



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



**LACREEK ELECTRIC**  
MARCH 2025 VOL. 25 NO. 11

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Jackson Neprud, 4-H archer for Jones County, poses next to his target.

## South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for  
the State Competition

Pages 8-9

Wild Horses Roam at  
Black Hills Sanctuary

Pages 12-13

# Building a Stronger Future: Enhancing Reliability and Engaging Our Members



**Josh Fanning**  
General Manager

As we find ourselves already closing the books on the first quarter, Lacreek Electric is committed to improving the reliability of our electric service across our entire service territory. Our team has been working hard to implement our annual work plan, which includes upgrading infrastructure, enhancing system efficiency, and ensuring that we are prepared for the challenges of the future. From replacing aging equipment to expanding our capabilities in outage response, every step we take is aimed at providing our members with safe, dependable electricity.

A key part of our cooperative's success is the engagement of our members, and that's why I want to invite you to our Annual Meeting on April 24th personally. This meeting is more than just a yearly gathering—it's an opportunity for you to stay informed, have your voice heard, and participate in shaping Lacreek Electric's future.

## Why Should You Attend?

1. **Stay Informed** – Learn about the progress we're making on system improvements, financial health, and future projects that will impact our service.
2. **Vote for Leadership** – As a cooperative, we are owned by you, our members. Your vote helps elect board members who represent your interests.
3. **Win Prizes** – We always have great door prizes, and attending members will have a chance to take home something special!
4. **Focus on Safety** – Hear about the steps we are taking to improve safety for both our employees and members, including outage response, system maintenance, and best practices for electrical safety in your home and business.
5. **Support Growth & Reliability** – Learn about our long-term plans for system expansion, infrastructure upgrades, and new technologies designed to improve service and support the future needs of our communities.

Your participation in the annual meeting strengthens our cooperative and ensures that we continue to serve you with the reliability and quality you expect. Mark your calendar for April 24th, and we look forward to seeing you there!

Josh Fanning  
General Manager, Lacreek Electric Association

**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  
 Neal Livermont – Marion Schultz  
 Jerry Sharp – Connie Whirlwind Horse  
 Donovan Young Man

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 Kasi Harris – Finance Manager  
 Sherry Bakley – Work Order/Staff Assistant  
 Ashley Turgeon – Administrative Assistant  
 Jessica Cook – Member Services/IT

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 Cody Larson – Accountant  
 Terri Gregg – Member Service/Billing Specialist  
 Katrina Fish – Member Service/Billing Specialist  
 Lisa Jensen – Member Service Representative

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 Journeyman Linemen:  
 Jordon Bakley – Kody Hagen  
 Lonny Lesmeister – Garrett Metzinger - Aaron  
 Risse – Trace Scott – Damon Wangerin  
 Apprentice Linemen:  
 Tee Allen – Les Cuny - Matthew Kruid  
 Riley Meis - Chayson Schofield - Cameron York  
 Staking Specialist: Ryan Pettit  
 Warehouseman: Henry Johnson  
 Maintenance Man: Justin Smokov

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# December 2024 Board Meeting Highlights

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, South Dakota, on December 17th, 2024 beginning at 1:00 P.M. The meeting was called to order by President Wade Risse, and the following Directors were present: Donovan Young Man, Jerry Sharp, Neal Livermont, Cole Lange, Clifford Lafferty, Troy Kuxhaus, Tom Schlack, Marion Schultz and Scott Larson. Also present were General Manager, Josh Fanning, Finance Manager, Kasi Harris, Operations Manager, Mike Pisha, Member Service/IT, Jessica Cook, Administrative Assistant, Ashley Turgeon, Work Order/Staff Assistant, Sherry Bakley and Office Manager, Tracie Hahn. Absent from the meeting was Brent Ireland.

**Items Approved:**

- Approved Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon to record the board minutes.
- Approved the November 2024 Board Minutes.
- Accepted the Operating Report for October as presented by Finance Manager Kasi Harris.
- Approved the checks and disbursements for November.
- Accepted the November Analysis of Investments presented by Finance Manager Kasi Harris.
- Approved the list of new members.

**Board Discussed:**

- Dane's retirement party on December 27th and open house on January 3rd.
- Scholarship application deadline February 19th.
- Work in progress such as line upgrades, hospital generator, new service installs and breaker maintenance as well as a safety report was given.
- Reports from Board Members on Rushmore Board Meeting, SDREA Board Meeting, NREA Annual Meeting and Mid-West Annual Meeting.
- GRIP 1 Community Kickoff Meeting/Wildfire mitigation efforts.

