



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Christmas at the Capitol

Capitol Christmas
event turns 40
Pages 8-9

The wonders of
winter stargazing
Pages 12-13

Thousands of visitors are expected to view the nearly 100 Christmas trees on display in Pierre during the Christmas season.

A Time to Be Thankful



Jordan Lamb
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As we wrap up 2021 and look back at a busy year for Oahe Electric Cooperative, I am reminded of all that we must be thankful for. We have seen record numbers for new services across our territory, a large part of it on existing infrastructure. We added another journeyman lineman to our crew to help improve system replacement, maintenance and outage response times. We have added a new

substation in our upcoming budget that will serve the south/southeast part of our system, an area we have historically seen more outages as well as more housing. Introducing a new substation in our service territory lowers the line miles and customer count per circuit, improving reliability for everyone on the Oahe Electric system.

Oahe has seen positive load growth since inception year-after-year. Load growth added to existing facilities helps to keep rates affordable for our members.

We also have several projects planned for the upcoming budget that bury 'trunk' three-phase lines throughout our service territory to provide more

reliable power during severe weather conditions. As a colleague of mine once said, "Any day another mile of line goes in the ground is a good day!", and we look forward to many good days to come!

Across the country, many utilities, cooperatives included, face negative load growth. Oahe has seen positive load growth since inception year-after-year. Load growth added to existing facilities helps to keep rates affordable for our members. We are grateful for this load growth that continues to add value in our rural communities through providing new services and meeting a growing population demand. It has been a relatively mild fall thus far, allowing our farmers time to harvest crops from the fields without battling snow or sloppy wet conditions. As Thanksgiving approaches, rest assured that Oahe Electric Cooperative is thankful to have each and every one of you as our member and we look forward to serving you and your growing needs now and in the future!



Statement of Non-Discrimination

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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 2022 Scholarships

Oahe Electric, in conjunction with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, is offering one **\$2,000** college scholarship to a lucky dependent of an Oahe Electric member(s). In addition to this scholarship, Oahe Electric is offering four **\$1,000** 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 members. 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 their written essay, 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. Applicants for the 2022-2023 academic year are being accepted until **Feb. 11, 2022**.

For more information, contact Samantha at Oahe Electric in Blunt, S.D., 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 **\$1,000** 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 OR a student from the Hughes or Sully County areas. Applications for the 2022-2023 academic year are being accepted until **Feb. 11, 2022**.

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.

Pierre Senior is Scholar of the Week

Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. is proud to announce its Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week. The recipient of this honor is Nevaeh Starr, a senior at T.F. Riggs High School in Pierre. The honor, bestowed by Dakota News Now, gives Starr bragging rights for the week of Nov. 14-20, 2021.

Nevaeh boasts a 4.0 GPA. She is active in FBLA, the T.F. Riggs Newspaper as lead editor, Stem Savvy Chapter and is the president of the National Honor Society. She was the recipient of the 2017 Citizenship Award, the 2018 Principal's Education Award, was the 2018 History Student of the Year and a 2018 South Dakota National History Day Research Paper place holder.

Starr will receive \$250 from Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. in partnership with East River Electric Power Cooperative, to reward her for her academic achievements. Another perk for being selected, Nevaeh is automatically in the running for a \$1,000 scholarship, to be awarded at a special banquet later this spring honoring all of this year's scholars.

Scholar of the Week is an ongoing joint effort between Touchstone Energy® co-ops, like Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., and Dakota News Now. The program recognizes the achievements of high school seniors throughout the region. The honor is awarded to highly motivated seniors who excel in the classroom as well as in their community.

Ready your home for a winter break during the holidays

If you're planning to be out of town for an extended period of time during the holidays, take heed of the following recommendations to save some energy and keep your home safe while you're away.

