



Cooperative Connections

Winter Wonderland at Falls Park is a main attraction in Sioux Falls that draws visitors from far and near each year.

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Stop Christmas
from Coming**

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Electronics to
Save Money**

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Volunteer to Make a Positive Impact



Rodney Haag

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While we've seen our share of challenges, I am heartened by the ways in which we have all pulled together to make our community stronger.

With the holiday season upon us and the New Year just around the corner, I can't help but reflect on the gratitude I feel for our community. I think most will agree this has been a year like no other – certainly in my lifetime. And while we've seen our share of challenges, I am heartened by the ways in which we have all pulled together to make our community stronger.

Because we are a co-op, volunteerism and giving back are a part of who we are.

Oahe Electric offers employees flexibility in their schedules to accommodate volunteer opportunities. We look at co-op volunteerism as an investment in our community by enabling our employees to donate their time and expertise to help groups that are doing so much for our community.

I look at volunteerism as the gift that keeps on giving. While it's difficult to quantify the impact that volunteers have, I do know they make a tremendous difference in our community and make our corner of the world a better place. Many organizations depend on volunteers to fulfill their mission. Volunteers fill in gaps and spread joy and compassion through their efforts. Even assisting with the smallest tasks can make a big impact in the lives of people, animals or an organization in need. Often a big commitment or special skills are not needed, just someone who cares.

I hope you'll consider volunteering. Give an organization or cause that you care about the gift of your compassion, time and talent. In addition to the organization and the community benefitting from your efforts, you will receive a gift as well. Not only will you enjoy the satisfaction of knowing you are helping a good cause, you will likely make new friends, expand your social network, strengthen existing skills or learn a new one.

Volunteering may provide additional dimension and purpose to your life. In the process, you will be a role model for your family because your commitment will offer a powerful lesson to your children. It will show them first-hand how one person can make a big difference and strengthen the community in which they live.

At the end of the day, the gift of volunteerism is a gift that will continue giving all year long. So, this holiday season, consider starting a new tradition – give the gift of time.

Oahe Electric Cooperative Connections

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Our Mission

Oahe Electric delivers high quality, low-cost electric service to our local member-owners. As a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of customer satisfaction. We do business with accountability, integrity, innovation and commitment to community. As an electric co-op, we are part of America's most trusted network of high quality energy providers.

Oahe Electric Now Accepting Applications for 2021 Scholarships

Oahe Electric, in conjunction with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, is offering one \$1,000 college scholarship to a lucky student in the Hughes and Sully County area. In addition to this scholarship, Oahe Electric is offering four \$500 college scholarships.

The scholarship program recognizes and encourages the academic achievements of students in our region. It also serves as an investment in the economic future of rural areas.

Applicants for the scholarships must be a U.S. citizen and a dependent of Oahe Electric consumers. Applicants also must be students enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at

an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

The scholarship recipients are chosen based on a combination of SAT/ACT scores, overall grade-point average, work experience, participation in school and community activities, a personal statement of career goals and a written recommendation by a third party.

Applications for the 2020-2021 academic year are being accepted until February 12, 2021.

For more information, contact Samantha at Oahe Electric in Blunt, SD at 1-800-640-6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. Applications can also be downloaded by visiting our website at www.oaheelectric.com.

Oahe Electric Accepting Lineman's Scholarship Applications

Oahe Electric Cooperative is offering a \$500 scholarship for a full-time student registered or planning to register in a power line construction and maintenance program.

The purpose of this scholarship is to emphasize and support the education of future power line workers in South Dakota. Oahe Electric has committed to providing funds for financial assistance to students enrolled in power line maintenance programs with the hopes that graduates of that program will pursue a career with rural

electric cooperatives in the area.

Applicants for the scholarship must be a member or a member dependent of Oahe Electric. Applications for the 2021-2022 academic year are being accepted until February 12, 2021.

For more information, contact Samantha at Oahe Electric in Blunt at 1-800-640-6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. Applications can also be downloaded by visiting our website at www.oaheelectric.com.

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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov

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Decorate Your Home Safely

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by Christmas and holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.



Correction: Pheasant bag limit unchanged

A story on pheasant hunting in last month's issue incorrectly stated that the daily bag limit was increased from three to four birds. This proposed change was considered by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; however, the proposal was not approved.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Do Not Shoot the Power Line!"

Luke Welsh, 10 years old

Luke is a resident of Oral, S.D., and is the son of Ryan and Rachel Welsh. He warns, "Do not shoot the power line. It might start a fire! Be safe."