The next meeting of the Board will be January 21st at 1:00 p.m.

# Falls Are Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed.
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment.
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job.
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment.
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather.
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended.
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open.
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder.
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface.
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge.
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top.
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom.
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use.



### Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project, remember the following.

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned to the left.
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills.
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment.
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### "Don't cut trees near power lines."

#### Remington Welsh, Age 11

Remington warns readers to not cut trees around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Remington! Remington's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh, members of Black Hills 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.

# Hearty FAMILY MEALS

## EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

### Ingredients:

1 lb. ground hamburger  
1 lb. cooked pasta  
5 oz. spinach  
1/4 cup butter  
2 cups heavy cream  
1 tbsp. minced garlic  
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

### Method

In a large pan, brown hamburger and minced garlic. Remove any excess grease. Turn heat to low and add the butter and heavy cream. Stir and simmer for a few minutes until the butter melts and it starts to boil. Stir in the spinach and cook for about three more minutes. Stir in the parmesan and cooked pasta. Enjoy!

**Lyndell Todd**  
Rapid City, S.D.

## MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef  
6 oz. chili sauce  
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled  
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs  
2 large eggs  
1 tsp. onion powder  
1 tsp. seasoned salt  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. yellow mustard  
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

### Method

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook and crumble bacon. In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce. Divide the mixture into eight round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves. Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for two to five minutes.

**Kayla Beaner**  
Centerville, S.D.

## SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

### Ingredients:

1/4 cup butter  
1 cup chopped onion  
1/4 cup flour  
2 cups chicken stock  
1 cup milk  
1/2 cup apple cider  
1/2 tsp. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp. whole thyme leaves  
1/4 tsp. black pepper  
2 cups cubed cooked chicken  
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)  
1 cup frozen peas  
1 can (7.5 oz.) refrigerated biscuits, (10 biscuits)

### Method

Preheat oven to 450°F. Melt butter in large ovenproof nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir five minutes or until softened. Sprinkle with flour. Stir with whisk until mixture is well blended. Add stock, milk, apple cider, garlic powder, cinnamon, thyme and pepper; whisk until mixture is smooth.

Stir in chicken, sweet potatoes and peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook and stir 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

Place biscuits on top of chicken mixture. Bake 10 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

**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.

# Landscaping to Save Energy



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** How can landscaping help lower my energy bill?

**A:** There's a lot going on in the space around our homes. Competing factors of aesthetics, safety, energy efficiency, water conservation and increasing risk of wildfires are a lot to consider. Thoughtful planning and good design can address these factors and result in year-round energy savings.

Carefully positioned trees can save up to 25% of a typical household's energy use, according to the United States Department of Energy (DOE). When selecting the right trees and other foliage, research what is best for your local climate. Select native species naturally adapted to your location for lower maintenance.

Strategically placed deciduous trees allow for summer shade and passive solar heat gain in the winter when leaves have fallen. This can lead to energy savings in the summer and winter.

Slower-growing trees might take longer to provide maximum shading benefit, but their roots are typically deeper, and branches are stronger. These factors can make them less likely to be damaged by wind, snow or ice, and be more drought resistant.

Be sure to plant large trees far enough away from your home to prevent damage from falling branches or root damage to your home's foundation.

Keep in mind, if you have a rooftop photovoltaic solar system, even a small amount of shade can significantly reduce energy production. Consider smaller plantings closer to the home to shade walls, windows or hardscaped surfaces, such as driveways and sidewalks.

Windbreaks are another landscaping strategy that can be beneficial for energy savings in windy areas. The DOE says windbreaks reduce wind speed by as much as 30 times the windbreak's height. That, in turn, reduces wind chill near your home and can lower heating costs. The DOE recommends planting two to five times the mature tree's height away from your home.

Plant evergreen trees and shrubs for windbreaks and consider adding fences or earthen mounds to help lift

the wind up and over your home. In cold climates, they offer the added benefit of acting as a snowdrift to keep snow from piling up against your home.

Keep landscaping clear of dryer vents, heat pumps and air-conditioning units to ensure access for maintenance and airflow around those locations.

If you live in an area at risk of wildfire, create a defensible space around your home. Consider hardscaping with gravel, bricks, pavers or stone shaded by fire-resistant awnings or covers. Plant fire-resistant plants with proper spacing of plants and trees from your home and other structures on your property.

