



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



LACREEK ELECTRIC
NOVEMBER 2022 VOL. 23 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Barb Gross, Adele Enright
and Jean Tehle have all
worked hard to facilitate
free and fair elections
for registered voters
in Dewey County

Poll tenders rock the vote

**Election workers are
dedicated to the task**
Pages 8-9

**Freshman Impact
teaches sound
decision making**
Pages 12-13

Keeping Pets and Energy Bills Comfortable



Josh Fanning
General Manager

I don't know about you, but I consider my four-legged companion part of the family. I know others feel this way, too. That's why during the winter months, we make sure our whole family, including our four-legged members, is cozy – without taking a big “bite” out of our budget.

This month, I'd like to share a few simple ways you can make your home more comfortable this winter, which can ultimately help you save on energy bills.

At the onset of the cold weather season, we replace the HVAC filter for better air quality and to help the unit operate more efficiently. You can also keep your home cozier by caulking and weatherstripping windows and doors. If your home is particularly chilly, you can tape or affix heavy, clear plastic to the inside of your window frames to create an additional barrier against the cold. Ensure that the plastic is tightly sealed to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

We know winter can be “ruff”, so we set our thermostat at 68 degrees, a “purr-fect” temperature for people and pets. This is especially important for smaller, short hair and senior dogs – not just for warmth, but for their general health. Puppies, kittens and



older pets with arthritis or other ailments may have a harder time controlling their body heat and need the additional warmth when it's chilly out.

Pets that sleep close to the floor can be subject to cold drafts that enter your home through windows and exterior doors. If your pet's bed is near a window or door that feels drafty, tightly roll up a towel and place it near the bottom of the door or window to eliminate the draft. Cutting down on cold drafts helps everyone feel more comfortable during colder months.

If possible, elevate your pet's bed so it's not placed directly on a cold floor. An old chair or sofa cushion works well. If you don't use a dog bed, take some old blankets and create a donut shape on the cushion so the dog can snuggle and “nest” within the blanket. You can do the same for cats but on a smaller scale. Blankets enable pets to nestle into them, even when they aren't tired, and provide a comfortable place for dogs and cats to curl up.

During the day, open your blinds and curtains to allow sunlight to warm your home. Close window coverings at night for an added layer of insulation.

We can't control the weather, but we can provide advice to help you save energy and keep your family and furry friends more comfortable during the winter season.

Find Your Account Number: It's Worth \$160!

A member's account number has been hidden somewhere in this newsletter. If you find your account number, call the office before **November 7, 2022**, and you will receive a \$160 credit on your next month's billing.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LACREEK ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-912)

Board of Directors

Wade Risse – President
Brent Ireland – Vice President
Scott Larson – Secretary
Tom Schlack – Treasurer
Clarence Allen – Troy Kuxhaus
Cole Lange – Clifford Lafferty
Scott Larson – Neal Livermont
Marion Schultz – Jerry Sharp
Connie Whirlwind Horse – Donovan Young Man

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Tracie Hahn – Office Manager
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Mike Pisha – Operations Manager
Ashley Turgeon – Administrative Assistant
Jessica Cook – Member Services/IT

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Billing Specialist
Katrina Fish – Member Service/Billing Specialist
Lisa Jensen – Member Service Representative

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Line Foreman: Jesse Byerley
Journeyman Linemen:
Jordon Bakley – Dane Claussen – Lonny Lesmeister
– Garrett Metzinger
– Ryan Pettit – Aaron Risse – Damon Wangerin
Apprentice Linemen:
Les Cuny – Kody Hagen – Matthew Kruid
– Trace Scott
Journeyman Electrician: Roy Guptill
Warehouse Man: Cody Larson
Maintenance Man: Justin Smokov

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August 2022 Board Meeting Minutes

The regular meeting of the Board of Directors of Lacreek Electric Association, Inc. was held in the office of the Cooperative, located in the Town of Martin, S.D., on Aug. 16, 2022, beginning at 4 p.m.

