

Cooperative Connections



Electricity in the classroom
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People behind the power
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Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.

Committed to a Co-op Culture for All



Rodney Haag

rhaag@oaheelectric.com

Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Over the years, you've heard me expound on why and how Oahe Electric Cooperative is different – because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Oahe Electric was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in Oahe Electric's director elections and we invite all members to participate in co-op meetings to weigh in on discussions that set co-op policies and priorities.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Oahe Electric was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and our pledge to you – the members we proudly serve – is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all.

I wanted to let you all know that this will be my final Cooperative Connections article. After 43 years with Oahe Electric, I have decided it's time to enjoy retirement. My career was both challenging and rewarding. I have seen many changes in this cooperative over the past four decades and was privileged to be part of a team which achieved success that we can all be proud of. I will miss visiting with all our members and wish the best for each and every one of you.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no in person retirement party for Rodney. In lieu of a party, we would like to organize a card shower to thank Rodney for his 43 years of dedicated service to Oahe Electric! If you would like to send a card saying congratulations or sharing a memory, they can be mailed to: Rodney Haag, 8001 Sunny Oak Circle, Sioux Falls, SD 57108.

Oahe Electric Cooperative Connections

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Editors

Russ Hohn and Sam Irvine

General Manager

Rodney Haag

Oahe Electric Board of Directors

President

James Feller, 605-962-6207

Treasurer

Blaine Livermont, 605-945-2910

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Kirk Yackley, 605-258-2412

Secretary

Ross Sperry, 605-962-6141

Assistant Secretary

Ryan Noyes, 605-280-3500

Attorney

David Larson

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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 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 be 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.

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.

All scholarship applications are due on Friday, Feb. 12, 2021.

Applicants must be members or member-dependents of Oahe Electric.

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.

Statement of Nondiscrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (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 USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

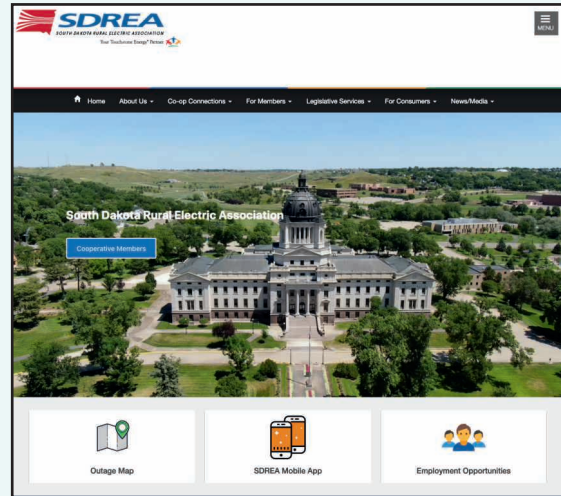
Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at www.sdrea.coop. You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"

Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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

Recipes to Power Up Your Day

Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD

Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD

Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

culinary.net

Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite seafood 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, telephone number and cooperative name.

Capital Credit Retirement Approved

Only your local cooperatives make every consumer an owner of the business. Unlike other electric utilities, your co-op exists to make sure your needs are always met, not to make a profit. As a member-owner, you share in the profits in the form of capital credit refunds. The cooperative works hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. But it's sure nice to know that when there are profits, they go back to you!

After reviewing the financial condition of your cooperative for the year, your board of directors approved a capital credit retirement of almost **\$500,000**.

In keeping with our attempt to run your business in the most efficient manner we can for the entire membership, your capital credits were credited directly to your bill this year. The amount credited was listed in the "Detail of Charges" on the bill you receiving in January. Of course, we will still have to write some checks for members whose capital credit retirement dollar amounts are large enough that it would create an ongoing credit balance on their bill.

If you cease to purchase energy from Oahe Electric Cooperative, please keep us informed of your address in future years. This will enable us to forward payment



when the capital credits are refunded for the year or years of your membership.

With this retirement, in addition to the Residential Relief Credit done in November, your cooperative returned almost **\$675,000** to its members in 2020! In an electric co-op, the people have the power! We know it was a tough year for many of our members and Oahe Electric hopes this helped make your holidays a little happier.

Small Change That Changes Lives

Several years ago Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. implemented a program called Operation Round Up®. Operation Round Up® is just what the name implies. Each month, Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. simply "rounds up" the electric bills of voluntarily participating consumers to the next highest dollar. The funds collected are then used to address charitable community needs, whether it is disaster relief for an individual, or an organization funding a special project. Since the program's first disbursement in 2009, the program has distributed over \$100,000.

