A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

LACREEK ELECTRIC
SEPTEMBER 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 5

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pristine Prairie

Tellus & Lori Waddell Grow, Harvest Native Plants

Pages 8-9

Drive Out to a Drive-In!

Pages 12-13

A New School Year, A New Season of Opportunities



Josh Fanning
General Manager

I hope everyone had a wonderful summer filled with good memories, family, friends and plenty of time spent enjoying the communities we call home. As we turn the calendar to September, summer is winding down, county fair season has come to a close, and our students are settling into another school year.

The county fairs, powwows, youth rodeo series and many other summer events throughout our service territory are always a great reminder of what makes our communities special. These events give us an opportunity to come together and see the hard work, dedication and talents of the young people in our area. From 4-H members and livestock exhibitors to rodeo competitors, dancers, performers and everyone who participated in the many events held throughout the summer, **congratulations on a job well done!** Your commitment and accomplishments are something to be proud of, and we are grateful for the opportunity to watch you grow, succeed and represent your communities.

Now that school is back in session, our communities are settling back into their routines. Between classes, activities, sports and everything else that comes with a new school year, there is certainly no shortage of things keeping our young people busy. As your electric cooperative, we're proud to support the students and families in our service territory and to help provide opportunities that encourage the next generation to learn, grow and get involved.

And speaking of opportunities — don't forget to keep an eye on Cooperative Connections!

The coming months will bring several opportunities for students to apply for scholarships, youth programs and educational trips through Lacreek Electric and our cooperative partners. These programs can provide students with experiences they may never have the chance to have otherwise, from traveling and meeting other students to learning more about the electric cooperative industry and seeing our nation's capital.

You never know which opportunity might be the one that opens a new door, so make sure you don't miss the deadlines! We'll be sharing information about these programs in upcoming issues of Cooperative Connections, along with application details and important dates. We encourage parents and students to watch for these announcements and take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

As we head into a new season, I hope you'll continue to look to your cooperative not only for reliable electricity, but also for the many ways we work to support the members, families and communities we serve.

Here's to a great school year, a successful fall and plenty of exciting opportunities ahead!

— **Josh Fanning**
General Manager/CEO
Lacreek Electric Association Inc.

811 Call before you dig
Free Call
Free Service

June 2026 Board Meeting Highlights

The regular meeting of the Lacreek Electric Association Board of Directors was held June 23, 2026, at the Cooperative office in Martin, South Dakota. President Brent Ireland called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Directors present were Connie Whirlwind Horse, Jerry Sharp, Marion Schultz, Tom Schlack, Wade Risse, Angela Rascher, Michel Melvin, Hadley Livermont, Scott Larson and Cole Lange. Director Troy Kuxhaus participated via Webex. Also present were General Manager Josh Fanning, Finance Manager Kasi Harris, Operations Manager Mike Pisha, Work Order/Staff Assistant Sherry Bakley, Member Services/IT Jessica Cook and Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon.

Items Approved

- Approved Administrative Assistant Ashley Turgeon to record the Board minutes.
- Approved the May 2026 Board minutes.
- Approved the June meeting agenda.
- Accepted the April Operating Report.
- Approved checks and disbursements for May.
- Accepted the May Analysis of Investments.
- Approved the list of new members.
- Approved holding the 79th Annual Meeting on April 22, 2027.
- Accepted the Form 990 as presented.
- Approved candidate to vote on in 2026 RESCO Director Election.
- Approved the Wage and Salary Committee's recommendation for wage increases under the Union Contract and Native American Day as a paid holiday.

Items Discussed

- Cooperative Connections magazine paper costs and the availability of discounted paper for the next six months.
- Reflect on 78th Annual Meeting.
- Right-of-way clearing progress in the Wanblee and Long Valley service areas.
- Reinsulating work north of Manderson and completion of the Vetal East project.
- Niobrara South Circuit underground replacement project.
- Completion of substation spraying. 2501800507
- Repairs to Bucket Truck #17.
- Hiring of a summer intern enrolling in MTI Lineman Program.
- Safety report.
- SDREA Board meeting activities.
- Rushmore Board Meeting and Rushmore Annual Meeting reports.
- CFC Annual Meeting report.
- Status of the Wildfire Mitigation Plan with Vantage Point.
- Oglala Substation cell tower lease and required lienholder approvals.
- Annual Conflict-of-Interest Forms required of the Board of Directors.
- Zone 6 Director vacancy and plans to advertise the position.