The meeting was then called to order by President Wade Risse and the following directors were present: Brent Ireland, Clarence Allen, Connie Whirlwind Horse, Marion Schultz, Tom Schlack, Cole Lange, Jerry Sharp, Troy Kuxhaus, Donovan Young Man, Clifford Lafferty, and Neal Livermont. Also present: General Manager Josh Fanning, Finance Manager Anna Haynes, Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon, Operations Manager Mike Pisha, Office Manager Tracie Hahn, Work Order/Staff Assistant Sherry Bakley, and Member Services/IT Jessica Cook. Absent was Scott Larson. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by President Wade Risse.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon to record the board minutes.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the July 2022 Board Minutes.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to accept the Operating Report for June that was presented by Finance Manager Anna Haynes.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the checks and disbursements for July and the checks ran from number 77866 to 77929 along with the electronic checks which ran from 3953 to 3989. (Tom

“chairman”, Scott, and Wade)

The August Check Audit Committee will be (Brent “chairman”, Donovan, and Connie).

A motion was made, seconded,

and carried to accept the July Analysis of Investments that was presented by Finance Manager Anna Haynes.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the list of new members.

Jessica reported on the Charity Ride t-shirts and event, the Years of Service Awards, and the Bennett County Fair over the past weekend. Lacreek had a float in the parade this year and had employees and board members serve cookies to celebrate our 75th year of service.

Mike reported on work in progress, pole testing, recent fire-damaged poles, the August 5th storm with straight-line winds, and equipment.

Mike gave the safety report.

Josh reported on Truck #17, cameras for outside the building, the NRECA Health Plan adjustment, and the RST TUC Meeting. He also, discussed Basin Margins year to date and CFC KRTA.

Discussion was held on the NRECA District 6 Director Candidates and CoBank 2022 Director Election. Other information included the Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange Board of Directors re-election material.

The board went into executive session from 5:12–5:43 p.m.

A note was in the suggestion box thanking the board.

No further business was brought before the board and the meeting was adjourned.

Next Board Meeting – Sept. 20, 2022, at 4 p.m. 2501824419



WE WILL PAY \$25 TO YOUR ELECTRIC BILL WHEN YOU SWITCH TO PRE-PAID BILLING!

Prepaid Billing

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OFFER GOOD THROUGH DECEMBER 2022

A heaping helping of holiday home safety

Nearly every household uses extra electricity during the holidays for cooking, decorating and heating.

Take extra care to use electricity safely and to ask family members and house-guests to do the same. Here are some helpful tips:

- Stay in the kitchen when broiling or doing any stovetop cooking.
- Keep children well away from cooking appliances while in use.
- Keep towels, potholders and curtains away from hot surfaces.
- One of the riskiest holiday behaviors is overloading your electrical outlets. You will overload your wall outlets if you string strand after strand of holiday lights together and plug them into an extension cord that you plug into an outlet. Plugging multiple strands of cords into a power strip does not add any juice to the electrical circuit that powers the outlet you plug the strip into.
- Check decorative lights for damaged cords, plugs and sockets. Replace anything that's frayed, cracked or broken. Buy cords that are certified by UL; look for the UL symbol on the package.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, carpets or baseboards, or anywhere they can be a tripping hazard.
- Only use decorations and cords outdoors that are properly rated for outdoor use.
- When you put up outdoor decorations, do not string lights in trees near power lines. Fasten outdoor lights carefully and securely with clips, never nails or tacks.
- Keep electric lights away from decorative metal trees.
- Keep all light strings and other decorations away from pets so they don't get tangled in them or chew the wires.
- Keep all decorations - and everything else - at least 3 feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces and space heaters.
- Always turn off your decorations when you leave home and when you're sleeping.
- Make sure smoke detectors are present and working properly.
- Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic areas and at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn off space heaters and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave an open flame, including your fireplace or a candle, unattended.

LINEMEN PARTICIPATE IN RUBBER GLOVING SCHOOL



Roughly 50 electric cooperative linemen from across the state recently participated in a Rubber Gloving School at the Mitchell Technical College training facility. The program included simulating maintenance and repair work on energized power lines, awareness of proper safety procedures, grounding and insulation of vehicles, operation of aerial lift devices and more.