- Set your home's thermostat to 50 degrees. This temperature is a happy midpoint that avoids wasting energy to warm an empty house while still preventing damage to your pipes and plants. If sub-20-degree days are forecast during the time you are away, drip faucets.
- Turn off your electric water heater at the breaker or set it to the lowest temperature possible.
- To avoid a potential fire hazard, unplug the washer and dryer before you leave your home. Disconnect the hoses leading to the washer to prevent them from freezing.
- Unplug all of your small appliances. You'll reduce the risk of a house fire and save a bit on your electric bill.
- Don't broadcast your travel plans on social media. Instead, share photos from your trip after you return.
- If you set a timer for your outdoor or indoor lights, make sure to switch up the times over the days you'll be gone so it's not obvious to any onlookers that the house is empty when lights go on at 6 p.m. every day like clockwork. If possible, stagger several timers that control different lights to approximate the natural movement of someone through a house.
- Close blinds and curtains. Don't advertise your belongings to any would-be house burglars.
- Be strategic about putting out post-holiday recycling and trash. If there are a lot of boxes from new gadgets or other expensive electronics, wait until you get back to put them out so they're not sitting outside in full view for days. Or have a trusted neighbor set them by the curb on the appropriate day.
- Place a hold on all mail and newspaper deliveries, and ask a neighbor or a friend to pick up any packages from your porch.

DID YOU KNOW?



On Christmas Eve 1923, President Calvin Coolidge began the country's celebration of Christmas by lighting the first National Christmas Tree decorated with electric lights.



Don't cut down trees by power lines

Milo Thompson

Milo reminds electric cooperative members that cutting down trees located near power lines can be hazardous. Milo is the child of Kurt and Rebecca Thompson of Hayti. They are members of H-D Electric.

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



HOLIDAY DESSERTS

CRANBERRY CAKE**Ingredients:**

3 Tbsp. butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
2 cups flour
1 cup milk
3 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
2-3 cups raw cranberries

Butter Sauce

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup evaporated milk or cream
1 Tbsp. flour
1 tsp. vanilla

METHOD

Grease and flour a bundt pan or 9 x 13 inch pan. Cream butter, sugar and egg. Beat in flour, milk, baking powder and salt. Fold in cranberries. Spread batter in pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. Bundt pan may need one hour. Serve with butter sauce. For butter sauce, mix flour and sugar. Place all ingredients except vanilla in saucepan. Heat, beating well over high heat until hot and bubbly. Add vanilla. Serve warm over cranberry cake.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

BAKED RICE PUDDING**Ingredients:**

2 cups milk
1 cup water
1/4 cup sugar
3 tbsp. rice
1 tbsp. butter
1/4 cup raisins
Pinch of salt

Topping

Sugar
Cinnamon
Milk

METHOD

In a 2-qt. baking dish, add milk, water, sugar and rice. Stir together. Add a pinch of salt and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Take out of oven and add butter. Let sit while you eat main meal. Dish up in bowls, sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon and add milk.

Deanna Dean, Artesian

FANCY CHRISTMAS CAKES**Ingredients:****Cakes**

1 pkg. (2-layer size) white cake mix
1 tbsp. McCormick® Red Food Color
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 tbsp. McCormick® Green Food Color
1 pkg. (16 oz.) chocolate candy coating, such as CANDIQUIK®

Buttercream

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 pkg. (16 oz.) confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tbsp. milk
Pinch of salt

METHOD

Preheat oven and prepare batter as directed. Divide batter evenly into 2 bowls (about 1-1/2 cups of batter each). Stir red food color and vanilla into first bowl. Stir green color into second bowl. Pour red and green batter into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pans. Gently tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. (If you do not have 2 13 x 9-inch pans, bake one color cake first, then reuse the pan to bake the second.) Bake 6 minutes. Remove pans from oven and tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. Return pans to oven and bake 6-9 minutes longer. Cool in pans 10 minutes. Invert cakes onto wire rack. Cool completely. Refrigerate cakes until ready to assemble. For buttercream, beat butter in large bowl with electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add vanilla and mix. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar on low speed, scraping sides and bottom of bowl after each addition. Add milk and salt; beat on medium-high until light and fluffy, at least 3 minutes. If frosting is too thick, beat in additional milk.

www.mccormick.com

Please send your favorite soup 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Valerie Marso

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Maybe you've read about the Pony Express back in school. Maybe you've seen a western depict the Pony Express system. For such a short-lived operation, it left a lasting impression. If you've never

heard of it or are a bit rusty on the particulars, here's a recap.