Next Board Meeting – July 21, 2026, at 4:00 PM.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LACREEK ELECTRIC

USPS No. 018-912)

Board of Directors
Brent Ireland - President
Troy Kuxhaus - Vice President
Cole Lange - Secretary
Scott Larson - Treasurer
Hadley Livermont . Michel Melvin
Angie Rascher . Wade Risse . Tom Schlack .
Marion Schultz . Jerry Sharp
Connie Whirlwind Horse

Management Staff
Josh Fanning - General Manager
Mike Pisha - Operations Manager
Sherry Bakley - Work Order/Staff Assistant
Kasi Harris - Finance Manager
Jessica Cook - Member Service/IT
Ashley Turgeon - Administrative Assistant

Office Personnel
Member Service Representative:
Lisa Jensen . Tawnni Risse
Billing/Member Service Representative:
Terri Gregg . Katrina Fish
Right of Way Specialist:
Amy Pisha
Accountant:
Cody Larson

Operations Personnel
Jesse Byerley - Line Foreman

Journeyman Lineman:
Tee Allen . Jordon Bakley . Les Cuny . Kody Hagen . Matthew Kruid . Lonny Lesmeister Garrett Metzinger . Aaron Risse . Trace Scott Damon Wangerin

Apprentice Lineman:
Burke Beer . Spencer Morrison . Ryan Porch Chayson Schofield
Ryan Pettit - Staking Specialist
Henry Johnson - Warehouseman
Justin Smokov - Maintenance Man

Mailing: This publication is mailed the 15th of the month prior to the issue date. Layout is at least three weeks prior to mailing. LACREEK ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Lacreek Electric Association, Inc., PO Box 220, Martin, SD 57551 for its members. Families subscribe to Lacreek Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Subscription information: Lacreek Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for $12 annually. Periodical postage is paid at Martin, SD and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Lacreek Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 220, Martin, SD 57551; telephone (605) 685 - 6581; fax (605) 685 - 6957

STAYING PREPARED IN RURAL S.D.

As most South Dakotans know, weather on the Great Plains can be frightfully unpredictable. In fact, South Dakota holds the record for the fastest temperature rise ever recorded. On Jan. 22, 1943, the temperature in Spearfish climbed from 4 degrees below zero to 45 degrees above zero in only two minutes.

Winter storms also offer reminders of how quickly severe weather can reshape daily life. The Blizzard of 1966 brought wind gusts of 70 mph and snowdrifts reaching more than 30 feet. Roads remained blocked for days, and massive livestock losses made it one of the most severe blizzards in state history.

Winter Storm Atlas, another devastating blizzard in October 2013, dropped several feet of snow over the Black Hills. Heavy snow and strong winds toppled trees and power lines, and devastated livestock operations, leaving some residents without electricity for a week or longer.

Although not every storm will make the record books, severe weather can still disrupt a household. A little preparation on an ordinary day can make a difficult day much easier.

Make A Plan

Emergency preparedness begins with a plan. FEMA recommends that households develop a plan for alerts, appropriate shelter, evacuation and communication if family members become separated.

Start by identifying the types of emergencies most likely to affect your area. For rural South Dakotans, that may include anything from blizzards and tornadoes to severe thunderstorms and wildfires. A good safety plan starts by choosing a safe place inside the home for high winds and tornadoes, generally a basement or small interior room, away from windows.

Next, consider who in your household may need extra help during an emergency, including infants, older adults and pets. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do, then walk through the plan together.

Build A Practical Supply Kit

Once the plan is in place, start collecting and organizing supplies your household could rely on if the power goes out or travel becomes difficult. FEMA recommends keeping enough food and water for at least several days, with one gallon of water per person for each day. For example, a family of four preparing for three days would need at least 12 gallons of water.

Choose nonperishable foods your household already eats and that can be prepared without electricity. Then add the basics needed to get through an outage, including flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit and a way to recharge cellphones. A NOAA Weather Radio can also provide important updates even when cellphone service is unavailable.

Next, tailor the kit to your household. Set aside medications and other essentials.

There is no need to build the entire supply kit at once. Start with what is already in the house, then add supplies during regular shopping trips. Check the kit a few times each year to replace expired food, medications or batteries.

Preparedness cannot stop a storm, reopen a highway or restore electricity, but it can provide time and options when conditions begin to change.

For more information, visit Ready.gov for additional tips on making an emergency plan, building a supply kit and staying prepared.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Owen Williams, age 7

Owen reminds members to not plant trees near power lines. That is great advice, Owen! Thank you! Owen's parents are Bruce and Jing Williams from Wakonda S.D.

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.



FALL DESSERTS

Picture by New Africa and Shutterstock.