To see a video of this event and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Don't play on transformer boxes

Traci Tschetter

Traci, 11, warns readers to stay away from transformer boxes, which contain high-voltage underground electrical equipment inside. Traci is the child of Ryan and Elaine Tschetter and they are members of Whetstone Valley 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.



CROCKPOT CREATIONS

SLOW COOKER CHILI**Ingredients:**

2 lbs. lean ground beef
 1 pkg. McCormick Slow Cookers Chili Seasoning
 2 cans (14.4 ozs. each) diced tomatoes, undrained
 2 cans (16 ozs. each) kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 1 can (15.5 ozs.) tomato sauce

METHOD

Brown ground beef or turkey in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Place cooked beef, Slow Cookers Chili Seasoning Mix, tomatoes, beans and tomato sauce in slow cooker. Stir until well mixed. Cover. Cook 8 hours on low or 4 hours on high. Stir before serving. For best results, do not remove cover during cooking.

McCormick.com**SLOW COOKER TURKEY BREAST****Ingredients:**

2 tsps. McCormick Garlic Powder
 2 tsps. McCormick Paprika
 2 tsps. McCormick Rubbed Sage
 2 tsps. Sicilian Sea Salt
 1 tsp. McCormick Pure Ground Black Pepper
 1 tsp. McCormick Whole Thyme Leaves
 1 turkey breast, (about 6 lbs.) fresh or frozen, thawed
 3 tsps. butter, melted

METHOD

Mix seasonings in small bowl; set aside. Rinse turkey and pat dry. Brush turkey with melted butter. Sprinkle seasoning mixture over entire surface and under skin of turkey. Place turkey breast in slow cooker. Cover. Cook 1 hour on high. Reduce heat to low; cook 7 hours longer or until turkey is cooked through (internal temperature reaches 165 degrees). Transfer to platter or carving board and slice.

McCormick.com**SLOW COOKER MASHED POTATOES****Ingredients:**

5 lbs. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes
 1 c. chicken stock
 2 McCormick Bay Leaves
 1/2 c. (1 stick) butter, cut into chunks
 1 tsp. salt
 3/4 tsp. McCormick Pure Ground Black Pepper
 1/2 tsp. McCormick Garlic Powder
 1/2 -1 c. milk
 1 tsp. McCormick Parsley Flakes

METHOD

Spray inside of 6-quart slow cooker with no-stick cooking spray. Add potatoes, stock and bay leaves. Cover. Cook 4 hours on high or until potatoes are tender, stirring after each hour. Remove bay leaves. Stir in butter, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Cover. Let stand 5 minutes. Beat potatoes with electric mixer on medium-high speed or mash with potato masher, gradually adding milk, until smooth. Stir in parsley. Top with additional butter, if desired. Serve with McCormick Brown Gravy or Perfect Brown Gravy.

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Q: How can I save energy at home during the holiday season?

A: The holidays are a magical time when we come together with our loved ones to share food, gifts and quality time. It's also the most expensive time of year for many of us. Along with the expense of gifts, meals and travel comes colder weather and darker nights that lead to more electricity use and higher bills.

One way to reduce the financial burden of the most wonderful time of year is by implementing efficiency tips to use less energy at home and lower your monthly bills.

HOME PRACTICES

If you are hosting guests, your household will consume more electricity than normal. Be prepared with efficiency basics:

- Have your thermostat programmed at 68 degrees when you are home and dialed back 8 to 10 degrees when you leave the house or go to sleep.
- Run the clothes washer on cold with full loads.
- When not in use, turn off lights and the TV; fully shut down computers and gaming systems instead of putting them in sleep or standby mode.
- Lower the thermostat when guests are over or cooking food. Most gatherings happen in the center of the home, so save energy by turning the heat down in areas you are not using.

COOKING EFFICIENCY

Whether you are making holiday treats or a feast, here are a few tips to help lower energy use in the kitchen.

Use the oven light to check food. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside is reduced by up to 25 degrees, according to the Department of Energy (DOE). When possible, make use of a slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate, which use less energy than an oven and

stovetop. According to DOE, a toaster oven can use up to half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time.

