



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Poll tenders rock the vote

**Election workers are
dedicated to the task**

Pages 8-9

**Freshman Impact
teaches sound
decision making**

Pages 12-13

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

CTIONS TO THE VOTERS

Read
if not able to
will be given
identification
driver ID card
or

STORM PREPARATION

Valerie Marso

Office Manager

With severe weather events occurring more frequently, it makes sense to be prepared. During a prolonged power outage or other emergencies, this means having enough food, water, and supplies to last at least a few days.

Here are general guidelines recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

- Assemble a grab-and-go disaster kit. Include items like nonperishable food, water (one gallon per person, per day), diapers, batteries, flashlights, prescription medications, a first-aid kit, battery-powered radio, and phone chargers.
- Develop a plan for communicating with family and friends (i.e., via text, social media, third party, etc.).
- Have some extra cash available; during a power outage, electronic card readers and cash machines may not work.
- Store important documents (birth certificates, property deeds, etc.) in a safe place away from home (for example, a bank safe deposit box).
- Keep neighbors and coworkers apprised of your emergency plans.
- Fill your car with gas.
- Organize your supplies so they are together in an easily accessible location that family members know about.

Caring for vulnerable family members

If you have older family members or those with special needs, make sure they have enough medication and supplies for a few days. If they don't live with you, arrange for a neighbor to check in on them. If a severe weather event is expected, consider having your relative stay with you if feasible; otherwise, call them daily. If you have an infant or young children, make certain that you have ample formula, diapers, medication, and other supplies on hand.

Keeping four-legged family members safe

For families with pets, having a plan in place in the event of a prolonged outage or an emergency will help reduce worry and stress.

- Bring pets indoors at the first sign of a storm or other emergency. Pets can become disoriented and frightened during severe weather and may wander off.
- Microchip your pet and ensure the contact information is up to date.
- Store pet medical records on a USB drive or in an easy-to-remember location.
- Create an emergency kit for pets (include shelf-safe food, bottled water, medications, and other supplies).

Planning for an emergency today can give you more confidence to deal with severe weather and potential outages in the future.

Eat Safe Food after a Power Outage

Refrigerated or frozen foods may not be safe to eat after the loss of power. Find out what you can do to keep food safe during a power outage, and when you need to throw away food that could make you sick.

Before

Keep appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.
The refrigerator should be at 40°F or below.
The freezer should be at 0°F or below.

Prepare for emergencies or natural disasters

Freeze containers of water and gel packs to help keep your food at 40°F or below.

Have a cooler handy.

Buy dry ice or block ice to keep food cold in the refrigerator if the power might be out for a long time.

During

KEEP Refrigerator & Freezer Doors CLOSED

4 Hours in a Refrigerator

48 Hours in a FULL Freezer

24 Hours in a HALF-FULL Freezer

After 4 hours without power, put refrigerated perishable foods in a cooler. Add ice or another cold source to keep them at 40°F or below.

After

Never taste food to determine if it is safe to eat. When in doubt, throw it out.

- **Throw out perishable food** in your refrigerator (meat, fish, cut fruits and vegetables, eggs, milk, and leftovers) **after 4 hours without power** or a cold source.
- Throw out any food with an **unusual odor, color, or texture.**
- **Check temperatures of food** kept in coolers or your refrigerator with a cold source. Throw out food above 40°F.
- If you have an appliance thermometer in your freezer, check to see if it is still at 40°F or below.
- You can **safely refreeze or cook** thawed frozen food **that still contains ice crystals** or is at 40°F or below.

CDC www.cdc.gov/foodsafety

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

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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.

Cove Heat Sale

We're clearing out our inventory of Cove Heaters and our members can benefit from reduced pricing!



Call the office for sizing and pricing – when they're gone, they're gone!