When landscaping, always consider safety first. Call before you dig to ensure you know where any underground power, gas, water or sewer lines are located. The national 811 Underground Service Alert program routes you directly to your local resources. Call 811 or go to [call811.com](http://call811.com) before you dig.

Be mindful of overhead power lines, too. Look up and check the surroundings before setting up ladders. Be thoughtful when planting new landscaping that could encroach on power lines. Utility equipment should have at least 10 feet of clearance, when possible.

As you prepare to refresh your yard for the coming spring and summer, consider ways you can boost your energy efficiency for more comfort and savings year-round.



# Crafting Memories

## Jaylie's Custom Pens Turns Parts Into Art

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Jaylie Beckman, a member of Grand Electric near Bison, S.D., has a knack for taking something as ordinary as a pen and making it extraordinary.

Last year, Jaylie and her mother, Jenny, ordered a custom nursing-themed pen advertised on Facebook as a gift for her sister-in-law, a nurse at West River Health Services in Hettinger, N.D. When the surgery department manager saw the pen, she wanted 10 more for their entire team.

"At first, we said, 'Wait, we bought them from somebody else.' But then we thought, if they make can make them, we can too," Jenny said. "It all exploded from there."

Encouraged by the growing interest in her community, Jaylie embraced the challenge. Inspired, she began exploring TikTok and other social media for new ways of making pens and ordering supplies for her new endeavor: Jaylie's Custom Pens. Combining beads with pens, Jaylie began transforming basic parts into something that is truly one of a kind.

In May 2024, Jaylie and Jenny opened their first vendor booth at the Bison Spring Vendor Fair, showcasing nursing, faith-based and graduation themed pens.

Since then, the two have traveled across northwest South Dakota and southwest North Dakota, displaying Jaylie's beautifully



Jaylie Beckman selling pens at a vendor show in Timber Lake.  
*Submitted Photo*

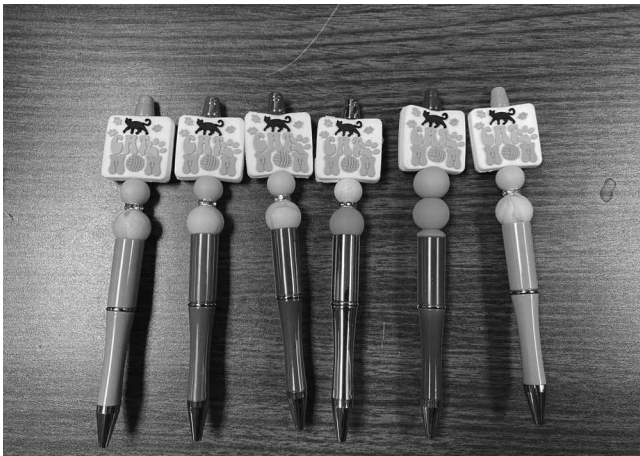
crafted pens at trade shows in Faith, Hettinger, Buffalo and beyond. Their booth now hosts a wide variety of customized pens with themes ranging from monster trucks and rubber ducks to butterflies – and Jaylie's personal favorite, a pen topped with a focal bead that proudly states, "Cat Mom." In total, Jenny estimates that Jaylie has sold more than 500 pens from their last eight craft shows.

"I really love it," Jaylie said.

Beyond the fun aesthetic, Jaylie's pens have also provided both her and her family a way to process a profound loss within their family. In January 2024, Jenny lost her granddaughter, Jaylie's niece, to a farm accident. In her memory, Jaylie and Jenny created purple pens with Minnie Mouse beads to help raise money in a silent auction for a commemorative park.

"Creating these pens gave Jaylie something to focus on and put her energy toward during that difficult time," said Jenny. "I think it kept her mind off of it and I know it helped me."

Jaylie continues to take custom requests for pens. She has also expanded her inventory to include bracelets, Crocs charms, stickers and keychains. Those interested can find her work on the Jaylie's Custom Pens Facebook page, where she shares updates on her latest projects.



Jaylie Beckman's favorite custom pens proudly state, "Cat Mom."  
*Photo by Frank Turner*



West Central Electric CEO Jeff Birkeland, left, is the retired archery coach, and IT Coordinator Derek Wolf, right, is a first-year rifle coach for Jones County, South Dakota.

# SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

## Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

**Jocelyn Johnson**  
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Dedicated practice is the price each marksman pays to qualify and compete at the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports state event.