All Operation Round Up® donations are placed in a trust and are administered by an independent Board of Trustees. The board is made up of community leaders who serve on a voluntary basis. The board evaluates all requests for funds, determines who will receive funding and how all Operation Round Up® monies will be distributed. The region served by the Trust is primarily the electrical area served by Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., including Hughes and Sully counties. The most gratifying thing about Operation Round Up® is that it is an extension of the concept of neighbor helping neighbor that built our electric cooperative.

The easy-to-complete applications for funding are currently available and can be requested by phone at 605-962-6243. Applications can also be found on our website at www.oaheelectric.com. All applications are due by April 30, 2021. Completed applications may be mailed to: Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 216, Blunt, SD 57522, faxed to: 605/962-6306, or emailed to: oahe@oaheelectric.com. After the deadline, the Board of Trustees will meet and allocate the funds to those they feel are in the most need.

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

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.
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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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Winner of Question of the Month

The Question of the Month winners for the December 2020 publication were Christopher and Lori Hammersly. They correctly answered the question "When are scholarship applications due?" with the answer being Friday, February 12, 2021.

Congratulations and we hope you enjoy your prizes!

Question of the Month!

This month's question is:

How long did Rodney Haag work for Oahe Electric?

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.



Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@srea.coop

Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

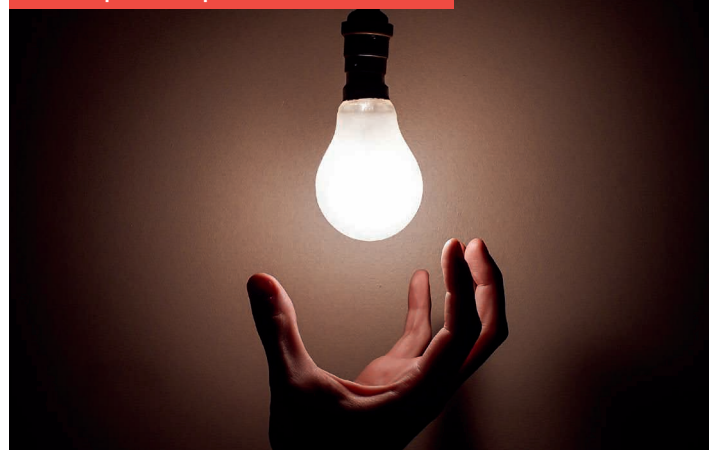
"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

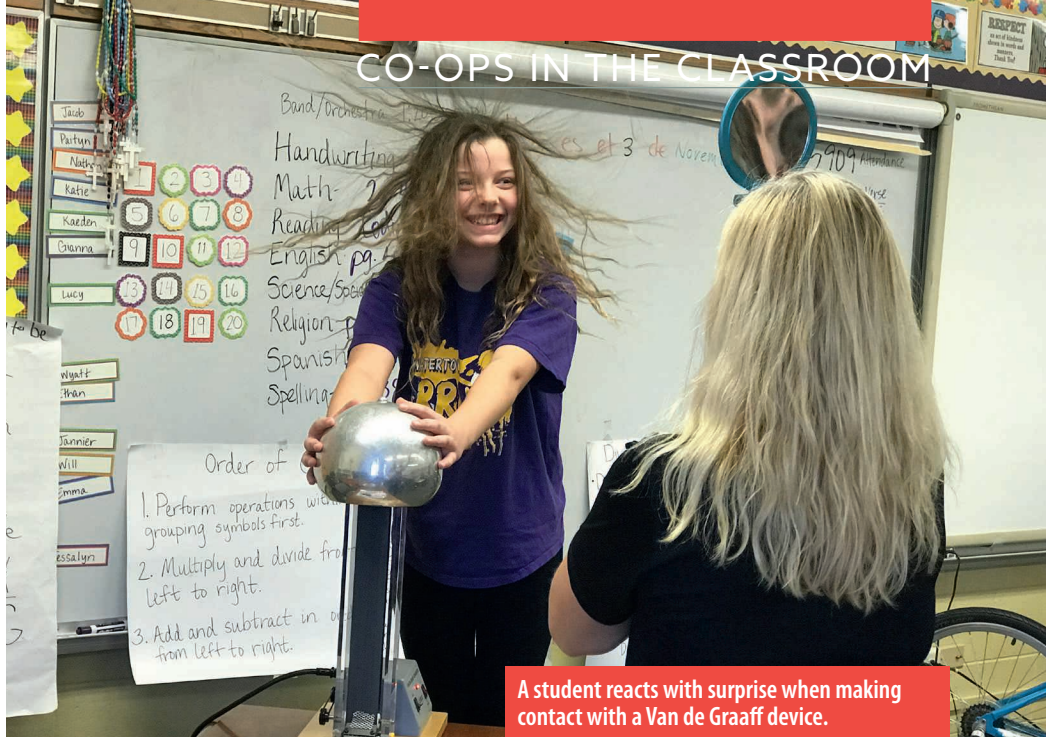
The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.