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

Delicious Holiday Desserts

Dorothy's Baked Carmel Corn

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 c. butter | 1/2 tsp. soda |
| 2 c. brown sugar | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 1/2 c. dark Karo syrup | 6 qts. (24 c.) popped corn |
| 1 tsp. salt | |

Add butter, brown sugar, syrup and salt to a large pan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil 4 1/2 minutes without stirring. Remove from heat. Add soda and vanilla. Stir 1-2 minutes. Pour over popcorn and stir well. Divide into 2 cake pans. Bake 250 degrees 1 hour, mix every 15 minutes. Break up and store in tight container.

Gloria Puetz, Salem, SD

Chocolate Kissed Macaroons

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 14 oz. pkg. sweetened angel flaked coconut | 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk |
| 3/4 c. flour | 2 tsp. vanilla extract |
| 1/4 c. salt | 24 chocolate kisses, unwrapped |
| 1 egg white, beaten til frothy | |

Line two baking sheets with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. In a medium bowl, mix together coconut, flour and salt. Add sweetened milk, beaten egg white and vanilla. Mix well. Mixture will be stiff. Use a cookie scoop, ice cream scoop or tbsp. to divide the dough dropping two inches apart on the baking sheet. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and gently press a candy kiss into the center. Remove to wire rack to cool.

Colleen Wolfe, Hot Springs, SD.

Scoops Ah Caramel

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1/2 c. butter | 1 can condensed milk |
| 1-1/2 c. brown sugar | 1 tsp. vanilla |
| 3/4 c. white syrup | 3 9-oz. bags Scoops |

Bring the butter, brown and white sugar and condensed milk to a boil. Boil for 1 minute. Add vanilla. Stir. Put chips on a platter. Pour caramel over Scoops. May drizzle with hot fudge. Keep well refrigerated.

Ginny Jensen, Volga, SD

Reindeer Pecan Brownies


- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Nonstick cooking spray | 1/2 cup cocoa powder |
| 1 stick (1/2 c.) unsalted butter, melted | 1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional) |
| 1 tablespoon pecan or canola oil | 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt |
| 1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons, granulated sugar | 20 raw pecan halves, cut in half |
| 2 large eggs | 40 candy eyeballs |
| 1 teaspoon vanilla extract | 20 red chocolate candies |
| 1/2 cup all-purpose flour | 1/4 cup chocolate chips |

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In large bowl, whisk melted butter, oil and sugar until well combined. Add eggs and vanilla extract; beat until mixture is thick and pale in color, about 1 minute. Sift in flour and cocoa powder. Add espresso powder, if desired, and salt. Using rubber spatula, fold dry ingredients into butter mixture until just combined. Batter should be thick. Using 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, transfer batter to prepared mini muffin tin. Bake 13-15 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out mostly clean, with some lingering crumbs. Add chocolate chips to heat-proof bowl; microwave until smooth and melted. Pour melted chocolate into sandwich bag and cut off small portion of one corner to use as tip. Use melted chocolate to "glue" on pecan antlers, candy eyeballs and red candy noses to brownies. Allow chocolate to set before transferring brownies to airtight container. Note: Brownies will stay fresh for up to three days.

AmericanPecan.com

Please send your favorite holiday 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

*Oahe electric,
Thank you for
the Short-go
shirt! I loved
last years so much
I wore it in the
Short go this
year!
-Sincerely Sully*



THANK YOU!

Thank you for supporting me on my trip to the 2020 National High School Rodeo Finals in Guthrie, Oklahoma! It was an amazing experience. Rat and I didn't have the outcome we had hoped for, but it was still a rodeo I will never forget. I had fun with family and friends and was excited to make my first runs at the Lazy E Arena. I know everyone's dollars are hard earned these days, so I am truly grateful that you chose to support me and my rodeo travels. I am looking forward to 2021 and another chance to compete at the Finals!

Congratulations Are In Order

Oahe Electric would like to congratulate the following area youth on their strong finish at the South Dakota High School Rodeo Association's finals this summer!

Blaine Hill – saddle bronc – Sully Buttes High School

Haley Husted – goat tying – Highmore Harrold High School

Jaden Jessop – bull riding – Mitchell Tech

Sully Paxton – team roping and calf roping – Sully Buttes High School

Layni Stevens – barrels and goat tying – T.F. Riggs High School

Chase Yellow Hawk – bareback – Sully Buttes High School

Rafe Wientjes – calf roping – Sully Buttes High School

Oahe Electric presented them each with a shirt in recognition of their accomplishments and finish in their events. Oahe Electric Cooperative Inc. and South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives are proud supporters of South Dakota High School Rodeo and we are proud of each of our area competitors.