In the 1860's it took about 25 days to get mail from coast to coast by stagecoach. The Pony Express was about 10 days! It was a series of couriers and mounts (horses) that relayed the mail until the destination was reached.

Ultimately, despite being heavily subsidized, the Pony Express was not a financial success and the telegraph was its demise. But in its short 18 months of operation, The Pony Express demonstrated a unified transcontinental system of communications.

OK, so what on Earth does that have to do with your electric bill? Although we have come a long way from mail being delivered by a horse and rider, sometimes it still

can take up to 10 days to get mail delivered regardless of destination or origination. Sounds crazy but I have seen it with my own eyes time and time again. The postal service is understaffed and overwhelmed. American consumers continue to have more and more items delivered to their homes and despite being operational six days a week, you may still experience delays.

So what is the solution? One extremely

secure option is to sign up for SmartHub! Simply go to www.oaheelectric.com to get started! Once you are registered you can compare your energy usage to previous months/years. You can make your payment via SmartHub if you want. You can still receive a paper bill in addition to the email or you can opt to receive the electronic notice only. Electronic notices are sent immediately when your bill is generated.

Don't take a chance on your statement or payment getting held up. Take the guess work out and sign up for SmartHub today!



THANK YOU



Oahe Electric Co-op Inc.,
Thank you for buying my Hampshire Ram at the 4-H Premium Sale. His name is Jeffrey. I'm going to use the money to buy a Red Angus Steer to show next year.
-From Cash

I just wanted to thank you for the nice gifts your people stopped by to give us yesterday. We were quite surprised and will be using those gifts, some on a daily basis. Nice to have a utility company that cares about their customers. Thanks once again.
-Gregory Hedrick (October Question of the Month winner)

SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES AND SAVE WITH CO-OP CONNECTIONS®

Gift wish lists are being made with haste and it's getting a little colder outside. That means the holiday shopping season is right around the corner. Speaking of 'around the corner,' there are plenty of locally owned businesses in our neck of the woods that can provide unique gifts and experiences for your loved ones. And Oahe Electric's Co-op Connections member benefit program can help you save while you keep dollars in the local economy.

This winter, let's power a Small Business Comeback and frequent the shops owned by our friends and neighbors. Visit www.Connections.coop to find all the ways to save locally or download the free Co-op Connections smartphone app in the App Store or on Google Play. Use the app's "Deals Near Me" option as you holiday shop at local merchants or anytime you are out running errands. And keep in mind, with participating dining options, you can fill up on grub while you fill your trunk with toys, clothes, home goods and more!

If you have any questions about how the program works, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at 1.800.640.6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. And as you are busy stockpiling gifts for family and friends, keep our small business community in mind this holiday season! Here is a list of our local businesses that have special offers through Co-op Connections. When shopping locally, either show your Oahe Electric Co-op Connections card or the app at the point of sale to save.



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.
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Home/Garden

Slumberland Furniture	605-945-1997	Pierre	20% off any regular priced Lazy Boy items. Excluding special orders.
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Services

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.
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Retail

Fastenal	605-224-4060	Pierre	10% off of fasteners and 5% off on all other products
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CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPITOL

Each year, musicians and other entertainers from across the state perform for the tens of thousands of visitors who travel to Pierre to see the “Christmas at the Capitol” displays and decorations. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Christmas at the Capitol: Celebrating 40 years of yuletide splendor and dazzling displays

Billy Gibson

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With all of its spectacular lights, familiar carols and colorful decorations, Christmas at the Capitol inspires thousands to become awash in the spirit of the season.

It's an especially magical and meaningful event for Moriah Gross, founder and director of the Pierre Youth Orchestra. Over the past decade, Gross and her students have performed in the Capitol Rotunda and added to the yuletide ambiance that more than 20,000 visitors travel from far and near to experience.

Gross is one of many performers slated to appear in the Rotunda as Christmas at the Capitol takes place from Nov. 23 through Dec. 26. Visitors to this year's celebration can expect to see brilliant hues of ruby, pink and pearl in recognition of the event's 40th anniversary.