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

This year, hundreds of shooters will compete on April 25-27 to showcase marksmanship. Their hard work will be on display as every shot will impact the final score. Among these competitors is a dedicated group from Jones County, South Dakota. For the past two decades, employees from West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, S.D., have dedicated their time to coaching various 4-H shooting disciplines.

“It’s the cooperative giving back to the community and promoting our youth,” said Jeff Birkeland, CEO of West Central Electric. “A few years ago, we took 41 kids to state, and we brought home 43 state trophies. I’m proud of our kids.”

Birkeland coached archery for 15 years and happily recounted the experience with his two boys during that time.

“Kids want to shoot. We have the best participation in shooting sports

than we have in anything else.”

Birkeland’s son, Jacob, competed for 10 years in shooting sports among other 4-H competitions.

“While I explored many aspects of 4-H, shooting sports became my primary focus,” Jacob said. “I began my journey in shooting sports with BB gun and was introduced to archery. Archery quickly became my main area of competition, and it has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful part of my 4-H experience.”

This experience offered him a competitive edge as well as bonding memories that Jacob vouches as life shaping.

“One of the greatest highlights of my time in 4-H has been the lasting friendships and memories I’ve built along the way,” Jacob said. “Whether it was constructing a trophy shelf with my grandpa, having archery competitions against my dad to see who had to do the chores or representing South Dakota at the national shooting sports event – each experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I would not be where I am today without it.”



Matthew Birkeland, left, stands with Hayzen Sealey, right, at the spring state competition.

Derek Wolf, IT coordinator for West Central Electric and first-year coach for Jones County 4-H, said, “We begin practicing once a week in January. We work on safety first – getting the kids comfortable with their firearms. Then, we step into practicing for competition.”

Each county competes in three matches leading up the state competition, and every participant must make a qualifying score in at least one match to qualify for state.

“We encourage every kid to enter and compete in all three matches,” Birkeland said. “It’s better to practice at it instead of getting to state and having the wheels fall off.”

The art of practicing perfectly is what brings these competitors to state. Birkeland noted that those who practice, will win. And those who overcome a disappointment may come home with the trophy.

“It teaches those kids a lot about life,” Birkeland said. “You practice and practice, you put the time in and then one thing happens – one flinch,

one mistake and it’s over. Emotionally, hopefully it strengthens them a bit. Instead of breaking down and crying, you better be able to handle it...Limit your problems. Don’t increase them with a mental meltdown.”

Wolf agreed with this sentiment and described how overcoming a bad shot and being mentally tough is sometimes more important than being a skilled shooter.

“There are a lot of kids who find success in this, so I find it rewarding to be involved as a coach,” he said.

Wolf’s daughter, Sophie, competes in .22 rifle and archery and remarked that the highlight of the competition was that it challenged her and made her a stronger competitor. She trains twice per week for several hours while preparing for the state competition.

“I feel excitement when I compete,” Sophie said. “I love the challenge.”

In 2024, more than 1,600 participants competed in various disciplines at the spring state shooting event. These disciplines

are pistol, archery, rifle, hunting and western heritage. An additional 270 participants competed in the fall state shooting event for shotgun and muzzleloading. Each year, the top five shooters win trophies and this year’s winners may be chosen to represent at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb., on June 22-27. Last year, South Dakota tied for 2nd place with Missouri at the national event.

John Keimig, South Dakota State University Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, emphasized that the shooting program is made great by the people who volunteer.

“One of the great things about small communities in South Dakota is people who give their time to volunteer,” said Keimig. “If it wasn’t for people who volunteer, we wouldn’t have this successful program – whether it be volunteers who work full-time for an electric cooperative or farmers and ranchers. They are the backbone of this program.”



Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.