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives nationwide are committed to the core values of innovation, integrity, accountability and commitment to community. Student athletes such these embody our state's future and many of these values. The dedication they've demonstrated to excelling in their sport has a very close tie to the commitment Oahe Electric Cooperative has to our members.



Haley Husted proudly wearing her rodeo shirt from Oahe Electric.

Residential Relief Co-op Advantage Credit

Oahe Electric Cooperative members with residential meters may have noticed something on the bill you received at the beginning of November that you have never seen before – a one-time Residential Relief Co-op Advantage Credit!


Over the past several months we have asked ourselves "What can we do to help our members?" We kept an eye on our sales as well as our budget, waiting to see if it was feasible to help our members while maintaining the financial integrity of the cooperative. Increased residential energy sales and budgetary adjustments made during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the cooperative's revenue to exceed its budget.

Oahe Electric is well positioned at this time to absorb the impact of a bill credit for the current operating fiscal year. Our primary goal is to put money in our members hands when they need it. This is an extension of the Commitment to Community spirit that your cooperative was built on.

As a not-for-profit utility, excess revenues are eventually returned to our members as capital credit retirements. However, we understand the burden the pandemic has placed on the community this year. By distributing a portion of these revenues as a bill credit, we hope to provide some immediate relief to our members. Also, unlike a capital credit retirement, this bill credit will be distributed only to active residential members. Whereas capital credit retirements benefit both past and current members.

Rest assured; we are also currently working on a plan to retire capital credits by year end. Keep an eye on future issues of the Cooperative Connections newsletter to learn more.

We hope this finds you and your family healthy, happy and provides you with some financial relief heading into the holiday season.

Co-op Connections Card			
 Cooperative Connections Card Program Vendors			
Automotive			
Graham Tire Company	605-224-8643	Pierre	Receive a 10% discount on regularly priced service work. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
Lamb Motor Company	800-952-2222	Onida	Receive a free alignment check with the purchase of 4 new tires.
Napa Auto and Truck Parts/Farnam's Genuine Parts, Inc.	605-224-8624	Pierre	Receive 10-50% off retail price.
Food/Convenience Store			
Branding Iron Bistro	605-494-3333	Pierre	Enjoy \$1 off your order. Limit one per visit.
Gator's Pizza Pasta and Subs	605-224-6262	Pierre	Purchase any large pizza at regular price and receive a FREE order of breadsticks.
Grey Goose Store	605-945-0794	Pierre	Receive a free 20 oz. fountain soda or coffee with the minimum of a \$30 gas or diesel purchase.
The Corner	605-258-2400	Onida	Buy one breakfast sandwich at regular price, get second half off.
Health/Fitness and Beauty			
Anytime Fitness	605-224-4011	Pierre	Receive a free two-week mini-membership.
Home/Garden			
The Pink Petal	605-224-1775	Pierre	10% discount on cash and carry purchases - fresh floral only.
Slumberland Furniture	605-945-1997	Pierre	20% off any regular priced Lazy Boy items. Excluding special orders.
Services			
Airtech Heating and Cooling	605-945-0160	Pierre	\$50 discount on any new heat pump OR \$15 discount on any service call
Apryl's Animal House	605-224-9203	Pierre	10% off a grooming or boarding
Inman's Water Technologies	605-224-5111	Pierre	Receive a 15% discount on the rental price of a water softener and/or reverse osmosis drinking water system by paying a year in advance. Receive 10% off of the purchase price of a new Water Softener or reverse osmosis drinking water system when you mention this ad. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discounts/specials.
Olson Plumbing Inc.	605-224-6436	Pierre	\$50 discount on any electric boiler, Marathon water heater, or fireplace
Small Engine House	605-224-5815	Pierre	10% off parts and labor
Sports/Recreation			
Teton River Traders Gun Shop LLC	605-224-1371	Ft. Pierre	2% discount. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discount.
Retail			
Fastenal	605-224-4060	Pierre	10% off of fasteners and 5% off on all other products

Winner of Question of the Month

The Question of the Month winners for the October 2020 publication were Robert and Bernadine Hinckley. The question was simply whether they planned on attending their 69th annual meeting! Congratulations and we hope you enjoy your prizes!



Question of the Month!

This month's question is:

When are scholarship applications due?

Please submit your answer via e-mail to oahe@oaheelectric.com with the subject line reading: Question of the Month. A winner will be chosen and surprise gift will be sent to them.

Like Us!

You can now keep in touch with your cooperative on Facebook!

We will share with you the latest news, events, power outage updates, energy efficiency tips, money-saving rebates, load management information, legislative alerts, safety tips and much more!

We hope you "like" Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. on Facebook.