GOLDEN GRAHAM/ SMORES BARS

Ingredients:

7 cups Golden Graham cereal
16 oz. mini marshmallows
1/2 cup butter
6 full size Hershey bars

Method

Unwrap Hershey bars and break apart on lines and then each piece again in half. Set aside. Melt the butter and 6 cups of the marshmallows. Stir in the Golden Grahams cereal. Cool for one minute. Stir in remaining marshmallows and Hershey pieces. Press lightly into a greased 9x13 pan with slightly wet hands. Cool and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsp. flour

Topping
(makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

VERY GOOD PEACH DESSERT

Ingredients:

First layer:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup nuts
1 stick margarine

Mix together and press in 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 F for 10 minutes.

Second layer:

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar

Cream together and add 1 cup Cool Whip. Spread on top of cooled crust.

Third layer:

1 cup sugar
2 tbsp. white corn syrup
3 tbsp. cornstarch
1 cup water

Combine ingredients, cook until thickened, then remove from heat. Add 3 tbsp. of peach-flavored gelatin and 1/4 tsp. almond flavoring. Cool.
Peel and slice fresh peaches, then combine with the cooled mixture. Spread on top of cheese filling. Top with a layer of whipped topping and chill.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

FROM LIGHT SWITCHES TO LIFELONG HABITS



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services Group

Do you have energy-saving helpers at home? Teaching your children to build good energy habits saves money on your electric bill today and sets them up for a lifetime of smart energy use. Here's how to get your family started on a household energy-saving adventure.

Safety First

When it comes to electricity, start with safety basics. Secure cords so appliances, lamps or other plugged-in items can't be pulled down. Use outlet covers and safety plugs to keep little hands from getting injured.

As they get older, teach children not to stick things in outlets. When they are old enough to use outlets, let them know they should never unplug by pulling the cord. When playing outside, educate them to stay away from downed power lines, keep a safe distance from all electrical equipment and avoid the dangers of electricity near water.



Teaching Energy Habits

Keeping safety in mind, you can teach age-appropriate energy habits.

Turning off fans and lights when you leave rooms is always a good habit to instill. Fully powering down TVs, computers and gaming systems reduces energy waste.

Keeping the refrigerator door open is a common energy waster for kiddos – and some adults. Show them they can take a quick look inside and scan their options. If they need time to decide what they want, they can close the fridge while making up their minds.

Closing your home's doors is another tip to keep heated or air-conditioned air inside the home. I wonder how many kids these days are asked if they were born in a barn or if they would even know what you mean?

Hot water is another saver to consider. In addition to reducing wasted water, using less hot water helps you save on your energy bill. Heating water is typically the second-highest energy use in a home, behind heating and air conditioning. Reduce energy use by turning off the water while hand-washing dishes, taking short showers and not overfilling the bathtub.

Gamify Your Bill

Review the electric bill with older children. Be sure to focus on energy use, which is shown in kilowatt-hours on your bill.

It's also a good opportunity to teach budgeting and household finances. If you save money on the electric bill, you may be able to do something fun with that money instead. Consider a trip to mini golf, getting ice cream or choosing a longer-term goal to fund a weekend family trip.

Make it a game. Consider a family reward for using less energy than the previous month or the same month of the previous year, or an individual reward for the one who guesses how many kilowatt-hours you used that month. The winner gets to pick the movie for family night.

Exploring energy efficiency and conservation with your children doesn't have to be a chore. Find fun ways to build lifelong energy habits and save energy around your home.

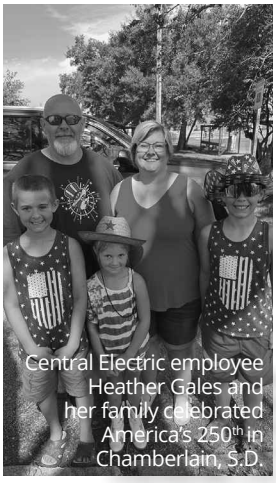
AMERICA'S 250TH

Aunicka and Jagger Dargatz and Micki Lesnar from Lake Region Electric pose with sparklers.

Electric Cooperatives Celebrating Independence



Beverly Heath, member of Lacreek Electric, captured the celebrations happening in Martin, S.D.



Central Electric employee Heather Gales and her family celebrated America's 250th in Chamberlain, S.D.



Oahe Electric General Manager Jordan Lamb takes a moment to pose with wildlife in the Black Hills.



Central Electric employee Lindsey Wilson's family celebrated America's 250th and July 4th at Lake Mitchell.



Bailey Meyer, member of Lake Region Electric, shares a photo of her children celebrating the holiday.



Lake Region Electric employee Autumn Spiering and her boys went touring around Custer.