# Director Petitions Available

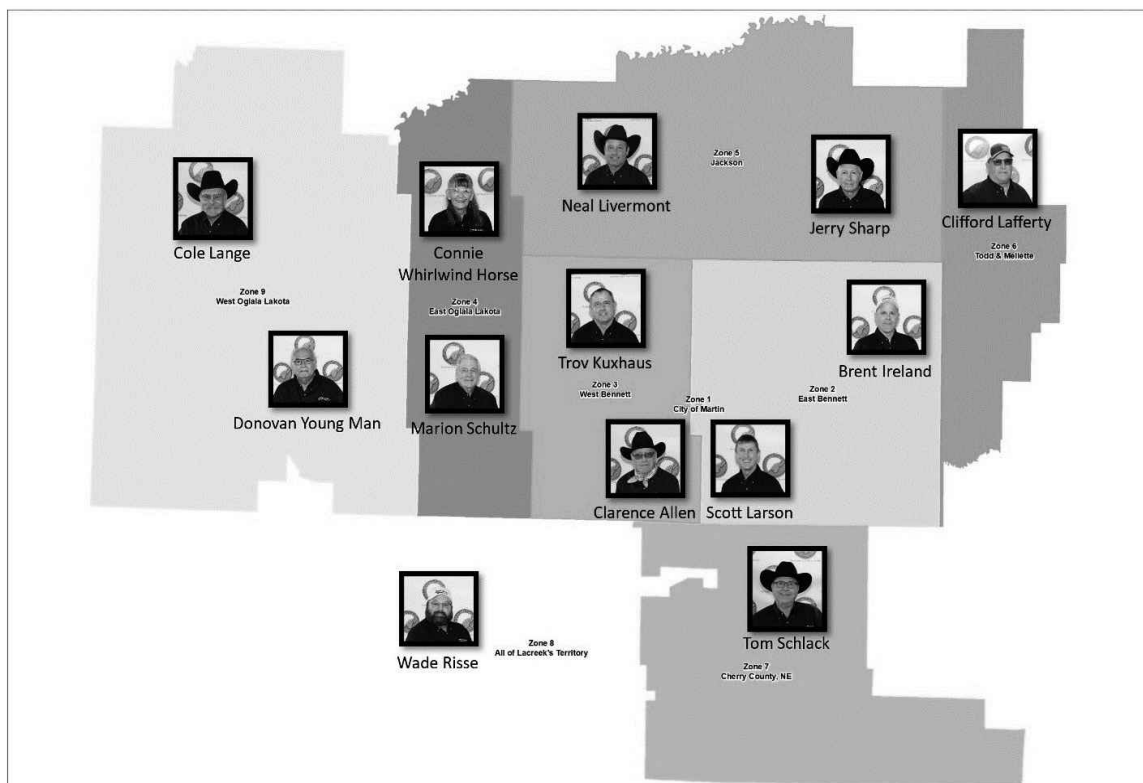
Board of Director Petitions are available and can be picked up for the zones open for election beginning **February 24, 2025**, from persons interested in running for Lacreek Electric's Board of Directors. The election will be held at the Annual Meeting scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 2025, at the American Legion Auditorium in Martin, S.D. Anyone interested in being a candidate for Lacreek Electric's board of directors who live in Zone 1, City of Martin; Zone 3, West Bennett County; Zone 4, East Oglala County; Zone 5, Jackson County and Zone 8, At Large, should stop by the office to obtain a petition.

The directors currently serving these zones are Zone 1, City of Martin, Scott Larson; Zone 3, West Bennett County, Troy Kuxhaus; Zone 4, East Oglala County, Connie Whirlwind Horse; Zone 5, Jackson County, Neal Livermont and Zone 8, At Large, Wade Risse.

Candidates must live in the zone they plan to represent. The petitions must be signed by at

least 15 active members living in the zone the candidate is running in. All positions are for three-year terms on the board. Petitions must be filed with the board secretary no later than **March 24, 2025**.

Lacreek's Board of Directors currently consists of 13 members representing nine zones. If you choose to run for a Board of Directors for a non-profit organization such as Lacreek Electric, you have inherently accepted fundamental responsibilities in addition to a commitment of time and accountability to the cooperative on behalf of the members it serves, keeping in mind, the board has ultimate legal responsibility for the cooperative. A director must act in good faith, in the best interest of Lacreek Electric. A director possesses a fiduciary duty to Lacreek Electric and its members. A director is accountable for the assets and resources of the cooperative. They should never use their board position to advance their private interests. A director should concentrate on the goals and vision of Lacreek Electric.



# ALWAYS LOOK UP, ALWAYS

POWER LINES ARE A LEADING CAUSE OF ELECTRICAL FATALITIES

Between 2011 and 2018, 38% of all electrically related workplace fatalities were caused by overhead power lines. In the majority of these cases, fatalities occurred in occupations with little to no electrical safety training. So when you're on a job site, always look up, always - it can save your life.

**IF A VEHICLE OR OBJECT CONTACTS A POWER LINE OR UTILITY POLE**

Consider all lines to be live and dangerous.

Tell others not to approach vehicle, downed lines, or anything that may be in contact with downed lines.

Warn others to stay at least 35 feet away.