Storybook Island captures the imagination of the young and old alike both during the summer and the holiday season.

CHRISTMAS IN SD

COVID-19 Hasn't Stopped Christmas from Coming

Billy Gibson

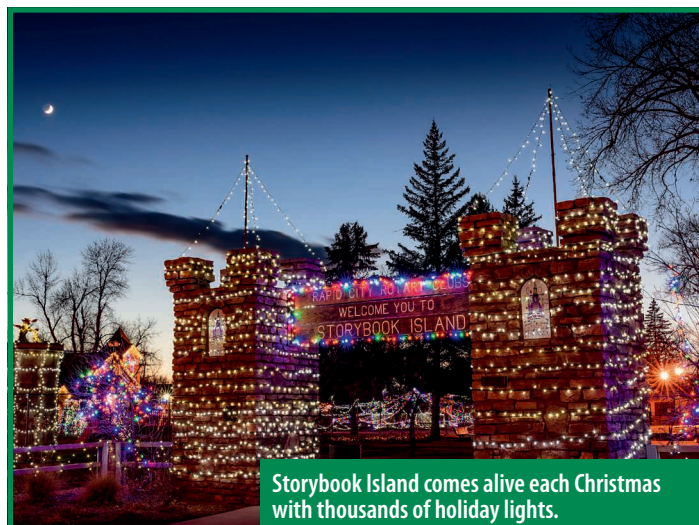
billy.gibson@sarea.coop

The coronavirus pandemic has certainly had a substantial “bah humbug” effect since it began sweeping across the globe last spring. And as the virus continues to pose a health risk going into the new year ahead, many familiar holiday festivals and events across the state have been canceled, curtailed or postponed until 2021.

But there are still a number of events across the state that are planning to proceed as scheduled, many of which have become annual holiday traditions for individuals and families looking to get into the Christmas spirit.

That’s the case for those who look forward every year to taking in the sights and sounds of the Winter Wonderland event held at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. For residents of the Sioux Falls area and thousands of out-of-town visitors each holiday season, the brilliant light display is a spectacle that not only sparks the Christmas spirit but also brings back memories of childhood wonder from previous seasons.

The Winter Wonderland exhibit includes 270 decorated trees and light poles and more than 25 miles of string lights throughout the complex that runs along the Big Sioux River. A five-story observation tower also gives park visitors a 360-degree bird’s eye view of the many eye-popping displays.



Storybook Island comes alive each Christmas with thousands of holiday lights.

The 29th Annual Parade of Lights will officially kick off the downtown Sioux Falls holiday season with festive music and a dazzling float parade along historic Phillips Avenue from 13th Street to 5th Street. But due to the pandemic this year, officials have announced there will be a twist: instead of the floats moving past the spectators, the spectators will walk along in front of the floats. The floats will remain stationary for the duration of the event and the public is invited to casually walk along the route and view the parked floats up close.

The “stationary parade” begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 27.



Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer shares the holiday spirit by decorating a bucket truck each year.

Everyone is encouraged to stay for an after-party and awards ceremony where there will be live musical entertainment and other activities. Admission is free.

Storybook Island, a popular attraction in the Rapid City area during the summer months, will hold its annual Christmas Nights of Lights display this season. The park boasts 16 miles of colorful lights, including dioramas, popular children's fictional characters and a variety of additional holiday-related themes. The event takes place Dec. 4-6, 11-23 and 26-31, from 5:30 to 8:30 each night at 1301 Sheridan Lake Rd. Admission is \$3 per person.

In Custer, the Annual Parade of Lights will take place downtown on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The annual event signals the kick-off of the holiday season in the Southern Hills area. After the parade, Santa and Mrs. Claus will make an appearance at Way Park for the Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. The parade begins at 8th and Mt. Rushmore Road and will end at Way Park on 4th and Mt. Rushmore Road.

The residents of Spearfish will celebrate the start of the season with the annual Holidazzle Light Parade and Christmas Stroll sponsored by the Downtown Business Association. The event will take place along Main Street on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning in the morning and lasting all day.

The Christmas Stroll will take place immediately after the parade and will feature special sales and discounts at downtown merchants and business establishments. To add to the holiday mood, carolers will perform from 2 to 4 p.m., and there will be a



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park offers a unique light display along the Big Sioux River.

Community Chili Feed at Common Grounds at 5 p.m.

In Pierre, revelers will ring in the holiday season with the 20th Annual Parade of Lights on Monday, Nov. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place entries and there will also be a Mayor's Choice Award as well as a Griswold Award for gaudiest float.

