attended the police academy training in Pierre, where for 13 weeks she studied everything ranging from traffic stops to defensive tactics to interrogation. Then, another 10 weeks of highway patrol academy and another 10 weeks of field training.

“In South Dakota, the Highway Patrol offers a lot of different things,” Metzger said. “All of our education and training is 100% paid for and they pay your salary while you’re there.”

While the Highway Patrol isn’t exactly brimming with female troopers, Metzger said she’s on the scene to help just like anyone else.

“I have the same expectations as any trooper highway patrol – there’s no special treatment,” she said.

Metzger encourages young women interested in applying to reach out to a local law enforcement officer for more information.



Officer Allan Guinard helps local children with their Christmas shopping. Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.



The Annual Bike Rodeo. Photo courtesy of the Gregory Police Dept.



MAY 31, JUNE 28, JULY 26
Fort Sisseton Lantern Tour
 Lake City, SD
 605-910-4465

*Photo courtesy of
 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.

APRIL 27
Country Roads
 2 p.m. Matinee
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

MAY 2-3
SD Spring Square Dance Festival
 Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.
 Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Faith Lutheran Church
 601 N. Cliff Ave.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 Call for events & times
 605-360-2524

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
 Sat. Consignment Auction
 Sun. Season Opening
 Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

MAY 3
West River Pheasants Forever Banquet
 5 p.m. Central Time
 Draper Auditorium
 Draper, SD
 605-516-0143

MAY 3
American Legion Post 15
Just Because It's Time to Dance
 6-10:30 p.m.
 El Riad Shrine
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-336-3470

MAY 3
Rummage & Bake Sale
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
 5103 Longview Rd.
 Rapid City, SD

MAY 6-7
7th Annual Energize!
Exploring Innovative Rural Communities Conference
 Hosted by SDSU Extension
 Community Vitality
 Platte, SD
 605-626-2870

MAY 10
Cinco De Mayo Falls Park Fiesta
 11 a.m.-7 p.m.
 Sioux Falls, SD

MAY 17
Norwegian Independence Day
 Vivian, SD
 605-222-3296

MAY 17
Annual Plant Sale
 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
 Codington Co. Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 830-534-5359

MAY 23-25
Brandon's Big Car Show
 Carnival & Car Show
 Fri. 6-11 p.m.
 Sat. 1-11 p.m., Car Show 1-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-5 p.m.
 815 McHardy Rd
 Brandon, SD

MAY 31
Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show
 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Brown County Fairgrounds
 Aberdeen, SD

MAY 31
Miss Prairie Village Pageant
 6:30 p.m.
 Lawrence Welk Opera House
 Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

MAY 31
Hay Country Jamboree
 7 p.m.
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

JUNE 5
Danish Constitution Day Celebration
 6:15 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Danish Folk Dancing & Music
 Daneville Heritage Museum
 Viborg, SD
 605-766-1312
danevilleheritage.com

JUNE 11
Agricultural Women's Day
 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Agar-Blunt-Onida School
 Onida, SD
 605-769-0013

JUNE 13
Jesse James Days
 Garretson, SD
visitgarretsonsd.com

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