WONDROUS WILDFLOWERS & PRAIRIE PRESERVATION

Tellus and Lori Waddell.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Waddell Native Seeds Turns Rural Acerage into Prairie Paradise

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Journeying east on U.S. Hwy. 12 toward Milbank, as you make a steep descent into Whetstone Valley, you'll pass the usual South Dakota crops – corn, soybeans, some wheat here and there.

But for Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative members Tellus and Lori Waddell of Marvin, the most facinating – and lucrative – harvest is one most of us would overlook, growing tall in roadside ditches and uncut fields.

For more than 30 years, the Waddells have allowed their Grant County acreage to run wild as they grow, harvest and sell the seeds of dozens of native wildflowers and grasses.

"We started noticing wildflowers up in the pasture, and at that time [the internet was] coming out so we could do some research on what they were," Lori recalled. "Tellus started calling nurseries asking them if they wanted this or that ... and that's how we built into this – and there are not a lot of people that do this."

When Lori says "this," she's referring to more than just collecting seeds. She means getting up early before the weather is too hot, rolling up her sleeves and driving around the property in a side-by-side scanning the ground for patches of whichever wildflower type is ready to be harvested – by hand – for seeds.

"It's very, very labor-intensive," Tellus added. "It's not like picking flowers – because we don't pick a flower. You have to let [the seeds] develop. Right now, we're picking things that blossomed about six weeks ago."

With dozens of plants and just as many harvest schedules, the Waddells have a steady amount of work to do from mid-spring all the way into fall.

Traversing the lightly traveled trails over their expansive, glacially carved property, (this reporter was joined by two labs in the back seat of the side-by-side) Tellus and Lori are quick to point out distant patches of coneflowers, blazing star, wild turnips, vervain and their personal favorite flora they cultivate, milkweed.

"It's for the butterflies," Tellus explained as he pulled the vehicle up to the family's newest experiment: milkweed planted as a row crop.

"It's the first time we've ever done that," Tellus said, proudly explaining his youngest son, Levi Waddell, is heading up the iniative.

Tellus added, "As every generation takes over, you'll get different things."

Most outbuildings on the Waddells' land double as drying rooms for at least one harvest during the season.

That includes their three-stall garage – a more accurate description may be the seed processing facility – where the Waddells dry the seeds, separate them from the chaff and package them for shipment to area greenhouses and other customers.

Demand has grown to the point where the Waddells have hired about a dozen part-time summer workers to help harvest seeds.

Their harvesting efforts don't stop at the

The Waddells are row cropping milkweed for the first time. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed, making it an important resource for conservation efforts.
Photo by Jacob Boyko





Lori Waddell enjoys photographing native flowers on the acerage. Top row: prairie lily, pasque flower (S.D. state flower), wild turnip. Bottom row: blazing star, scarlet gaura, coneflower. *Photos by Lori Waddell*

fence line – Tellus is known to park his car, knock on the doors and ask to collect seeds if a patch of prairie catches his eye.

"We have picking rights [agreements with property owners] from here to Pierre down to Grand Island, Nebraska," Tellus said, recounting an especially vibrant purple field of vervain near Forestburg.

This led Tellus to a more solemn conversation. Piece by piece, he and Lori have bought surrounding acerage in an effort to isolate their native plants from the effects of drifting pesticides. Tellus said that when mixed into a slight breeze, the chemicals are potent enough to wipe out their native broadleaf plants for years at a time – even if the spraying takes place miles away.

Tellus and Lori's observation is that biodiversity is shrinking throughout the region for this same reason – diverse fields of native flowers and grasses are becoming more difficult to find, and the wildlife that relies on native plants for food are becoming increasingly scarce.

"You talk to people in their 80s, and they'll talk about about walking through a field of lilies," Tellus said. "And then they just sit there for a bit and try to think of the last time they've seen that. Sometimes 40 or 50 years ago."

He continued, "that's when people realize the prairie is pretty much gone."

Levi Waddell uses social media to spread awareness about native plants, conservation and his family's operation.

His TikTok page, Waddell's Wildflowers, has more than 1,000 followers and 19,000 likes and chronologizes the day-by-day life of a native plant harvester.

The Waddells hope to share their story to educate others on the importance of conservation and inspire them to preserve the native prairie for generations to come.

"God gave us this beautiful earth and we're ruining it," Lori said. "If we can at least preserve and protect our little corner, I feel like we've done our job."



PROCESSING NATIVE SEEDS



The harvested seeds are spread indoors to dry for several weeks.