“Winter Wishes” is the theme for 2021 as nearly 100 decorated trees will line the halls and fill the

historic structure. Local businesses and government agencies, non-profit organizations and other community groups from across the state will once again put their decorating skills to the test and give the Capitol and its environs a South Dakota Christmas flair.

This year's official lighting ceremony will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at 7:30 p.m. The popular Pie Day is set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., when complimentary slices of pie, cookies, coffee and ice cream will be offered along with live musical entertainment sure to spark the Christmas spirit.

Gross said she and her students look forward to the event each year, but one memory stands out for her among the rest. Two years ago, she accompanied a guest performer who sang the traditional carol Silent Night in the language of the Lakota Sioux.

“It was so spectacular and moving to be able to have that experience there inside the State Capitol and honoring the Lakota people and

culture, and also to have our students experience that as well,” said Gross, a member of Oahe Electric Cooperative outside of Pierre.

A native of Kansas and accomplished string instrumentalist, Gross relocated to Pierre 10 years ago and soon realized there was no educational string program for public school students. So, she started the Pierre Youth Orchestra, which has nearly 40 students who are set to perform at the Capitol on Sunday, Dec. 19, at 5 p.m.

THIS YEAR'S OFFICIAL LIGHTING CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE TUESDAY, NOV. 23, AT 7:30 P.M. THE POPULAR PIE DAY IS SET FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 4, FROM 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Gross said while she calls the Capitol “one of my favorite places to perform,” the experience is also beneficial for her music students in many ways.

“It's just the opportunity to play for

DECKING THE CAPITOL HALLS



Nearly 100 trees are decorated by clubs, associations, non-profits and government agencies. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

an audience in this kind of setting. It's very intimate and not like playing on a stage in a large theater where the audience is sitting at a distance away from you," she said. "In the Rotunda, there are people all around, sometimes standing room only, and they're very close and intimate. It's an emotional time of year and you get to really connect with the audience. At the same time, they have to be disciplined and focused on what they're doing. It's a unique experience that a lot of students don't always get to have."

She said many students will return after they've graduated from the program and sit in on the performance and have their photos taken with the current crop of students at the Capitol.

Observing Christmas at the Capitol from behind the scenes, Gross noted the many individuals and volunteers who help make the event a success each year.

"I can't say enough about all the committees, greeters, volunteers, organizers and others around the

Approximate number
of annual visitors

20,000

to the Christmas at
the Capitol event.

community who make this possible for people coming in from all over the country and the world. You have the sights and sounds and scents of the pine trees, and it all adds up to a wonderful holiday experience," she said. "There are so many people who all work together to make this something special."

The annual holiday event started back in 1981 with a dozen decorated trees and has grown in popularity through the past 40 years. Visitors can look for some of the more popular recurring displays such as a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments from the China Painters Organization and an old wooden nativity scene that the local Knights of Columbus group sets up on the second floor of the Capitol each year.

Those interested in serving as a volunteer for the event can contact rick.augusztin@state.sd.us.



The State Capitol grounds are also decorated to evoke the spirit of Christmas. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*



NEWS FROM THE LINE CREW



Matt Eldridge
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Fall is in full swing here in South Dakota, and at Oahe Electric, that means trying to get as many things done as possible before winter hits.

One of our big projects is changing out poles. In August, RAM Utilities, LLC began testing poles in the southeast part of our service territory. The age of the pole will normally determine how a pole is tested. If it is a newer pole, a visual inspection may be all that is required. Testers will note whether it seems as if it has had signs or other articles attached to it, if it has been damaged by wildlife, used as a scratching post by cattle, etc., all of which can cause lasting damage to poles. With older poles, testers may dig down

beside the pole, drill into and remove a core sample. If they find any issues that leads them to believe it won't last another 10 years (based on Rural Utility Service guidelines), they will reject the pole. It is important to note that just because a pole fails this test, does not mean that it is in imminent danger of falling down. The purpose of pole inspections is to prevent future issues with the poles.