Energy Efficiency: Tip of the Month

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

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

Source: energy.gov

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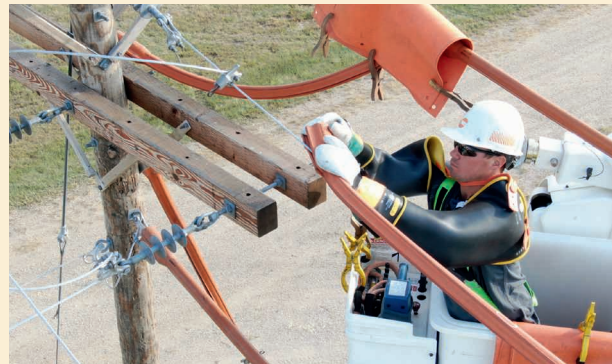
A heaping helping of holiday home safety

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

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

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

LINEMEN PARTICIPATE IN RUBBER GLOVING SCHOOL



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

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



Don't play on transformer boxes

Traci Tschetter

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

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

CROCKPOT CREATIONS

SLOW COOKER CHILI

Ingredients:

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

METHOD

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

McCormick.com

SLOW COOKER TURKEY BREAST

Ingredients:

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

METHOD

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

McCormick.com

SLOW COOKER MASHED POTATOES

Ingredients:

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

METHOD

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

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Local Students Learn About Electricity

Oahe Electric employees spent several days visiting 600+ students in both the Pierre and ABO School Districts, teaching them about electrical safety! The presentations

started off in the classroom with a Power Town display. Power Town uses a small-scale version of an electrical system to demonstrate safety around power lines. Students saw firsthand how electrical current moves through various items they may encounter in their daily lives.

The students then moved outdoors to take in the High Voltage Demonstration Trailer. This unit simulates live power lines and gives the students an opportunity to see an up-close and dynamic view of electricity. The demonstration helps educate about the dangers and hazards associated with overhead and underground power lines.

The Safety Mission of Oahe Electric is to develop and promote a healthy and safe environment for all employees, cooperative members, and members of the public through the involvement of all individuals with regards to education, communication, training and safe work practices. We work every day to fulfill this commitment to safety and hope to further that goal by offering these educational opportunities.

Oahe Electric Employees (Tyler, Brady, Steve),

Thank you for taking time to come educate our class on electricity, it's danger and safety precautions. WOW! That was awesome while also being informative. We enjoyed ALL of it: the bird demonstration, the girl and car demonstration, the circuit checker, etc. Our favorite thing was the demonstrations outside! These are some of the things we learned: what to do if a power line falls on your car (jump with two feet together), be cautious around power lines and power boxes, electricity can be dangerous, and electricity is powerful.

We would love to have you back again next year! We really appreciate it.

Handwritten signatures and names surrounding the photo include: Hannah, Bryn, Jackson, Annie, Liam, dsabel, Annie, God bless, Mrs. Steele and the 4th graders at St. Joseph School, Boston, Charlie, Bryn, Nick, Joseph, Charlotte, Ainsley, Evelyn, Steve, Ben, Boole, Rylen, Samuel, Brooklyn, Tawach, Henry B, and many others.



LINE CREW NEWS



Matt Eldridge
Operations
Manager

Fall is in the air here at Oahe Electric, and with that, we are working on finishing up last minute projects in the service territory before winter sets in.

The crew has been working on changing out poles that were rejected from inspections performed this past summer. A lot of poles that are rejected are service poles located closer to the structures they serve (i.e. – house, grain bins, etc.). These can take a whole day and four linemen to change out as they sometimes have several runs of underground secondaries and overhead lines coming off them.

If you have a rejected service pole in your

yard, we will be getting in contact with you to schedule an outage to get these changed out.

Once the weather gets colder and the ground becomes frozen, the crew will start with the annual line patrol. This year, we will be patrolling Sully County. The crew will drive the line going from pole to pole and making sure there is no damage on the poles. Additionally, they will be fixing any problems that they find.

If you are still in need of a new service or a service upgrade, please contact our office at 1-800-640-6243.

Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$19 billion to members since 1988 – \$1.5 billion in 2020 alone.

Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues (called margins) are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

*Source: National Rural
Utilities Cooperative
Finance Corporation*



GREY GOOSE HALLOWEEN DISPLAY

Friday, Oct. 28th - Monday Oct. 31st, 2022

6 p.m. until 9 p.m.

You and your families are welcome to walk around and enjoy the lit jack-o-lanterns. Be mindful of vehicles, wildlife, and pedestrians.

Directions: 19988 Grey Goose Rd. Turn onto Grey Goose Road off Highway 1804 and drive four miles north. Look for orange glowing lights.



Landowners are not responsible for accidents or lost items.



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

Poll workers urge voters to stay active in the election process

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Number of South
Dakota citizens

62,429

registered to vote but
considered inactive

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

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

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



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

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

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

Total - 589,363

V O T E

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

feels safe while doing her work inside the armory.