Let hot food cool to room temperature before placing it inside the refrigerator. This ensures you don't increase the temperature inside your fridge and cause it to use more energy to cool down. You can also take some of the stress and expense out of your holiday cooking by asking guests to bring a dish.

HOLIDAY LIGHTING

This year, make the switch to LEDs for all your holiday lighting. LED holiday lights consume 70 percent less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. For example, it costs 27 cents to light a 6-foot tree for 12 hours a day for 40 days with LEDs compared to \$10 for incandescent lights.

Pick up a few light timers so you don't have to remember to unplug your lights every evening. You can also choose to upgrade to smart holiday lights that offer a wide range of app-controlled options, including time, colors, music and modes.

OUT-OF-TOWN EFFICIENCY

If you're visiting family and friends during the holidays, prepare your home to use less energy while you're away.

Water heating is the second-largest energy expense in your home, accounting for about 18% of your utility bill, according to DOE. Switching your water heater to vacation mode will reduce wasted energy by keeping the water at a lower temperature. If your water heater does not have vacation mode on the dial, you can adjust it to the lowest setting.

Set your thermostat to around 55 degrees so you're not wasting energy to heat the home while you're away.

Instead of leaving lights on all day, consider upgrading a lamp or fixture to a smart lightbulb. This allows you to control lights from afar and set a schedule for the light to go on and off. Another option is to repurpose your holiday light timer for one of your living room lamps.

Lower your energy bills this holiday season with these simple tips. Happy Holidays!



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Schaunaman living out Miss Rodeo dream

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Adrienne Schaunaman is used to being the center of attention and pulling off pressure-packed performances in front of large crowds, but one spine-tingling moment managed to mangle her nerves.

The reigning Miss Rodeo South Dakota was on horseback at the start of the annual Rodeo Rapid City event last February. She was staged at the edge of the arena and getting ready to take off across the middle of the ring holding a state flag with a switch attached to the pole. Her task was to ride out in front of the crowd as the national anthem reached a crescendo and flip a switch



that would send fireworks shooting out of the end of the pole.

There was something about the extraordinary zeal of the sold-out crowd that gave her the jitters.

"They were screaming the national anthem at the top of their lungs and it was clear they knew the meaning of every single word," she recalled. "They were singing with such enthusiasm and passion that it made me nervous. I had to make sure I clicked the switch at the



Adrienne Schaunaman has spent 2022 traveling across the state and region representing South Dakota and promoting the rodeo and ranching lifestyle.

right time and get everything done like we had planned. As soon as they got to 'home of the brave' I headed out down the center and it was so cool. It was a once-in-a-lifetime moment."

Schaunaman, 24, has spent the year traveling across the state and region promoting her chosen platform, "Mentoring Matters." When she speaks to groups, she shares with her audiences the positive impact that so many influential individuals have had in her life, including her parents, 4-H leaders, school teachers, rodeo coaches and her network of friends.

A graduate of Aberdeen Central High School, she grew up on the family farm raising and showing livestock. She competed in barrel racing at Colby Community College in Colby, Kan., and showed horses at the University

of Minnesota-Crookston where she graduated in 2021 with a degree in equine science and equine business management. She took a break from her job at Northern Plains Animal Health and hit the road to pursue her ambassador responsibilities.

Schaunaman recently returned from Oregon where she represented South Dakota at the Pendleton Round Up, one of the oldest rodeo events in the country.

"I try to ingrain into everyone that they have unique talents they can share," she said. "I wouldn't be where I am without so many people helping me along the way. I encourage people to try to do more with what they have. We should unite around common causes, volunteer and help our communities thrive by identifying and coalescing around those many things that unite us."



Jamalia Franzen, auditor deputy in Dewey County, encourages all eligible citizens to register to vote. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Poll workers urge voters to stay active in the election process

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

About 10 years ago, Michele Moore was newly retired and looking for something interesting to occupy her time. Out of the blue, she received a call from the Clay County elections auditor.

“She wanted to know if I was interested in working the elections and I told her I’d do it. It’s been very rewarding and it feels like I’m doing something important and worthwhile,” Moore said.

When she’s not facilitating the election process, Moore takes care of the bookkeeping for the family’s welding and manufacturing business operated by her husband, David.