“These are things they’re going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It’s a lot to pack into an hour, but it’s important information.”
 - Jennifer Gross



A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.

just provide electrical power. We’re here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we’re always here for them if they have questions about electricity.”

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

“It’s something that’s always around them and they deal with all the time,” Heinrich

said. “It’s good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents’ cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, ‘So, this is a bad idea.’ It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices.”

South Dakota’s electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unhar- nessed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s.

Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country’s rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite’s economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: “Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call ‘Neon Leon,’ and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, ‘I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year’s demonstration, my husband is alive.’ That really shows how important it is.”



Science is at the center of learning about how electricity is generated and used.

Co-op Tech: Long Duration Storage



Russ Hohn

Member Services Advisor
rhohn@oaheelectric.com

Renewable generation sources like wind and solar have gained significant ground in the past decade. But most experts agree that fully realizing the potential of these promising technologies will require

an even greater breakthrough: economically viable, large-scale, long-term energy storage. An experiment by Great River Energy just might make it happen.

The G&T based in Maple Grove, Minnesota, is installing an “aqueous air battery” prototype that will provide one MW of power for up to 150 hours, with the promise of future grid-scale deployment, at a fraction of current storage costs. Greg Padden, GRE’s director of resource planning and markets, says the pilot project, expected to come on-line in 2023, reflects the G&T’s commitment to a “cost-competitive portfolio” for its 28 distribution co-ops across Minnesota and their 700,000 member-owners. “We’re in a very wind-rich part of the country, and that, combined with technology advancements, has made wind power the lowest-cost option for our members,” he says. “That’s very much a driver for this project.”

Great River Energy will generate more than 25 percent of its power this year from renewable resources, primarily wind, he says, and has set a goal of 50 percent renewables by 2030. U.S. Energy Information Administration numbers show wind and solar as the fastest expanding generation sources nationwide, and storage capacity is on a similar trajectory, set to grow from 523 MW in 2019 to 7.3 GW in 2025, according to Battery Energy Storage Overview, a report from NRECA’s Business and Technology Strategies group. But the rapid growth in wind and solar is exposing the limits of current storage systems.

“You can have a certain amount of renewable energy on the system and be fine,” says Jan Ahlen, NRECA energy solutions director. “But as you increase the amount, you run into problems of system stability, and storage makes a difference at that point. It becomes

important to have that backup power, long-duration storage to assure you have reliable power during times the sun’s not shining or the wind’s not blowing.” The problem, Ahlen says, is that lithium-ion batteries, currently the dominant technology, are suited to providing backup power over hours, not days, with a maximum duration in most cases of six hours or so. They also remain relatively expensive. While the price of lithium-ion batteries has fallen significantly, down 89 percent in the last decade, costs are projected to fall at a slower rate in the future, according to the NRECA report.

And the industry could see price spikes for minerals like lithium, nickel, and cobalt, on which lithium-ion technology depends, as electric vehicles and short-duration storage systems grow in popularity, the report notes. “Because of this, lithium-ion batteries are unlikely to provide an economical long-duration energy storage option,” it concludes. That means finding alternatives is a priority.

The U.S. Department of Energy and several companies are working on new battery chemistries that can offer economical storage over a longer duration, and new technologies appear to be on the horizon. These include flow batteries, a form of rechargeable fuel cell, and a zinc-hybrid cathode battery developed by Eos Energy Storage. “There are some contenders out there,” Ahlen says. “But there hasn’t been a technology yet that has really come out and said, ‘We’re going to be the next big thing over the next five years.’”

If Great River Energy’s aqueous air battery operates as advertised, he says, it could make a big difference: “I think it does have a ton of promise for the industry as a whole and co-ops in particular as they move toward more renewable energy.” Padden says Great River Energy looked at both existing and upcoming battery storage options. “We not only benchmarked this technology against what was out there but what was in development,” he says. “We think this technology holds great potential.”