During this process, RAM Utilities tested over 5,000 poles and rejected 111 of them. This is approximately a 2 percent rejection rate, which is very good overall. The poles range in age from poles set in the 1950s until present. As RAM Utilities were testing the poles, they were also making notes of other issues that needed to be fixed on the overhead line such as loose material, broken grounds, chipped insulators, amongst other concerns. The line crew has started changing out the rejected poles along with fixing these issues, and will continue to do so as long as the weather allows them too.

We also have a few new services left to put in before old man winter arrives. We will be installing those services as new members complete their paperwork. If you are still in need of a new service, or have any other concerns, please call us at 1-800-640-6243.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

This month's question is:

How long was the Pony Express in operation?

Please submit your answer via email to oahe@oaheelectric.com with the subject line of "Question of the Month." A surprise gift will be sent to the winner!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH WINNER

The Question of the Month winners for the October 2021 publication were Gregory and Cheryl Hedrick. They correctly answered the question, "In the past 20 years, on average, how much has the cost of a kWh increased at Oahe Electric?"

The answer was less than two cents!

Congratulations and we hope you enjoyed your prizes!

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!

Learning From Failure



Russ Hohn

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Failure. What feelings does that single word evoke for you? Maybe it triggers a memory of a recent misstep. Or maybe it's a big gaffe you made early in your career that still makes you cringe today. There are plenty of management books and articles that talk about how important it is that we "embrace" failure as a necessary part of learning and growing, but few take a deep dive into what it takes to learn from failure successfully.

Professor Amy C. Edmondson of Harvard Business School summed up the problem this way: "The attitudes and activities required to effectively detect and analyze failures are in short supply in most companies, and the need for context-specific learning strategies is underappreciated."

There's a lot to unpack in that sentence. Dr. Edmonson, who championed the idea of "psychological safety," observes responses to failure are both emotional and operational.

Let's start with the emotional side. In the opening paragraph, I asked you to remember a time when you failed and how that felt. You likely had a visceral reaction to that memory because we are all taught from an early age that failure is bad. Someone whose opinion we cared about, like a parent or favorite teacher, was disappointed by our mistake. Maybe we were reprimanded and admonished to "don't do that again" or "make better choices."

As a result, we felt shame, embarrassment and/or self-doubt. We quickly learned to try to avoid failure or at least to avoid accepting responsibility for something that went wrong. Instead, we look for someone or something to blame.

Adults may react to failure with anxiety or a sense of hopelessness, or fear being held accountable for the failure, even if it could not have single-handedly been avoided. We may also be concerned about the failure resulting in our manager or peers lacking trust or confidence in our abilities going forward.

Behavioral scientists point to a variety of responses to failure aimed at self-protection, that is, mitigating negative feelings, such as justification, downplaying the consequences or even something they call "self-handicapping" in which the individual expresses that he/she had low expectations in the first place. While all of these responses may help us feel better, none of them set us up particularly well for learning and growing from our mistakes.

Moving from self-protection to self-improving requires reflection and psychological safety. While some negative emotion to failure can help motivate us to do better next time, our chances of actually improving go up significantly if reflecting on and learning from failure have been explicitly

encouraged and enabled.

Dr. Edmondson shares that leaders must cultivate a culture where their teams recognize that some failure is bound to happen and are encouraged to bring failures forward, analyze them and invite suggestions for correction or improvement. To do so, organizations need to separate failure from fault, or in other words, drop the "blame game."

She clarifies that the reasons for failure fall upon a spectrum – from praiseworthy (such as exploring options and testing hypotheses that may lead to valuable new insights) to blameworthy (deliberate violations of policies) and teams need context to know where their type of work (and potential failure) falls on that spectrum. Yet, too many times, organizations tend to treat all or most failures as blameworthy. Dr. Edmondson urges leaders to view failures in three broad categories to help enable a learning culture:

1. Failures in routine operations that can be prevented.
2. Failures in complex operations that can be managed but not avoided entirely.
3. Intelligent failures from unexpected or unwanted outcomes that are still valuable because they bring new insights or information to light.