Also in Pierre, the highly anticipated "Christmas at the Capitol" event will take place once again this year from Nov. 25 through Dec. 26. The rotunda and the hallways of the Capitol Building will be filled with the sounds of carolers and musicians as well as the scent of mountain pine and the soft glow emanating from nearly 100 lighted Christmas trees. The trees are decorated by cities, businesses, non-profit groups and other civic organizations.

Popular displays inside the Capitol include a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments and a wooden nativity scene believed to be nearly 125 years old located on the second floor.

Before scheduling a visit, check for the most recent updates at www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol.



The Pumpkin Carriage is a popular attraction at Storybook Island.

**Russ Hohn**

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**Lessons learned
and findings from
the projects will
be shared with
electric cooperatives
across the nation
for potential
implementation at
other facilities.**

NRECA, DOE Launch Rural Battery Storage Research Projects

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) today launched four rural battery storage projects in partnership with five electric cooperatives and the Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Electricity.

The projects are being funded in part by DOE and will examine how energy storage systems can improve the resilience of critical infrastructure in rural areas. Two of the projects simultaneously will support military installations served by electric cooperatives and will help fulfill Department of Defense energy assurance goals.

“This is a great example of how America’s electric co-ops and the more than 95 military facilities that they serve are evolving together,” said NRECA CEO Jim Matheson. “Meeting future energy needs requires a commitment to research and innovation. This new program will improve resilience while expanding our understanding of how battery technology can be used in new applications throughout rural America.”

“America relies on rural communities, and rural communities rely on electricity,” said Dr. Imre Gyuk, director of energy storage in DOE’s Office of Electricity. “By using storage, these projects will help to make the supply of electricity more resilient, greener, and sustainable, as well as more cost effective.”

NRECA’s partners on the battery storage projects include Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association in Colorado, West River Electric Association in South Dakota, and, in North Carolina, Sandhills Utility Services, Tideland EMC and North Carolina EMC.

The one-year project will develop four battery storage sites – two integrated directly into separate cooperative facilities and two integrated directly into military bases served by electric cooperatives. Lessons learned and findings from the projects will be shared with electric cooperatives across the nation for potential implementation at other facilities.

DOE’s Office of Electricity will provide approximately \$1.3 million in cost share funding to NRECA to offset the design, purchase, installation and commissioning of batteries at the four sites. Technical assistance will be provided by DOE’s Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories.



Matt Eldridge

Operations Manager
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Four Tips for Winter Safety

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards.

This makes sense

because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1. Don't overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections—they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.

2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room. Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.

4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

**This holiday season,
Oahe Electric's
offices will be closed on
the following:**

Nov. 26-27, 2020

Thanksgiving


Dec. 24-25, 2020

Christmas

Jan. 1, 2021

New Year's Day

**Everyone at Oahe
Electric wishes you a
joyous holiday season
and a happy and peaceful
new year!**



There are several popular electronics on the market that can help you use energy more efficiently.

Cut Energy Consumption

Upgrade Electronics for Energy Savings

Are you looking for easy ways to save more money on your monthly energy bills as the year comes to a close?

Beyond some of the more traditional energy efficiency measures, such as sealing air leaks or adding additional insulation, there are several popular electronics that can help you use energy more efficiently.

These devices are relatively easy to incorporate into your home, making them a simple way to help manage your energy use.

Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy at home. With smart thermostats, there's no longer a need to constantly adjust the temperature. They can be programmed to follow a pattern of heating and cooling throughout the day and year to maximize your comfort and energy use at the same time.

Some advanced smart thermostats out on the market today can even learn your habits and adjust the temperature in your home accordingly. Another great benefit is the ability to control a smart thermostat remotely from an app on your phone, allowing you to set the temperature to your liking before you even arrive home.

Lastly, some smart thermostats can be integrated with a more complete smart home hub, like Amazon Alexa or Google Home,

which are both hot sellers in the market. Smart thermostats can be pretty pricey upfront, but if it's time to upgrade your home's thermostat, you'll soon discover that smart options offer more convenience and savings that make them worth the initial investment.

If you're looking for ways to save energy while you and your family are on a budget, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs can be inserted into any standard electrical outlet and can help you manage the energy of the devices that are plugged in. With con-



Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy. Photo provided by Ecobee.



If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal.

trol of the smart plug, you can stop power-hungry devices from being on longer than necessary.

Some smart plug models have a scheduling option, allowing you to turn on lights or turn off the TV at certain times of the day, such as when you leave in the morning and when you anticipate returning home. Others offer a dimming function, allowing you to change the brightness of lights that are plugged into the smart plug. These features can be controlled through an app on your phone, and some models also have voice-controlled options when connected to a smart home hub.