Great River Energy will test a revolutionary long-duration battery that will boost deployment of renewables and uphold reliability during extreme weather. The G&T’s portfolio this year will be 25 percent renewable. (Photo Courtesy of Great River Energy)

Form Energy, the Massachusetts-based company that owns the aqueous air battery technology, was launched in 2017 by storage industry veterans in search of an affordable, longer-term battery solution, co-founder and President Ted Wiley says. “The main challenge we had identified with energy storage is cost, and that is what we are attempting to bring down: the cost of energy storage on a dollars-per-kilowatt-hour basis,” Wiley says. “We’re targeting a 90-plus-percent reduction in the cost of a kilowatt-hour of energy storage to enable more deployment of renewable energy.” Even if the cost of storage declined by 50 percent he adds, current technology is economically viable for only a few hours. Our hypothesis going into this was that we need more than four to six hours,” Wiley says. “We need tens of hours or possibly greater than a hundred to unlock the potential of renewable energy to transform the grid.” Wiley says the company expects to be able to share more about how its aqueous air battery works soon. “What I can say now about the technology is that one of the main reasons it’s low cost is because it uses abundant materials – abundant materials that are available in the United States,” Padden says. “It isn’t relying on exotic components.”

Padden notes that viable long-term storage has industry-changing implications, such as allowing power producers to shift energy production seasonally. “We’ll be able to cost-effectively store energy from wind, which has its best production in the spring and fall, and shift its availability to the winter and peak months,” he says. He says Great River Energy had a first-hand look at the difference storage could have made last winter when a polar vortex, which brought temperatures of 25 degrees below zero, gripped its service territory for three days.

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

Prices in the wholesale power market soared to \$160 per MWh, a cost that could have been hedged if they'd had a 150-hour grid-level storage system operating. The aqueous air battery is being installed at Great River Energy's peaking power plant site in Cambridge, Minnesota. If the system is successful, the G&T hopes it will lead to larger deployments. "This is a stepping-stone," Padden says. "While this project only provides one MW, the technology is being developed very much with an eye toward larger, grid-scale projects. It's intended to be scalable to hundreds of megawatts in size."

Form Energy's Wiley says the company hopes the Great River Energy project "will act as a lighthouse, showing a path to the kind of storage capabilities and costs required for renewable energy to be the main source of power for grids around the world."

"Our vision is renewable energy plus storage that is just as reliable and just as dispatchable as thermal generation [coal, oil, and gas] without trade-offs in cost or reliability," he says. That could spur a significant transformation of the grid, Ahlen says.

"You could see a grid that is more distribut-

ed, where, instead of having very large power plants in operation, you have more distributed operations; you have generation spread out over the grid," he explains. "You also have a more flexible system, where you can use energy you have in storage multiple ways." More than half of states have renewable energy portfolio standards designed to promote wind, solar, and other renewable generation,

Padden says, and longer-duration storage could help cooperatives manage that transition. "We think it ultimately positions co-ops to continue serving their members in a future that looks different from what we see today."

The differences between overhead and underground power lines



Matt Eldridge

Operations Manager
meldridge@oahelectric.com

There are two methods of installing the power lines that carry electricity to your home, overhead and underground. Oahe Electric members sometimes ask why we use one versus the other, or more to the point, why all power lines are not installed using the underground construction method. Isn't one method better than the other? These are great questions, and the answer is that each method has its place.

Overhead line construction starts with the setting of utility poles. Poles can be set in nearly any type of terrain, even rocky. In the case of heavy rock, special equipment is used to auger out the hole. If placement occurs in boggy or wet terrain, many techniques are available to set poles securely. Once the poles are in place, wires can be strung and then equipment—like transformers, fuses and reclosers—are installed. Power can now flow.

Underground line construction requires digging a trench that is deep enough to keep the lines well away from surface activities. Where the terrain is extremely rocky, underground lines may not be an option. Next, wires are laid in the trench directly or placed in conduits for protection. The trench is filled in, and the surface is restored to its original condition. Padmount transformers and additional equipment are installed as needed, now the system is ready to deliver electricity. Let's take a look at some the advantages and disadvantages of each construction method, beginning with overhead.

Overhead construction

Pros:

Lower cost, quicker construction, easier to spot damage and faults, less expensive to repair and upgrade, can be built

anywhere, any voltage can be placed overhead.

Cons:

Susceptible to wind, ice and snow; more vulnerable to damage from trees and vegetation, which requires right of way trimming; vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines; susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions; less attractive.

Underground construction

Pros:

Not vulnerable to damage from tree branches; no right of way trimming required; less susceptible to damage from vehicle collisions; not impacted by wind, ice and snow; less vulnerable to blinks when animals and branches contact lines.