While election work isn’t a full-time gig, poll tenders put in long hours on voting day. They typically report to the local precinct at 6 a.m. before the polls open an hour later. The shift goes straight through to 7 p.m. when the polls close, although any voters still

standing in line at that time are allowed to cast their ballots. Workers have to stay on duty the entire time and often pack their own lunch and dinner.

After the last voter is done, all the sealed ballots and accompanying paperwork are brought to the auditor’s office for verification and certification to ensure the election is “free and fair.”

Moore said all the workers at her precinct located at the National Guard Armory in Vermillion are diligent, dependable, thorough and conscientious. She said they take their jobs very seriously and are careful not to be “political” in any way, a guideline contained in the orientation and training process that workers go through before each election regardless of one’s years of service.

The training material requires that workers be professional, punctual, respectful to voters, team-oriented and “leave partisan leanings at the door.” Anyone concerned about the validity of the election process can appear at

Number of South
Dakota citizens

62,429

registered to vote but
considered inactive

the precinct as a “poll watcher” or “poll observer,” however, those individuals must adhere to a separate set of guidelines as set forth by the Secretary of State’s Office.

“We’re not here to change anyone’s mind or influence how anyone votes,” Moore said. “We’re just here to do anything we can to help them vote as quickly and smoothly as possible and make sure the process goes well. We try to make it easy for them.”

That doesn’t mean everything always goes according to plan. As the political passions and divisions have grown more intense over recent years, Moore said she’s encountered some fairly tense situations. But she said she generally



Poll workers are on the job from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time. If the polls close while you are in line, you will still be permitted to vote.

Here is a breakdown of party identification as of Sept. 1, 2022:

- Republican - 291,956
- Democrat - 150,760
- No party/Ind. - 142,538
- Libertarian - 2,733
- Other - 1,376

Total - 589,363

VOTE

Election poll workers see themselves as doing something helpful to support and facilitate the democratic process.

feels safe while doing her work inside the armory.

Some voters can get upset when they try to make requests that violate the voting rules, such as attempting to change their party affiliation on voting day or not providing the proper identification. She said tensions can run high during contentious presidential or mid-term elections.

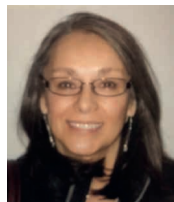


“Sometimes people get angry and you just try to calm them down. They don’t know how things work and what’s required because they’re not paying attention,” she said. “Social media and TV stirs up their passion and they don’t always know how to control that.”

She recalled one particular fellow who insisted on voting without presenting the proper identification. When he was

told he would have to use a provisional ballot, he became agitated and stormed out of the precinct. Moore was “a little nervous” about the man returning and what he might do, but she took comfort in the fact that the National Guard soldiers were right there in the building.

Cris Sichmeller, a resident of Webster, signed on to join her local precinct in Roslyn six years ago and enjoys the



Michele Moore

social aspects of the assignment. A self-described “farm wife,” Sichmeller said she doesn’t often have an opportunity to sit down and visit with friends, but being at the polling place means visiting with folks and catching up on current events.

“People used to spend time just visiting with one another, going to houses and having coffee and playing cards, but that doesn’t happen a lot these days,” she said. “There’s a lot of camaraderie that comes with being around people you know in the community that you have something in common with.”

She said at her precinct things normally proceed “without a lot of drama,” but she remembers that the Covid pandemic did cause a few wrinkles. Several workers contracted the virus, along with the precinct deputy.

The workers had to wear face shields, and Plexiglas was set up in the voting area and at the registration tables.

“I remember a man who had just retired from the military and he came in and saw the face shields and just laughed,” Sichmeller recalled. “He said that wasn’t going to keep us from getting the virus or passing it on to others. He said we needed a hazmat suit for that. I guess he was right.”

Barb Gross recently retired after tending the polls in Dewey County since the 1980s. She describes herself as a stickler for adhering to the rules and buttoning everything down.

“We always made sure everything tallied up because we knew we were going to be audited and we invited that because it was a challenge to see if we could pull it off without a hitch and without anything slipping through the cracks,” she said.