Another useful gadget is the home energy monitor, which helps you monitor home energy use and set energy budgets. If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal. They are connected to your electric meter and provide a big picture on your home's energy use.

Additionally, some home energy monitors can show which appliances are using the most energy, giving you the knowledge on which devices to cut down on. There are also a few additional features among home energy monitors that provide several different benefits. Some models can show you real-time electricity use and costs, while some can help create a personalized plan for energy efficiency. Most home energy monitors can be connected through a smart phone app, which can send notifications, warn about abnormal energy use and provide tips for further energy savings.

These simple devices can help you save a little more energy each month. Considering what your needs are will help you choose a device with the appropriate features. As with any new product, do some homework first to determine which device suits your home best.

Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Safety

During the holidays, many of us turn our attention to gift giving, and while the shiny, trendy and pricey may make a big splash when the unwrapping's done, practical gifts can leave lasting impressions. What's more, they can really make a difference by enhancing safety and improving security.

Here are a few practical gift ideas that can make a real difference in helping to reduce safety risks year-round.

Smoke Detectors: Most of us have at least one in our homes, but experts say that's not enough. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a working smoke detector be installed in every bedroom, on every level of a home, and in hallways outside of sleeping areas. And, if smoke detectors are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms: Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless gas

created by incomplete consumption of fuels like gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane, oil, coal or methane. The gas is highly toxic, so having CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and on every level of a home improves safety. Local fire departments respond to about 80,000 non-fire CO incidents each year. Fuel-burning heating equipment and cooking appliances should be professionally inspected once a year to reduce the risks of malfunction and detect structural problems early.

Extension Cords: They are not all created equal; subject to wear; have specific use guidelines; and are never recommended for permanent use. Brittle and cracked plastic can indicate heat damage, and exposed wires or frayed connections increase risk of shock, shorts or fires. An extension cord that's warm or hot to the touch is a good indication it's not designed to safely do the job. Consider giving an assortment of extension cords designed for indoor or outdoor use. Before you buy, look for the label of a nationally recognized testing lab like Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA-International (CSA) or Intertek (ETL).

Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters: Arcing and sparking are indications that a home's electrical wiring needs service. Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) can help address fire hazards before they occur. Properly installed by a licensed electrician, AFCIs can often replace circuit breakers in the electrical panel box. This should be completed by a qualified electrician because the installation involves working inside the panel box, which carries current even when main circuit breakers are turned off.



Faith, Family & Community

After four decades, Oahe Electric's Rodney Haag is ready to hand-off the reins

Tom Griffith

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Editor's Note: This is the first of a four-part series about Oahe Electric Cooperative's General Manager Rodney Haag, who began work with the cooperative shortly after leaving lineman's school in 1977 and never left.

Hugging the breaks along the Missouri River north of Pierre, which Lewis and Clark first navigated more than two centuries ago with their famed Corps of Discovery, are miles of fields filled with spring and winter wheat, corn, soybeans, sunflowers and grazing cattle. Farms and ranches, handed down through generations, stretch as far as the eye can see.

While seasonal visitors flock here for a few weeks each summer to fish for treasured walleye, most of those encountered are year-round residents, raising families, working hard and attending small churches for Sunday services. It's a singular spot tucked in the vast void of America's Outback, where a hand-shake and a few words account for more than any signature.

And, it's a place that for nearly a half-century, Rodney Haag has grown to love. But, were it not for a thoughtful father and a prescient bride, it's also a place Rodney may have never come to know.

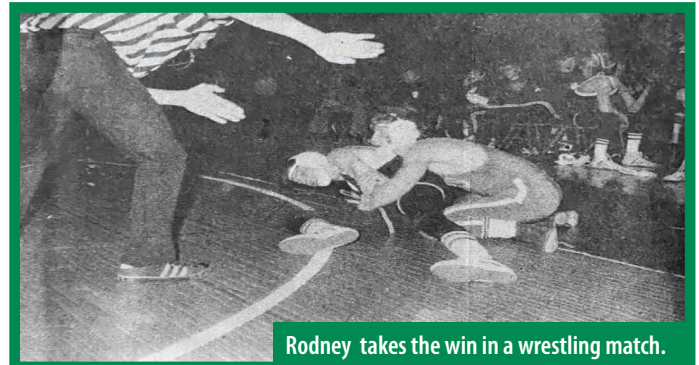
I learned it takes a lot of hard work on a farm. It's a great life, but you have to work for it.

Born in Dickinson, N.D., on June 29, 1955, to father Phil, a Navy veteran-turned truck stop owner, and mother Martha, a homemaker-turned café operator, Rodney's earliest memories involved five years of wrestling in junior high and high school in Lemmon, S.D. He played some football and baseball as well, but wrestling was closest to his heart.