Five Strategies for Creating Psychological Safety That Enable Learning From Failure:

1. Provide context or framing. Identify at the outset what types of failures may happen within the work setting or project and state your expectation of learning from them.
2. Do better than just not shooting the messenger. Celebrate and encourage those who speak up with questions, concerns, or reports of mistakes. If debriefs or "after action" reviews are already part of your culture, examine whether the follow-through on the areas for improvement that surfaced is happening, and if not, why.
3. Be up front about limitations. Be open as a leader about your lack of familiarity with a situation or subject area, readily acknowledge past mistakes, and ask for help from your team.
4. Dig deeper into the why not who. Take the time to do root cause analyses to get to the heart of the mistakes that occurred versus stopping short at superficial explanations. Bring your curiosity and patience.
5. Set the rules and enforce them. Be clear and direct about what the boundaries are as well as the consequences for acting outside of them, such as deliberately violating cooperative policies or acting recklessly. While it may seem incongruous, psychological safety actually increases when teams know what actions are on the blameworthy end of the failure spectrum.

Failure can be a powerful teacher. Personally, we can become more resilient, develop better coping skills, and gain the confidence that comes from working through adversity and challenges. At an organizational level, being able to learn from failure can ultimately raise performance and enable more innovation by enabling relatively safe experiments that unlock newfound wisdom. I hope this article has helped you consider failure in a more positive light.

SEARCHING FOR THE STARS

Badlands Observatory photographer Teresa Hofer captured this image of The Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters.

Badlands Observatory welcomes stargazers, researchers and others interested in pursuing the field of astronomy

Billy Gibson

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For centuries, astronomers have sought to find a scientific explanation for the Star of Bethlehem, which is described in the Gospel of Matthew as the celestial sign that led the Magi into the presence of the Christ child.

Some have speculated that the object high in the night sky could have been a supernova, a comet or possibly a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus.

Accomplished astronomer Ron Dyvig has views of his own. As a researcher who adheres to scientific methods, he's a bit hesitant to plow into topics where science and faith may collide.

But when pressed to offer an educated opinion on the Christmas Star, he replies, "There are several elements that make it challenging to address from a scientific standpoint and there are a

half-dozen theories beyond what's there in the Biblical accounts. But I think it could have been a nova or the planet Venus. Venus can be remarkably bright after sunset when it appears to descend in the west for several weeks. That may have been what the Magi saw and would be something they could follow. But a lot of people have strong religious beliefs about it, and if you believe it was a miracle, then science can't really explain it adequately."

Dyvig is founder of the Badlands Observatory, which he opened for his own private viewing and independent research in 2000. Two years ago, he began renovating the facility located in the small community of Quinn just north of I-90, with the goal of one day welcoming members of the public interested in astronomy.

While the renovation project is not fully complete and a grand opening is set for next spring, Badlands

Observatory is now welcoming visitors by reservation only.

"Since we got settled into this facility, there has just been so much public interest in it that we decided to go public. It's as simple as that," Dyvig said. "Right now we're taking it slow with small groups. During the winter months our activities will be curtailed a bit, then we'll expect a busy spring."

A native of Deadwood, the 79-year old Dyvig took a keen interest in astronomy at an early age when he was



Teresa Hofer and Ron Dyvig are long-time collaborators who have opened the Badlands Observatory to public access.

introduced to the discipline by his local Boy Scout troop leader. He created his first observatory as a youngster when he made a concrete pad and a cylinder to hold his telescope in place in the middle of a rancher's field. During his high school and college years, he spent late nights scanning the skies, marveling at the vastness of the universe and hoping to discover new heavenly bodies.

As a college student, Dyvig learned and taught the art of telescope-making and became president of the Black Hills Astronomical Society. He later designed and fabricated the optics for the Hidden Valley Observatory in Rapid City.

Dyvig spent time honing his craft as a research assistant at the University of Arizona where he worked under several mentors and utilized the advanced facilities at Kitt Peak National Observatory. He was chosen to help design and test image intensifier camera systems for Steward Observatory.