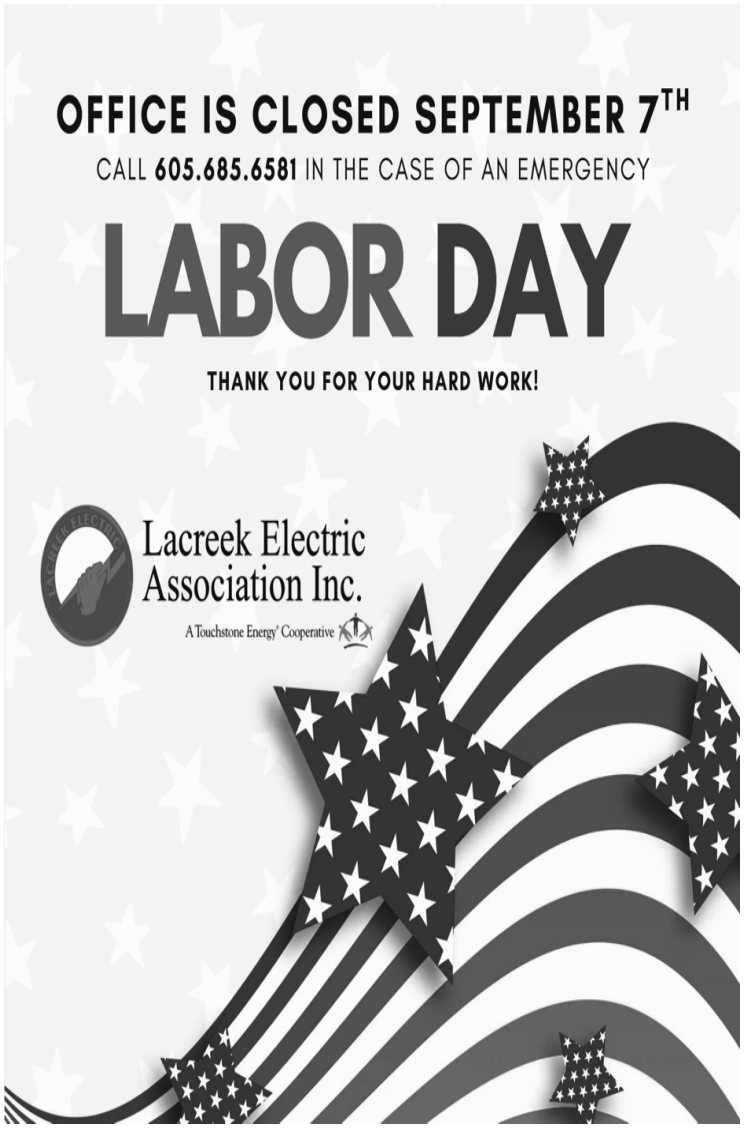
The dried seed heads are broken apart to loosen the seeds from the surrounding plant material.



The seeds are fed into a hammer mill to break apart remaining plant material from the seeds.



The cleaned seeds are sifted one final time to remove any extra material. The separated chaff is spread where the seeds were harvested so any unseparated seeds can germinate.





FIND YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

~ Worth $70 This Month ~

A member's account number has been hidden somewhere in this newsletter. If you find your account number, call the office before September 11th, 2026, and you will receive a $70 credit on your next month's billing. If no one finds their account number, the credit will be $80 in the next issue.

When the Temperature Climbs, So Does Electric Demand

Jessica Cook
jessica@lacreek.com

With temperatures reaching near or above 100 degrees and dry conditions continuing across our area, homes, farms, ranches and businesses are all working harder to beat the heat, and so is our electric system.

During extreme heat, electric use climbs quickly. Air conditioners run longer, refrigerators and freezers work harder and irrigation systems are busy helping crops through hot, dry conditions. When much of that equipment is running at the same time, it creates periods of high demand on the electric grid.

Managing Demand Together

One way Lacreek Electric helps manage these peak periods is through our Demand Response Unit (DRU) load control program.

During periods of high electric demand, participating water heater and irrigation loads can be temporarily controlled, reducing the amount of electricity needed across our system at one time. Managing these peak periods helps us control power costs and reduce strain on the electric system, benefits that extend across our entire membership.

During a summer this hot and dry, we know how important irrigation is. We appreciate the cooperation of the producers who participate in load control and help us manage demand when it matters most.

Busy Season Means Safety Season

As farm and ranch activity picks up, please remember to watch for overhead power lines when moving tractors, combines, augers and other tall equipment. Know the height of your equipment, lower attachments before traveling and never assume there is enough clearance.

If equipment contacts a power line, stay inside and call 911. Unless there is an immediate danger such as fire, wait for utility personnel to confirm the line has been de-energized before exiting.

And before any project that disturbs the ground, from fence posts to water lines, call 811 before you dig so underground utilities can be properly marked.