In his off-hours away from school and athletics, the young man's days revolved around Phil's Truck Stop

which his parents had purchased in Lemmon, and where Rodney worked nearly every day manning the cash register, washing windows, pumping diesel, checking fluids and changing flat tires.

"It wasn't a super hard job," he recalled recently. "It was actually a fun job because you got to interact with people – tourists, truckers and locals. We worked every day at least eight hours, me switching off with my dad. It wasn't great pay back then, but I thought I was making good money. I got to know truckers from the cities who'd come through on a regular basis and made friends. I'd recognize them in other towns and say, 'hello.' Good people."



Rodney takes the win in a wrestling match.

In high school, Rodney spent two summers on his uncle's dairy farm near Regent, N.D., 50 miles away from home and, more importantly to him, a wrestling cheerleader named Janice Ham. Those two summers taught Rodney the importance of hard work for low pay.

"We milked cows morning and night, baled hay, then stored it in the barn's loft," he remembered, shrugging his shoulders. "We'd bale all day and then come back in and clean the chicken coops and the sheep sheds. We didn't have skidsters back then. It was all done by hand. I can't remember how many bales we did, but I bet we did 10,000 bales a summer, at least. Plus my uncle had hogs, sheep, chickens and a horse, which we called a nag."

At the conclusion of those two summers, Rodney's uncle would pay the boy with a Holstein calf, which he'd raise on his father's land – meager compensation for three months of back-breaking labor.

"I learned a lot on that farm in two summers," Rodney recalled. "I learned it takes a lot of hard work on a farm. It's a great life, but you have to work for it. When I came home, I wanted to take over my dad's hog operation which involved a couple hundred hogs. I planned to live in the hired man's house with my sweetheart and raise hogs."

Fortunately, that lonely life of sweat and toil wasn't meant to be for Rodney. And, today he suspects that his parents and his girlfriend recognized that long before he did. So, after two summers on the faraway farm, Rodney quit the dairy business, returned to Lemmon and began working year-round at his father's busy truck stop.





Rodney shows off his motorcycle.

In the ensuing months, he regained his entrepreneurial spirit and developed a plan for his future that involved taking over his father's business, marrying his sweetheart and living happily ever after. But, in short-order, his father, again recognizing something Rodney didn't, put the kibosh on those dreams as well.

"When I broached the subject, the interstate was just being built and I think my dad knew that business would be going backwards – and indeed it did," Rodney reflected. "He eventually sold out to a Rapid-City based business and he continued to manage the place for at least a decade longer."

Fortunately for Rodney, he was secure in matters of the heart, as his girlfriend Janice bolstered his confidence and made sure he knew he had her support.



Janice and Rodney as a young couple.

The two had met when Rodney was in eighth grade. She was an "older girl," a freshman who was a cheerleader at all his wrestling meets. "Back then, you'd just look at a girl and you were going steady," he said. For Janice, the relationship was decidedly more complex.

"I was a wrestling cheerleader and Rodney was an amazing wrestler," Janice said recently. "To be honest, I went after him because he was so shy and so dang cute. Plus, he was so kind and had long hair and rode a motorcycle."

The couple started dating exclusively, cruising Lemmon's short Main Street, hanging out with friends and going to movies every chance they got. Janice still remembers constantly clicking the receiver on her parents' party-line to annoy users into hanging up the phone so Rodney could call and arrange a date.

"My parents were very strict and I could only go out with him once a weekend and I had to be home by midnight," she said with a sigh. "Was he a gentleman? I wouldn't go that far, but he always opened doors for me and my mom loved him. Of course, my dad wasn't as in love with him and I don't think my friends knew why I loved him so much, but I did."

As Rodney began his senior year in high school, and Janice prepared to leave town and attend the Aberdeen School of Commerce for its one-year secretarial program, Rodney arranged a memorable date.

"We were at a drive-in that summer and he went to the concession stand to get popcorn," Janice said, her eyes reaching back to the past. "When he came back, my engagement ring was tucked below the first kernels of popcorn. It was real romantic. And, of course, there was never a doubt in my mind that we would get married."

In May 1974, Rodney graduated from high school, earning five varsity letters in wrestling. On Nov. 30 of that same year, the couple walked down the aisle at Cavalry Lutheran Church in Lemmon and married. Following the nuptials and a large reception at the local country club, the newlyweds headed to Bismarck for their honeymoon.

"The reason we went there was because nobody went to Bismarck, North Dakota," Janice said with a laugh. "We went out to dinner and both of us ordered a beer to celebrate. The waitress asked us for an I.D., and they wouldn't serve us because neither of us was 21. Seriously though, we didn't have a care in the world."