While through the decades he kept day jobs to support his avocation, his evenings were spent star gazing and pursuing new discoveries. His passion and dedication to astronomy paid off when he discovered - and aptly dubbed - Asteroid 26715 South Dakota just a year after opening the Badlands Observatory. It's just one of the 25



Photographer Bob Rossiter and Ron Dyvig are shown with the 26-inch Newtonian Reflector telescope at Badlands Observatory.

discoveries credited to Dyvig during the course of his astronomy work.

Building the observatory was no small task. First, he found and converted an old medical building in Quinn to house the facility. Then he personally designed and fabricated all of the optics, including grinding and polishing the mirror for the 26-inch f/4.8 Newtonian Reflector telescope. West River Electric

Cooperative worked with Dyvig and the town of Quinn to install hoods over surrounding street lights to reduce "light pollution" and enhance the ability to scan the night sky.

Dyvig describes himself as fortunate to find a partner in Teresa Hofer, a career accountant who shares his passion for all things celestial.

There's always something to be done

at the observatory, Hofer said. Ongoing duties include maintaining and upgrading the optical and drive systems, control systems for the telescope and dome, facility management, designing and implementing new educational programs for visitors, website updates and keeping up-to-date on developments in the field of astronomy.

"There's plenty to do, especially since we decided to make the facility public after we figured people might like to see what we do," she said. "We had to make sure everything was comfortable for the public and do a lot of renovating and painting and upgrading."

Hofer said she is starting to promote the observatory as a destination for astronomy enthusiasts who might be interested in touring the facility and peering through one of seven telescopes on the observation deck. Dyvig is in the process of also building a radio telescope to add to his collection.

Those interested in experiencing the Badlands Observatory can call 605-381-1521 to set up a viewing time or visit www.badlandsobservatory.com.



The Orion Nebula has long captured the imaginations of star watchers as it has been associated with the Greek myth of a huntsman placed among the stars by Zeus.

BUILDING RURAL LEADERS

Minnesota Ag Rural Leadership Class IX members develop problem-solving skills during a “Building Strong Teams” session.

Working today to develop tomorrow’s rural community leaders in South Dakota and Minnesota

Billy Gibson

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Success in any endeavor calls for solid leadership. Don Norton of the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (SDARL) is eager to build better leaders who envision a more prosperous future for individuals, families and businesses across the state.

Norton believes leadership skills don’t just materialize out of thin air. Those skills and abilities have to be taught. That’s the goal of SDARL, an 18-month program that takes participants through an intensive course of conferences, class time and state, national and international seminars all designed to prepare the students to return to their communities and make positive contributions.

“You don’t see SDARL graduates sitting on the sidelines,” Norton

said. “They’re stepping up to serve on commodity and corporate boards, in community organizations, in government and in their families, leading and taking action and inspiring others to do the same.”

SDARL Class VII graduate Mike Traxinger of Claremont is doing anything but sitting on the sidelines. Traxinger is a fifth-generation farmer and rancher who also serves as general counsel and director of governmental affairs for Agtegra Cooperative. He recently joined the board of directors at Northern Electric Cooperative based in Bath, is past president of the American Agricultural Law Association, co-chair of the Agricultural Law Committee of the State Bar of South Dakota and a member of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, Farmers Union and South Dakota Simmental Association.

“The SDARL program really helped hone my leadership skills and gave me more insight into ways that I could make a difference that I hadn’t thought of before,” said Traxinger, who also serves as president of the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives. “Leadership is vital to the continued success of rural America, farming and ranching operations, and our communities. And programs like SDARL are very effective in developing strong leaders who have a passion for service and a heart for helping others succeed in a way that’s beneficial for everyone.”

The SDARL Foundation was created in 1998 under the first Executive Director Dr. Dan Gee, who stepped into the role after retiring from the Animal Science Department at South Dakota State University. The first class started in 2000 with participants representing a range of backgrounds including ranching, farming, banking, media, government and private business.