Investing in Our System

Lacreek Electric continues to invest in the system that serves our members. Through funding received as part of a cybersecurity grant, we recently installed newer equipment throughout portions of our grid.

These upgrades help strengthen and modernize the technology and infrastructure we use to operate and monitor our electric system, improvements that support safe, reliable service for our membership.

Working Through the Heat Together

Extreme summers remind us just how connected we are to the same electric system. From keeping our homes cool to keeping farms, ranches and businesses running, electricity is working hard across our service territory.

Thank you to all of our members for working with us as we continue our commitment to providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity, even through the hottest days of summer.



A show is about to start at the Midway Drive In near Miller.
Photo submitted by Midway Drive In

DRIVE OUT TO A DRIVE-IN

Outdoor Movie Theaters Offer Old-Time Fun

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

It's one of the defining cultural behemoths of the 20th century. Load the family into the station wagon – or someone you fancy in a borrowed hot rod – and head over to the drive-in theater. You pick up popcorn and soda pop, tune your car stereo to the transmitter, and settle in for an unforgettable experience.

It all started in 1933, when Richard Hollingshead of Camden, New Jersey, began developing an accessible and comfortable way to bypass the confining indoor theater seats and allow moviegoers a way to enjoy a show from the comfort of their own vehicle.

The Smithsonian Magazine reports a peak of more than 4,000 American drive-in theaters in 1958. But with cities continuously expanding and the price of property increasing, most of them have closed in the time since. Today, it's estimated that fewer than 300 drive-in theaters remain.

But don't fret! If you're reading this magazine, there are still some nearby drive-in movie theater options for you and your family (or your date) to enjoy!

Midway Drive In – Miller, S.D.

In Miller, mid-May through Labor Day weekend is drive-in movie season. Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are illuminated by the distant glow of the local drive-in movie theater.

Sarah Resel is one of the owners of the Midway Drive-In. Growing up in Miller, the drive-in was her weekend hangout and the site of so many cherished memories. Years later, that's still the case – just under slightly different circumstances.

"We pretty much don't have weekends during the summer," Resel said. "We're committed to being here with the theater. We all have full-time jobs; we always call this our community service."

Despite the hefty commitment, Resel says seeing people turnout from all over the country for an authentic drive-in experience makes it worthwhile.

"I think with us in our Miller community, we take it for granted that it's just here," Resel said. "It's crazy the support we get from other towns coming to our community."

Pheasant Drive-In – Mobridge, S.D.

Cam Wal Electric Cooperative members Jon and Jill Olson of Mobridge have experience with both indoor and outdoor theaters.

"The day-to-day prep is a little bit different," Jill said, explaining



The Pheasant Drive-In sits on the Missouri River hills near Mobridge.
Photo submitted by Pheasant Drive-In

the maintenance needed for the property and screen, along with weather surprises.

"I think weather is probably the number one issue," she continued. "We had a windstorm that came through Sunday [July 19] and caused some damage for us."

Even with the unexpected challenges, Jill said owning the drive-in theater is a positive experience, and on summer nights as people from near and far gather for a showing, she's reminded why she does it.

"It's a completely different vibe than sitting inside a dark theater," Jill said. "Parents do such a good job making it a fun experience, like bringing a pickup, backing it in and letting the kids sit in the back end. The other weekend, we had a family bring a bunch of blow-up air mattresses. The kids can talk and run back and forth – it just isn't your typical thing."

Hilltop Drive Inn Theater – Gregory, S.D.

"It's awesome," Rosebud Electric Cooperative member Dawn Boyer said when asked about running a drive-in movie theater.

"It's like owning a piece of the past while being in the present – and hopefully the future."

When Dawn was a kid, her mom worked at the ticket counter, sometimes taking Dawn along too. When she learned in 2018 the theater was looking for a new owner, it just seemed right.

"Two weeks later, I was running a theater I knew nothing about," Dawn laughed.

The drive-in is an 80-year-old landmark in Gregory County, and the oldest operating drive-in theater in the state. The age is catching up with it, Boyer said, explaining the heavy maintenance schedules necessary to keep the theater running.

Though the theater is becoming harder to operate, Boyer says the smiles on visitors' faces make it all worth it.

"The people who come through that have never seen a drive-in before – that's who we do it for," Boyer continued. "The expression on somebody's face when that big screen lights up at night is awesome."

Pheasant City Drive-In Theatre – Redfield, S.D.

Redfield's drive-in theater has been open continuously since 1953, and thanks to Dave and Stacey Marlow, it will continue for many years.