Stay in place or inside your vehicle unless you see fire or smoke.

911 Call 911.

**IN THE EVENT OF FIRE OR SMOKE**

Do not touch the ground and vehicle at the same time.

Jump from the vehicle with your feet together.

Shuffle away and avoid lifting your feet.

Please share this free resource to save lives

ESFi.org   [www.facebook.com/ESFi.org](https://www.facebook.com/ESFi.org)   [www.twitter.com/ESFidotorg](https://www.twitter.com/ESFidotorg)   [www.youtube.com/ESFidotorg](https://www.youtube.com/ESFidotorg)

BRING ALL OF THESE THAT YOU CUT OUT TO THE

**ANNUAL MEETING, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

TO BE ENTERED IN AN ADDITIONAL DRAWING!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ACCOUNT #: \_\_\_\_\_ METER #: \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_

## PRE-PAID BILLING

PREPAID HIGHLIGHTS

- ~ No Late Fees ~
- ~ Payment Flexibility ~
- ~ Avoid Reconnect Fees ~
- ~ No Monthly Bill Surprises ~

### THE BREAKDOWN

To Start Prepaid Billing:

- \$50 Deposit
- \$50 Credit Balance

To Maintain Prepaid Billing:

- Keep a Credit of Over \$10

Reconnecting with Prepaid Billing:

- Pay Small Balance Due
- Pay \$25 for a Credit to get you back on

If off Longer Than 10 Days...

\$25 Reconnect, \$25 Credit, Pay Any Balance Due

**CALL NOW**

**AVOID DISCONNECT**

**AVOID LARGE PAYMENTS**



# RUNNING FREE

*Photos by Alvis Upitis*

## Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

In the southern Black Hills, a watchful eye will catch a rare and breathtaking sight: a herd of wild mustangs galloping freely across thousands of acres of grassland in the Cheyenne River Valley.

For the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary staff and the hundreds of rescued horses they care for, it's just another day on the ranch.

The sanctuary operates like most working ranches, says Susan Watt, the president and CEO of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. Staff regularly travel over 15 miles across the 10,000 acre ranch to fill water troughs and set out hay, mineral blocks and horse cake. It's a trek that takes them across picturesque grasslands, hills, bluffs and the muddy banks of the Cheyenne River. A bulwark against suburban sprawl, the land remains as nature intended.

"Wild horses have been part of North America since time immemorial," Watt explained. "We have a large population of American mustangs, Spanish mustangs, horses with blood lines that trace back to Spain and Portugal, and a small herd of Choctaw Indian ponies that were part of the Trail of Tears

— They are a very important part of American history we need to preserve."

The story of the sanctuary begins in the late 1930s with a young man named Dayton Hyde. At 13 years old, Hyde left his home in Michigan for his uncle's cattle ranch in Oregon after hearing captivating tales of the wild west's excitement and beauty.

Once he arrived, Hyde was completely enthralled by the western lifestyle. With each passing year, his connection to the land and the wildlife strengthened, shaping his identity as a cowboy, conservationist and writer.

Decades later in 1987, while on a trip to Nevada to purchase cattle, Hyde came across corrals of wild horses the federal government had rounded up using low-flying helicopters. Devastated by the idea of the free-roaming herds confined to pens, Hyde was inspired to create a refuge for wild horses where they could run free.

Hyde petitioned congress to allow him to take some of the captured horses and create a sanctuary. South Dakota Governor George Mickelson, who had learned of Hyde's ambitions and was supportive, invited Hyde to inspect a piece of land known as Chilson Canyon near Hot Springs, S.D.

For nearly 40 years now, that piece of land plus Hyde's hard work has given hundreds of wild horses another chance to roam wild. However, it's a luxury very few wild horses receive.

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

rounding up over 40,000 wild horses to control herd populations, which can grow rapidly in the wild. Their fates vary; At government holding pens, they await auction where if sold they'll be rehomed with owners who agree not to sell them for slaughter outside of the U.S.

According to Watt and other wild horse advocacy groups, those assurances don't always matter.

"The horses are supposed to be protected from slaughter," she continued, "But unfortunately, you put them in a trailer and cross the border into Canada or Mexico and they don't always check to see what's in the trailer."

The horses that come to the sanctuary are generally in "emergency situations," Watt said, which means the horses are being sent to slaughter or their previous caretaker died or is unable to take care of the horses.