Secretary of State Steve Barnett emphasized the fact that poll workers serve a very valuable role in society.

“They’re on the front lines of the election process. You couldn’t run an election without them,” he said.

Barnett stressed importance of voters meeting their obligation to stay actively involved and make sure they are familiar with the rules and regulations. To find out more about voting rights and responsibilities, visit www.sdsos.gov.



Be safe this hunting season

Be aware of what's behind that big buck, or it might cost big bucks!

Across the U.S., thousands of dollars per year are spent repairing equipment and power lines that have been struck by a stray bullet. Not-for-profit cooperatives, owned by the members, all share in the expense.

This doesn't even include the inconvenience, damages and hazards to members down the line who require power for medical equipment or other needs while a lineman does some hunting of his own to locate the problem.

Hunters and other gun-owners should not shoot near or toward power lines, power poles and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Sometimes the damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months, and is only discovered when an unexplained outage occurs.

Landowners are also encouraged to take note of nonmembers who are hunting on their property, and remind them to be aware of power lines.

Hunting safety tips:

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and wildfire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines

may not be as visible.

- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at, or near, birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any type of firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole, except utility equipment, can pose an obstruction and a serious hazard to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations.
- Avoid the use of lofting poles near overhead power lines – remember, electricity can jump across a considerable distance.

The majority of hunters practice safe hunting and understand the potential risks when discharging a firearm. We encourage experienced hunters who are familiar with the area to identify the locations of utility properties and equipment to young or new hunters in their group and remind them to avoid shooting toward these facilities. Enjoy the great outdoors. Just be sure to hunt only what's in season.

During hunting season, please remember that electrical insulators, conductors and electrical equipment are NOT on the hunting season list.

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f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	3907	3695	
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16. Electronic Copy Circulation

		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
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18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: **Jessica L. Cook, Member Service / IT** Date: **9-29-22**

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We Power Creativity.

Our community is teeming with energy and ideas. We're proud to power yours.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Is your home heating system ready for the winter chill? One of the easiest ways to keep your system running efficiently is to regularly replace filters. If your central air system has a furnace filter, it should be replaced about every 90 days.

If your home is heated through warm-air registers, baseboard heaters or radiators, remember to clean them regularly to boost efficiency.

Source: energy.gov

SOUND DECISIONS

Central Electric lineman Cody Riggs uses a hot stick to simulate de-energizing a power line during a Freshman Impact emergency exercise at Hanson High School in Alexandria. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Freshman Impact program promotes sound safety practices for students

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The students at Hanson High School were stunned and aghast at the horrific scene unfolding right before their eyes.

There were two wrecked sedans, a downed utility pole and tangled wires strewn across the road. Emergency responders were swarming everywhere as a fire truck barreled onto the scene with its sirens blaring. And the most unsettling sight of all: four of their fellow students lying in the crumpled cars with massive wounds and barely clinging to life.

Fortunately, it turns out the accident scene was just a drill staged by a group known as Freshman Impact: Caught in the Moment, and coordinated as part of Cornbelt Program Day at the school located in Alexandria.

Nearly 200 students came from surrounding schools for a full slate of

learning opportunities centered around vehicle safety, first aid, emergency response, drug abuse awareness and much more. Participating schools were Hanson High School, Armour, Bridgewater-Emery, Ethan, Marion, McCook Central, Plankinton and Wessington Springs.

Local organizers Yolanda Price and Don Huber worked with Freshman Impact Executive Director Rick McPherson, local school officials and emergency response agencies to plan the event.

The morning session included seven separate stations scattered throughout the school's parking lot and in the gymnasium. The learning stations focused on the following subjects: teen mental health; healthy relationships; jaws of life and ambulance demonstration; seatbelt awareness; drug dog; social media dangers; and a distracted driving course where the



West River Electric is one of several electric cooperatives that support the Freshman Impact program.

students wore goggles simulating drug and alcohol impaired vision and attempted to navigate a short course behind the wheel of an ATV.