"We bought it at the time the industry was changing over to digital projectors," Stacey said, recalling the 2014 sale. "And [the previous owner] wasn't going to do it, so we went to him and asked if he'd like to sell it."

Since taking over, they've upgraded the display system again, installing a brighter, higher-contrast laser projector that allows shows to begin earlier and helps future-proof the theater.

While modern, the theater retains its original elements: the speaker poles are functional (Dave spends hours wiring each spring) and the the propane popcorn maker satisfies hungry moviegoers.

"People tell us all the time, 'We are so glad you took this and have kept it going,'" Stacey said. "This is a part of our town we didn't want to lose, so we decided we were the ones to step up and save it."

Winner Drive In Theater – Winner, S.D.

In 2022, Rosebud Electric Cooperative members Austin and Jill Moser were looking for more space for their family. They finally found the perfect house on a nice chunk of land – with a catch.

"The movie theater was included," Jill said. "We thought, 'Why not?'"

The Mosers say running the drive-in theater with their three kids has been a good experience for the family and has given the kids an opportunity to work concessions.

During the Mosers' second season in operation, a windstorm damaged the screen, necessitating a lengthy rebuild. Luckily, the theater was able to reopen for the 2025 season.

"It's really great to see how many people still support drive-in movie theaters," Jill said. "There's not that many left in the country. We meet people from all over – we've had people from France come to the theater."

Verne Drive In – Luverne, Minn.

Half an hour east of Sioux Falls, the Verne Drive In welcomes hundreds of I-90 travelers Wednesday through Sunday each summer.

Owner and operator Doug Rozeboom said his goal is to provide an experience that is affordable, fun and unique for both locals and travelers.

"I don't want to say drive-in theaters are a thing of the past, but they're becoming it," Rozeburn said. "It's a unique experience because you can't just go anywhere to watch a movie outdoors on a big screen."

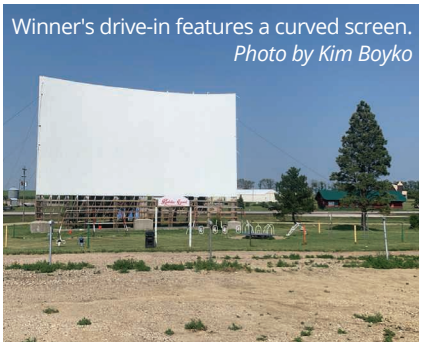
He continued, "Kids are able to run around and throw a football, so they can blow off some steam."

Rozeboom described the enthusiasm of moviegoers, recounting creative truck-bed setups, typically with lawn chairs, sofas or matresses.

"For the Toy Story 5 premeire, someone had a tree-trimming truck, so they had the boom arm out," he laughed. "I was like, 'Huh, that's interesting.'"



Making the perfect setup is part of the drive-in movie theater experience! *Photo submitted by Verne Drive In*



Winner's drive-in features a curved screen. *Photo by Kim Boyko*



RUNNING TOWARD BETTER CARE

Avera Race Against Cancer Makes Every Step Count

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

As Vice President of Community Giving for Avera Foundation, Kellie Yackley helped raise millions of dollars to bring the Avera Cancer Institute to Pierre and build the Helmsley Center, a cancer treatment center at Avera St. Mary's Hospital. From the beginning of the campaign, she conveyed to the region the importance of bringing cancer care closer to home.

However, a year after the cancer center opened its doors, that mission became personal. Yackley was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer and soon found herself receiving treatment at the same oncology center she had helped bring to Pierre. Instead of traveling regularly to Sioux Falls, she was able to complete most of her care close to home, surrounded by her family, community and local care team.

"The center was open for a year, and then I received the diagnosis. That irony was lost on nobody, but everything that needed to be managed with my care was managed in Pierre," Yackley said. "I understood the importance through the campaign, but it really landed when I became the patient instead of the fundraiser."

Yackley's fundraising efforts had come full circle. For years, Yackley has lead the team who organizaes the annual Avera Race Against Cancer, the foundation's largest fundraiser, raising money for cancer treatment, technology, research and patient services across the region.

Participants line up for the Avera Race Against Cancer in Pierre, outside of the Helmsley Center.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

Held on the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend, the event includes a 1.5-mile walk, a 5K run and a 10K run. For Yackley, the race is proof that a community gathering can have an impact far beyond the finish line.

"It takes all of us, from the $2 donation to the folks providing five- and six-figure gifts," Yackley said. "Every dollar counts."