In addition to preserving the herds of wild horses, Hyde envisioned the sanctuary as a means to protect and preserve the land's natural beauty and rich historical legacy, which includes long-ago remnants of human activity.

"This particular tract of land was the location for ancient petroglyph writings that ancient man did on cliff walls," Watt explained. "And we're protecting the pioneer history of this land; Our buildings that we use are pioneer homesteads."

Though Dayton Hyde passed away in 2018, his legacy lives on. Today the sanctuary is home to several hundred wild horses, a herd of cattle, thousands of acres of pristine prairie

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

"He used to say every ache and pain he ever had was from a horse," Watt laughed. "What Dayton Hyde really wanted was to protect this land from subdivision, to let it be for wildlife and wild horses, and keep it safe and protected. I think South Dakota should be immensely proud of what Dayton Hyde has done."

For more information about the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, visit [www.wildmustangs.com](http://www.wildmustangs.com).



(Above) Dayton Hyde, founder of the sanctuary.  
(Below) The sanctuary encompasses more than 10,000 acres of land along the Cheyenne River near Hot Springs, S.D.

*Photos by Alvis Uptis*





# CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

The Vinyl Record Club at the Custer County Library meets once each month.  
Photo submitted by Custer County Library

## Fun Awaits At Your Local Library!

**Jacob Boyko**

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, March is National Reading Month – and the best place to celebrate is at your local library. Whether you are into reading or are just looking for a fun weekday activity, your local library is sure to have something that interests you and your family. Stop in at your local library to learn about fun activities like the ones below!

### **Custer County Library – Vinyl Record Club, Seed Library, Letterboxing**

As the snow melts and the first leaves of spring begin to unfurl, the Custer County Library transforms into a hub of inspiration for community gardeners of all skill levels. With engaging seminars and resources for everyone to enjoy, Custer's library is the perfect place for community members of all ages to cultivate a love for gardening.

One of the library's most beloved initiatives is the seed library, made possible by the contributions of the Custer Mile

High Garden Club. This unique resource invites visitors to explore a collection of seeds that they can use whether they're growing vegetables in their garden or flowers on the kitchen counter.

Seeds are sorted by type, Myers explained, with sections dedicated to seeds you start indoors, seeds you start outdoors, root vegetables, leafy greens, flowers, herbs and so on.

The library also hosts educational seminars covering topics including hydroponics and sowing seeds in the wintertime.

"Master gardeners come to talk on related topics and we'll have free plant clippings and free seed packets available for people to pick up," Myers explained. "It just kind of kicks off our gardening season."

Gardening isn't the only thing bringing people together at the Custer County Library. The Vinyl Record Club transforms the library into a relaxing lounge where community members connect over their shared love of music.

"Everyone brings their favorite albums,

and you can play a song or two to share," Librarian Sarah Myers explained. "We just saw it as a potential to bring people together and capture that interest of vinyl. It's kind of fun to see different generations of people interacting together."

Myers also promotes outdoor opportunities through a scavenger hunt activity called letterboxing.

Similar to geocaching – just without the coordinates – letterboxing requires players follow hints and clues about their surroundings. Myers prepares clues in a similar fashion to the one below that guides players to a cache on the Mickelson Trail.

"Park near search and rescue, ready for a quest. Walk toward Hill City, following the rest. From the little stop sign, take 220 steps on track. Search high and low for a quartz throne, no looking back. If you see the football field sign, you've gone too far. Take a seat on the throne, reach down, and there's your star."

From under benches to tucked between rocks, players scour the area for the hidden stamp to ink their logbooks and continue to the next step of their adventure.

"We love getting people outside," Myers continued. "This was a way for families to have little mini adventures. Libraries

are more than just books – they're a place where you can build community and find community."

## Madison Public Library – Chess Club, Trivia Night

In Madison, Librarian Lisa Martin keeps her community sharp with brain-building activities and clubs for people of all ages.

The library's reach extends beyond its rows of books and walls; On Thursday nights, The Office Bar & Grill in downtown Madison transforms into a bustling trivia hotspot where the community tests their knowledge on an array of topics to lead their team to victory.

The library hosts five rounds of trivia. Participants can count on a round focused on current events, but the rest remain a surprise to keep everyone on their toes.

"Sometimes we do a theme to go along with a month," Martin explained. "Last January, we decided to do "Dry January" where you try and go without drinking, but it was really just an excuse to have trivia about soda pop!"

The night's winner receives a gift card to The Office Bar & Grill, but at the end of the year, the team with the most points walks away with a trophy.