Taking part in the program was Central Electric Cooperative, which provided the downed power pole and wires. Once the emergency exercise was set into motion, two co-op linemen promptly arrived on the scene to de-energize the lines and worked with other responders to secure the area and form a safe perimeter.

Central Electric's Manager of Communications Tara Miller helped



A Hanson High School student takes on the role of an accident victim during a recent mock emergency scenario. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

facilitate the partnership while working alongside local organizers.

"This is an incredible opportunity for area students to learn about good decision-making, safety and the real dangers that are out there," Miller said. "Concern for community is one of our guiding principles as a cooperative. This experience serves to educate first responders and students. It aligns with our values, and we are pleased to support it."

The day's program covered just about all the bases. The schedule included a poignant perspective of loss and grief from LeAnn Moe, who lost her teenage daughter to an automobile accident. During the mock accident response, one of the crash victims was carried away in a hearse furnished by a local funeral

home. And after all the activity settled down outside, the students returned to the gymnasium to observe a mock legal trial and sentencing hearing over the car accident they had witnessed.

The day ended with the distribution of educational materials by CORE (Community Organized Resources for Educating), the parent organization of Freshman Impact.

McPherson said he has found that the teaching method employed by Freshman Impact is successful in driving the message home to students, and they also develop a rapport with local

agencies and emergency responders.

"The students see up close and learn through hands-on activities the possible consequences of wrong choices and the lasting effects physically and emotionally on their bodies, their families and friends and their community," he said, noting that West River Electric based in Wall is also an event sponsor. "It's all about making safe choices and preventing destructive behaviors, and it's important our teens learn the life-long skills and values to help them make the best possible decisions."

Visit www.freshmanimpact.com.

Central Electric Cooperative of Mitchell presented CORE with a \$2,500 Operation Round Up grant to help fund the local program. Pictured left to right are Freshman Impact founder Rick McPherson, CORE Coordinator Yolanda Price, CORE Coordinator Don Huber, Operation Round-Up Trustee LeAnn Moe, Central Electric Director Merl Bechen and Hanson County Chief Deputy Mike Brown. *Photo by Tara Miller*





University of Minnesota graduate students pose in a massive coal bucket during an electric cooperative tour sponsored by Renville-Sibley CPA and the university.

Renville-Sibley leads tour of electric cooperatives for college students

Erin Kelly
NRECA

The smallest electric cooperative in Minnesota is having an outsized impact in educating college students about the co-op business model and how power is generated and delivered for co-ops in the region.

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association, a 1,586-member co-op with 13 full-time employees, worked with the University of Minnesota to organize a week-long tour of distribution co-ops and generation and transmission co-ops in Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota for graduate students pursuing master's degrees in science, technology and environmental policy.

"These students are going to lead us into the future from a public policy and an environmental perspective,"

said DeeAnne Norris, Renville-Sibley's CEO. "It's important that they understand there's an obligation to keep energy reliable and affordable while trying to marry that up with renewable energy and sustainability."

The mid-May tour began at Renville-Sibley's office in Danube, Minn., with a discussion about broadband, solar energy and farming. It continued with stops at several facilities run by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Bismarck, N.D.-based generation and transmission provider owned by 131 member co-ops that provide electricity for more than 3 million people in nine states.

Other visits included Sioux Valley Energy, a distribution co-op in Colman, South Dakota, where students learned about electric vehicle charging and other kinds of beneficial electrification,

and East River Electric in Madison, South Dakota, a G&T that supplies power to Renville-Sibley and 23 other co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Students learned about East River's load management, economic development programs and co-op relationships.

The tour wrapped up at Lake Region Electric Cooperative in Pelican Rapids, Minn., where students saw the co-op's creative member-focused programs like wind and solar generation and hydroponic gardening trailers.

"It's important for the students to be able to get out there in the field to see the really big energy infrastructure," says Gabriel Chan, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota and co-director of the Electric Cooperative Innovation Center, a new initiative focused on research partnerships with co-ops.

"You read about wind, hydro or coal plants, but being there is an entirely different experience."



The students put on their harnesses and took turns going up in a bucket to simulate working conditions for linemen. The group also stopped by the headquarters of East River Electric in Madison, SD.