The race began 38 years ago when a group of women organized an event to support a friend undergoing breast cancer treatment in Sioux Falls. The event continued to grow and eventually became connected with Avera. For many years, it was known as the Avera Race Against Breast Cancer before expanding to recognize people



Judy Davis, left, inspired the original Avera Race Against Cancer. She is pictured with Jackie Haggar-Tuschen, a longtime volunteer who helps kick off the event in Sioux Falls.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

affected by all forms of cancer.

Today, the race is held in six Avera communities: Sioux Falls, Pierre, Aberdeen, Mitchell and Yankton in South Dakota, and Marshall, Minn.

"We want people to get care locally," Yackley said. "Rather than saying everybody needs to come to Sioux Falls to participate, we wanted to make sure people could participate locally, where they receive their care and where their care team is."

Virtual participation has also extended the race well beyond the six host communities. Over its history, the event has drawn participants from 42 states and several countries, helping the race reach more people than ever before.

In 2026, the event drew 8,683 participants and raised more than $1 million through sponsorships, registration fees and fundraising by individuals and teams. Those funds support cancer screening and early detection, genetic testing, 3D mammography and other advanced technologies intended to identify cancer sooner and improve treatment.

"Every person who participates matters," she added. "Every person that we touch matters, and every dollar that we raise matters."

Proceeds from the race also help support Avera's cancer navigation services, which connect patients and families with assistance at any time of day. Patients can call with questions about treatment reactions, appointments or other concerns. The service also helps coordinate care and provides bereavement support for families after a loved one dies.

Another resource supported by the race is the New Look, Same You program. The program provides wigs to patients experiencing hair loss from chemotherapy and can connect patients with cosmetologists who offer advice about skin care and other appearance-related concerns during treatment, a service Yackley herself used.

The race also highlights the stories of cancer survivors, caregivers and families at each location, recognizing the people behind every diagnosis.

Yackley recalled the story of a Pierre-area woman who expected to travel to Sioux Falls, a three-hour drive across the state, for radiation treatment. Because treatment required appointments over several days, the care would have meant an extended stay away from home. The woman later learned that the treatment she needed was available in her hometown of Pierre.

"She was able to receive all of that care here because the technology had been expanded to Pierre," Yackley said. "That is a perfect example of why this matters for rural people."

At a previous race, organizers recognized the late Dr. Mikel Holland, former president and CEO of Avera St. Mary's Hospital. Holland supported the effort to build the Helmsley Center and later received treatment there during his own cancer journey. His wife, Debbie, shared the story of his treatment, leadership and connection to the center.

"He was heavily involved in fundraising for the cancer center, and later he was able to receive his care at the Helmsley Center," Yackley said. "Ultimately, his team cared for him here."

Years after helping advocate for expanded cancer services in Pierre, Yackley remains committed to ensuring future patients can receive high-quality care close to home.

"For me, the race is a culmination of all the things that are really important," she said. "We will absolutely continue to carry that banner and support patients in every region throughout Avera."



Kellie Yackley of Pierre poses for a photo at the 2026 Avera Race Against Cancer.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

The next Avera Race Against Cancer is May 8, 2027. Register at AveraFoundation.org.



Runners begin the Avera Race Against Cancer.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your Email Address: _____

Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



SEPT. 3 (ONE DAY EVENT)
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
Horticulture Park, State Fairgrounds
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.

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 6
Studebaker Car Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
South 6th St.
Custer, SD

SEPT. 9
BFest Concert Series & Farmers Market
Matt Gauger Performing Museum Park
Bruce, SD
605-627-5671

SEPT. 11-12
Center of the Nation 9/11 Remembrance
6 p.m. Fri: Remembrance Walk
Sat. 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Blood Drive
Herrmann Park
Belle Fourche, SD
605-641-3245

SEPT. 12
Salute to Ellsworth
3-8:30 p.m.
City Hall & Phelps Pond
Box Elder, SD
605-390-9341

SEPT. 12-20
Rustic Designs & More Fall Country Show
9 a.m.-6 p.m.
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

SEPT. 12-13
Harvest & Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD
605-505-0535

SEPT. 19
Your Race, Your Pace
9:30 a.m.
Aberdeen, SD
605-380-6762

SEPT. 26
Harvest Pumpkin Fest
3-7 p.m.
Eureka City Park North Shelter
Eureka, SD
605-230-1777

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 4
St. Anthony's Fall Bazaar
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Swiss Steak 12-1:30 p.m.
Legion Hall
Hoven, SD

OCT. 4
Grace Lutheran Church & Little Brown Church Fundraiser
Meal: 12-1:30 p.m. CDT
Auction: 2 p.m. CDT
Grace Lutheran Church
Hayes, SD
605-567-3559

OCT. 17
Faulkton Area Arts Council Craft Fair
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Faulkton School
Faulkton, SD
605-380-8444

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.