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

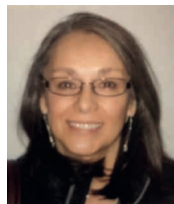


“Sometimes people get angry and you just try to calm them down. They don’t know how things work and what’s required because they’re not paying attention,” she said. “Social media and TV stirs up their passion and they don’t always know how to control that.”

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

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

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



Michele Moore

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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MEMBER THANK YOU MESSAGES

Dear Oahe Electric,

Now that the fall semester has started and fees have posted, I wanted to write and let you know how much I appreciate your support of students in our local community through your scholarship awards.

Thank you again for awarding the generous scholarship to my son Matthew.

With Gratitude,
Maria King

Oahe Electric, *KE Beh*
Dalton Eldridge
 Thank you for sharing your time
 with us last week. We really enjoyed
 learning about safety + electricity. *Mrs. Dashi*
Kylan *grace* *KARA* *Sincerely,* *Khalie*
Reagon *break* *charlotte* *Hunter* *Mrs. Brink* *Kodi*
Reece *Lucy* *Sam* *Hadley* *Kenzie*
Mrs. Dashi *John* *HUGO* *AB!* *Eli* *Remi* *Maddox* *Lex* *Mrs. Jill*
Gratison



Many
THANKS

Thank you for being a big part of my special day.
 I plan on attending LATC Automotive Technology program in the fall with
 hopes of take over ray's Garage someday.
 God Bless
 Kylan Vern Horsley

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

This month's question is:

How long will food in a full freezer last without power?

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!

WINNER OF QUESTION OF THE MONTH

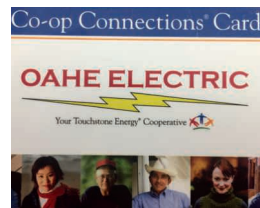
The Question of the Month winners for the September 2022 publication were Deborah and Larry Iversen. They correctly answered the question, "What was the average inflation rate from 1913-2020?" The answer was 3.1.

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!



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.
Lee Real Estate	605-222-6003	Perre	Receive a FREE Comparable Market Analysis for real estate properties, which gives members current market values for home, land and commercial properties.

Services

Apryl's Animal House	605-224-9203	Perre	10% off a grooming or boarding
Inman's Water Technologies	605-224-5111	Pierre	Receive a 10% 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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SOUND DECISIONS

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

Freshman Impact program promotes sound safety practices for students

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Central Electric's Manager of Communications Tara Miller helped



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

facilitate the partnership while working alongside local organizers.

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

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

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

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

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

agencies and emergency responders.

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

Visit www.freshmanimpact.com.

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





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

Renville-Sibley leads tour of electric cooperatives for college students

Erin Kelly
NRECA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



different experience.”

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

Sarah Komoroski, a mechanical engi-

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

- DEEANNE NORRIS, CEO, RENVILLE-SIBLEY CPA

neer who is halfway through her master’s degree program, said she felt like “a kid in a candy shop” on the tour as she got up-close and personal with coal boiler, gas turbine and other infrastructure.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“The students are in their 20s and

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

OCT. 28-30

ZooBoo

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

OCT. 31

Halloween Parade

Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 3-5

Yankton's Harvest Halloween
Downtown, Yankton, SD

NOV. 3-5

Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge

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

NOV. 4-6

Girlfriends' Weekend
Hill City, SD

NOV. 5-20

Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show

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

NOV. 5

Fairburn Community Center Bazaar
Fairburn, SD

NOV. 11-13

Christmas at the Barn

Front Porch 605
Groton, SD
605-216-4202

NOV. 12

Black Hills Meat Festival

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

NOV. 12

Holiday Extravaganza

Sisseton, SD
605-698-7425

NOV. 13

Lutefisk, Lefse, Meatball Supper

Chamberlain, SD
605-234-6698

NOV. 18-20

Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival

Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

NOV. 19

Fall Craft Show

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

NOV. 19

Lille Norge Fest

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

NOV. 25

Olde Tyme Christmas Kick-off and Parade

Hill City, SD

NOV. 25

Trap Shoot

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

NOV. 25

"Light up the Night" Parade and Fireworks

Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 25-26

Kris Kringle Kraft Fair

Hill City, SD

DEC. 2-3

Gregory Mid-Winter Fair

Gregory Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 2-3

Christmas in the Hills

Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4140

DEC. 3

Santa's Thrift Village

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

DEC. 3

60th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale

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

DEC. 17

Custer Christmas for Kids

Custer High School
Custer, SD
custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com

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