Janice and Rodney cut the cake on their wedding day.

Up next: In Part II, Rodney Haag and his new wife work to find him a career, spend a stint in the coal fields of Wyoming, then discover a life-long mission at Oahe Electric Cooperative in Blunt.

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

November 20-21

Holiday Arts Christmas Show, 112 E. 5th St. Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

November 21-22

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S. Washington St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

November 24-December 26

Christmas at the Capitol, Free Admission, Pierre, SD

November 27

Hill City Olde Tyme Christmas Parade and Celebration Kick-Off, 5 p.m., Downtown Hill City, SD, 605-574-2368

November 27

Black Friday Trap Shoot, Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League, 10:30 a.m., Lunch Available, 5000 North Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

November 27

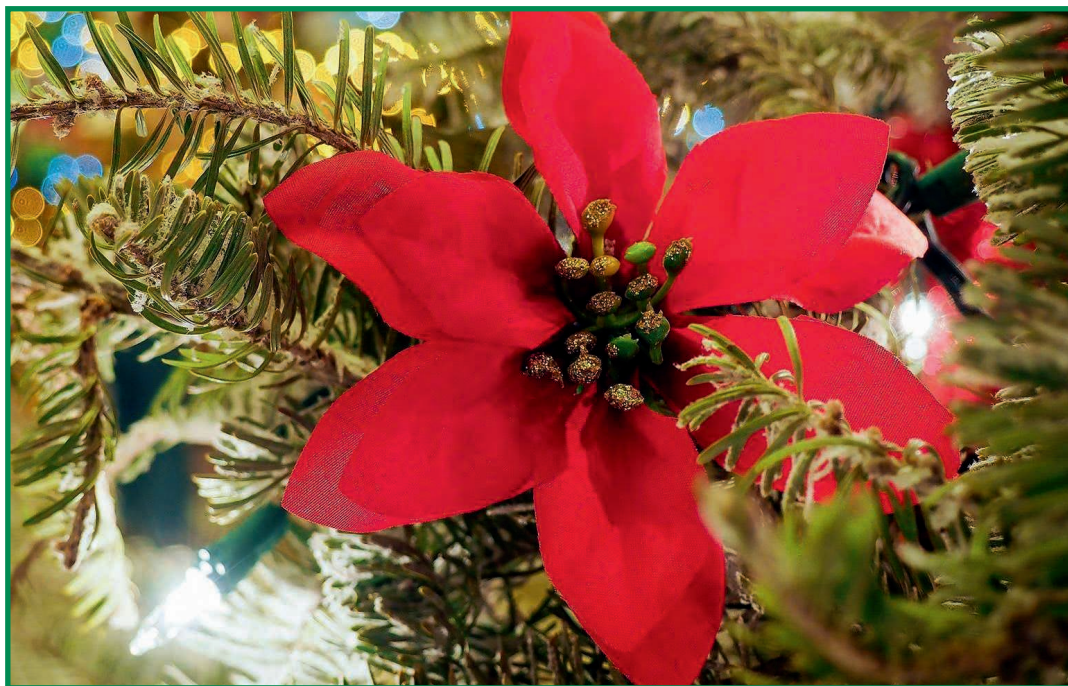
Annual Sioux Falls Parade of Lights, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Phillips Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 605-338-4009

November 28

Holiday Celebration and Winter Market, 2 to 6 p.m., Free Admission, Main Street Square in Downtown Rapid City, SD

November 27-December 27

Trees and Trains at the South Dakota Railroad Museum, Weekends, Contact the Museum for Days and Times. Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



December 4

Christmas in the Hills Parade of Lights, 6 p.m., Downtown Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

December 4-5

Creekside Crafters 13th Annual Bazaar, Snappers Club Building in City Campground, Friday 1 to 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Spearfish, SD

December 4-6 and 10-12

Same Time, Next Year, Dramatic Comedy by Bernard Slade, Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, www.pierreplayers.com

December 5

Manager Medlodies Concert Christmas in the Hills, 7 to 9 p.m., Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

December 5

Rapid City Garden Club's 59th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lions' and Bridger Buildings, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

December 5

Custer Christmas Parade, 5:30 p.m., Downtown Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

December 5

Festival of Trees, Newell City Hall, Newell, SD, Admission: Two Cans of Non-Perishable Food Items Per Person, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

December 6, 20

VFW Bingo, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD, 605-279-2663

December 12

Christmas for Kids, Ages 0-10 visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, Custer High School, Preregistration is Required, Register via email custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com, Custer, SD

December 12

Frontier Christmas, 11907 434th Ave., Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

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.