Chan had worked with Norris since before the COVID-19 pandemic to organize the tour and used the pandemic delay to create a semester-long graduate seminar called The Energy Transition in Rural America, which brought in guest speakers and included site visits to nearby cooperative facilities.

"IF YOU DON'T TELL PEOPLE WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR CO-OP, THEY'RE GOING TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN STORY ABOUT YOU."

- DEEANNE NORRIS, CEO, RENVILLE-SIBLEY CPA

Sarah Komoroski, a mechanical engineer who is halfway through her master's degree program, said she felt like "a kid in a candy shop" on the tour as she got up-close and personal with coal boiler, gas turbine and other infrastructure.

"I was just smiling the whole time," says Komoroski, who describes her passions as climate change and the transition to renewable energy. "Everyone

was so nice and so welcoming and so passionate about what they do.

"I think the biggest thing that struck me about co-ops is they're so unique in terms of their governance structure," she said. "They're non-profit, member-owned, and their goals and incentives are different than a traditional for-profit utility. They're each tackling the challenges of affordability, reliability and sustainability in a slightly different way."

Komoroski said she believes electric cooperatives also have the advantage of having a special relationship with their members.

"Co-ops are uniquely positioned to build trust with their members during the energy transition," she said. "That relationship is the exciting part to me."

Norris and Chan say they hope to continue the week-long tour every other year for students in the two-year master's program. The professor said he would like to hear more from cooperative consumer-members, and Norris says she would like to start it a day earlier.

"The students are in their 20s and

30s, but regardless of your age, that was a very taxing schedule," says Norris, who went on the tour herself.

"It was an intense week," Komoroski agrees. "We had about 15 stops in five days, with 26 hours of driving."

Norris urges other co-ops across the country to connect with local universities or university extension offices and plan similar experiences that can raise awareness of energy systems in rural areas and how consumer-centric utilities like co-ops can lead the energy transition.

"When I was planning this trip, there was a little skepticism by a few people we wanted to visit," she said. "But if you don't tell people what's happening at your co-op, they're going to come up with their own story about you, and often it's not close to reality."

"This experience shows that when we open our doors, we can engage and collaborate with students who are excited about the cooperative business model, who are passionate about the Earth and her resources and are enthusiastic about learning and making a difference."



NOV. 3-5
Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge
Huron, SD

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

OCT. 28-30

ZooBoo

Great Plains Zoo
Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-7003

OCT. 31

Halloween Parade

Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 3-5

Yankton's Harvest Halloween
Downtown, Yankton, SD

NOV. 3-5

Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge

100 4th Street SW, Huron, SD
605-352-0000

NOV. 4-6

Girlfriends' Weekend

Hill City, SD

NOV. 5-20

Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show

9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

NOV. 5

Fairburn Community Center Bazaar

Fairburn, SD

NOV. 11-13

Christmas at the Barn

Front Porch 605
Groton, SD
605-216-4202

NOV. 12

Black Hills Meat Festival

Black Hills Harley Davidson
2820 Harley Dr.
Rapid City, SD
605-390-7917

NOV. 12

Holiday Extravaganza

Sisseton, SD
605-698-7425

NOV. 13

Lutefisk, Lefse, Meatball Supper

Chamberlain, SD
605-234-6698

NOV. 18-20

Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival

Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

NOV. 19

Fall Craft Show

Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD
605-394-1887

NOV. 19

Lille Norge Fest

Canyon Lake Activity Center
Rapid City, SD
605-342-4226

NOV. 25

Olde Tyme Christmas Kick-off and Parade

Hill City, SD

NOV. 25

Trap Shoot

Izaak Walton League
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-9527

NOV. 25

"Light up the Night" Parade and Fireworks

Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 25-26

Kris Kringle Kraft Fair

Hill City, SD

DEC. 2-3

Gregory Mid-Winter Fair

Gregory Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 2-3

Christmas in the Hills

Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4140

DEC. 3

Santa's Thrift Village

Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD
605-394-1887

DEC. 3

60th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale

Central States Fair Grounds,
Rapid City, SD
605-343-0710

DEC. 17

Custer Christmas for Kids

Custer High School
Custer, SD
custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com

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