Dr. Gee was the leader of SDARL



Leadership students take a field tour of a logging operation in northern Minnesota.

in 2008 when Olga Brouwer went through the curriculum. Brouwer was so impressed with Dr. Gee and the program that she later went on to become leader of the Minnesota Agriculture Rural Leadership (MARL) and has held that position for the past 10 years. She points out that both the MARL and SDARL programs were formed on the same day 21 years ago and have graduated a combined 600 students during that time.

“I learned so much from Dr. Gee,” said Brouwer, who once operated a dairy farm in Elkton. “He was super-educational and also provided a lot of insight into the political process, how to reach out. If you go and talk to legislators and staffers you find out there are reasons why things might not be working out so well. But in order to change things, you have to be at the table and be active, especially for cooperatives.”

While both programs have similar structures and operate in similar fashion, Brouwer said MARL is affiliated with the University of Minnesota Extension and places a bit more stress on the academic side in the learning material.

Kylie and Jake Rieke are both graduates of the MARL program and leaders in their community. Along with raising corn and bean crops, Jake is chairman and a founding organizer of the R-S Fiber Cooperative while Kylie serves on the board of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association based in Danube, Minn.

Jake participated in MARL from 2018 to 2020 and was impressed with what he gained from the program. His group traveled to Cambodia and Taiwan to examine their agricultural practices.

“It was a great experience. For us, it blew open an entire network of connected individuals to draw off their expertise and bounce ideas off of,” he said. “Everybody in the group brings a unique background in different fields, so there are people you can call to ask questions or answer questions someone may have for you. It gives you a fast lane for networking and for getting your projects moving to accomplish whatever goals you have in front of you.”

Neither SDARL nor MARL receive direct funds from state or federal governments to support their programming. Participants pay

The number of years
SDARL and MARL

21

have been developing
community leaders.

a percentage of the cost of going through the program but most funding comes from individuals, businesses and partnering organizations whose goal is to improve and develop rural communities.

One of those organizations standing in full support of both programs and the concept of rural leadership development is East River Electric Power Cooperative, which provides transmission, substation and distribution services for electric cooperatives in both states.

Those interested in investing in rural leadership through these programs can visit www.sdagleadership.com and www.marlprogram.org.



Christmas Day
December 25, 2021

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

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



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

NOVEMBER 26

Parade of Lights

Dakota Avenue, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

NOVEMBER 26-28

Beautiful – The Carole King Musical

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/> for more info and tickets

NOVEMBER 26-28

DECEMBER 4-6, 10-23, 26-31

Christmas Nights of Lights

Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

NOVEMBER 27

Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade

Downtown, Rapid City, SD,
605-381-4204

DECEMBER 2

Christmas on the Prairie

526 North Broadway Avenue, Miller, SD, 605-853-3098

DECEMBER 2

Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights

Downtown, Yankton, SD,
605-668-5231

DECEMBER 3

Handel's Messiah

First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

DECEMBER 3-4

Christmas in The Hills – "Visions of Sugar Plums"

Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, 605-890-0519

DECEMBER 3-5

Annual Christmas Tree Lighting & Cowboy Christmas

Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-223-7690

DECEMBER 4

Rapid City Garden Club's Wreath & Centerpiece Sale

Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

DECEMBER 5

Magical Medora Christmas

Homestake Opera House, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.homestakeoperahouse.org/> for more info and tickets

DECEMBER 10

for KING & COUNTRY – A Drummer Boy Christmas Tour

Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://smarturl.it/DBSiouxFallsSD>

DECEMBER 11

Breakfast with Santa

Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown, SD, tickets go on sale after Thanksgiving, 605-882-6269

DECEMBER 11

Frontier Christmas

Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

DECEMBER 11-12

Christmas with the Symphony: 'Tis the Season

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

DECEMBER 11-12, 18-19

Christmas Tours of the Historic Adams House

22 Van Buren Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-722-4800

DECEMBER 15-18

Lakota Nation Invitational 45th Anniversary

The Monument, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

DECEMBER 16-19

25th Annual Christmas at the Cathedral

Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://ccfesd.org/events/christmas-at-the-cathedral/>

DECEMBER 18

Vendor and Craft Market

Watertown Mall, Watertown, SD, 605-882-1734

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve with The Davis Sisters

601 Columbus Street, Rapid City, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

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