The library also hosts a chess club, which Martin says attracts community members of all ages.

"It's hard to get the boys in sometimes because they might not want to sit through things," Martin said. "Chess club attracts that crowd, and we'll have 10 guys sitting here anywhere from sixth grade to retirement talking to each other and teaching each other – sometimes smash talking – and it's a lot of fun."

Martin strives to offer something for everyone. Whether it's inviting Lake Herman State Park rangers to demonstrate outdoor skills, holding puzzle competitions or hosting talented musicians, Madison Public Library will have something to get you involved.

## Gregory Public Library – STEAM Club

At the Gregory Public Library, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Club, is working to spark children's imaginations and show them opportunities for new

hobbies, or even future careers.

The after-school club focuses on hands-on lessons where students often have an active role in the experiment.

"We started off by inviting Sanford in and the kids were able to do an experiment where they extracted DNA from strawberries," Librarian Tara Engel said of the early days of the club. "We've also used our LEGOs to introduce engineering, we've used a lot of art supplies, we'll do chemistry experiments with microscopes – Our STEAM Club is really getting kids thinking and doing things in a different manner."

One of the most popular initiatives has been the bridge construction lab, where students use recycled materials like cardboard tubes to construct different bridges and learn basic engineering concepts.

"We use some of our bridge and construction books in our nonfiction section as examples," Engel explained. "Then we have them use cardboard, construction paper, straws and strings to try and hold their bridge up."

The moment of truth comes when the bridge's structural soundness is tested by the weight of a Matchbox car driving across the deck.

The library also makes use of challenge cards for LEGOs, where students draw a card with a creation challenge and students ranging from making the tallest tower to building a musical instrument that makes a sound.

"It's fun to see how the students come together to form teams and work together," Engel said.



(Above) Trivia Night winners in Madison.  
Photo submitted by Madison Public Library



(Right) Gregory students work on a cardboard bridge.  
Photo submitted by Gregory Public Library



**MARCH 14-15**  
**St. Patrick's Day**  
**Weekened**  
**Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.**  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

*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.

**FEB. 28-MARCH 1**  
**Mardi Gras Weekend**  
 8 p.m. Fri.-10 p.m. Sat.  
 Main Street  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**MARCH 6**  
**SD Jazz Festival Concert**  
 Aberdeen Community Concert Association  
 7:30 p.m.  
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD  
 Tickets Available at Concert

**MARCH 8-9**  
**Philip Area Annual Gun Show**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 American Legion Hall  
 Philip, SD  
 605-859-2135

**MARCH 8**  
**Epiphany Sausage Sale**  
 10 a.m. until gone  
 Parish Hall  
 Epiphany, SD

**MARCH 8**  
**Minnehaha County**  
**Pheasants Forever Banquet**  
 5 p.m.  
 El Riad Shrine  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-376-8219

**MARCH 14-15**  
**Badlands Quilter Weekend**  
**Getaway**  
 Fri. 5 p.m.  
 Sat. 8 a.m.  
 Community Center  
 Wall, SD  
 605-685-5718

**MARCH 15**  
**VFW Teener Baseball Bingo**  
**Benefit**  
 5 p.m.  
 Tyndall Auditorium  
 Tyndall, SD

**MARCH 22**  
**Annual Banquet & Bash**  
 Britton Area Chamber of Commerce  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Britton, SD  
 605-448-8130

**MARCH 26**  
**Hill City Garden Club**  
**Trip to Central Asia**  
 1 p.m.  
 Kathryn Cleveland  
 Hill City Super 8  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 29**  
**Ready. Set. Grow!**  
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners  
 Codington CTY Extension Complex  
 Watertown, SD  
 605-838-7098

**APRIL 4**  
**Mitchell Technical College**  
**2025 Alumni Gathering**  
**Cornhole Tournament**  
 5 p.m. Social  
 6:30 p.m. Tournament  
 The World's Only Corn Palace  
 Mitchell, SD  
 605-995-7342

**APRIL 4-5**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 748 S Main St.  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237

**APRIL 4-6, 11-13**  
**Women Playing Hamlet**  
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.  
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.  
 Mighty Corson Art Players  
 Corson, SD  
 www.mightycorson.com

**APRIL 5-6**  
**Youth & Family Kids Fair**  
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Sun. 12-4p.m.  
 The Monument  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-342-4195

**APRIL 11-12**  
**Junkin' Market Days Spring**  
**Market**  
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 www.junkinmarketdays.com

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