Cons:

More expensive to build; susceptible to flooding; difficult to locate faults; expensive to repair; fed by overhead lines at some point, making the lines vulnerable to outages and interruptions; limitations on voltages that can be buried underground; can be vulnerable to dig-ins.

Determining if power lines should be overhead or underground boils down to what is best for the situation. Underground lines might be ideal in situations where there is a desire to keep the poles and wires out of sight, such as a residential neighborhood, park or historical area. There are many cities and towns that construct only underground lines for a variety of reasons. Overhead systems work well when appearance is not a major concern. Examples include extremely long line distances across country, where the voltages are higher than the limitations set for underground lines.

The ultimate mix of underground and overhead construction used by Oahe Electric provides you, our members, with the highest possible quality of service at the lowest possible price. Cost, appearance, reliability, maintenance and future upgrades will drive which is the better approach, overhead or underground.



Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

The People Behind the Power

Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power

of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

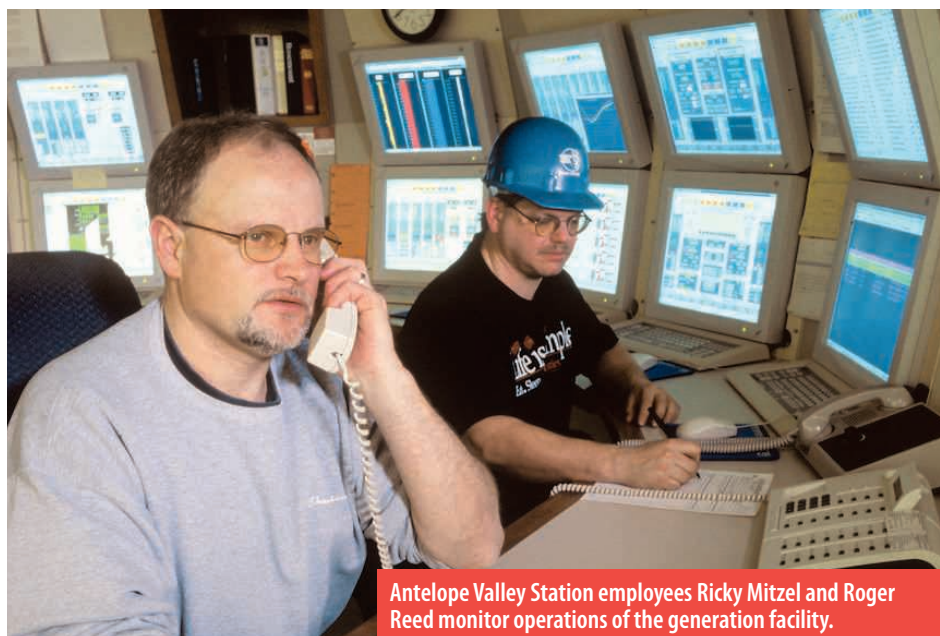
"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."

Rising Through the Ranks

Tom Griffith

tom@tdgcommunications.com

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

Rodney and Janice Haag could not have known in the midst of the dog days of that summer of 1977, that the lineman's job at Oahe Electric Cooperative, which Rodney had just accepted, would consume the better part of their lives.

In fact, Blunt would become the Haag's beloved home and Rodney would continue working at Oahe Electric for the next 43 years, well over half of the cooperative's 74-year history. Along the way he'd rise through the ranks and the couple would raise a family, remain active in their church and schools, and become an integral part of their community.

But in August 1977, for the second time in two months, the Haags found themselves packing everything they owned in a trailer and setting off for new horizons and a new home just a few miles east of the mighty Missouri River. For Janice, who with her husband had endured two months in the rough and rowdy oil fields near Gillette, Wyo., the change of address was a welcome respite.

"When we came over the hill and saw the trees and the valley around Blunt that sultry summer, we thought, 'Oh this is going to be home,'" she recalled.

And, the young couple could not have found a more welcoming community.

"The line superintendent at the co-op had arranged an apartment, put the electricity in my name, and paved the way, a guy who would give you the shirt off his back," Rodney remembered. "They even helped us move in."

With her education and resume, Janice immediately found work at American State Bank in Pierre, where she served as the financial institution's "gate-keeper," the first person customers encountered upon entering the bank. She would remain employed there for more than three decades, save some time off with the birth of their children.

Meanwhile, Rodney began learning the ropes of being a lineman for the cooperative, first serving as an apprentice for two and a half years, before becoming a journeyman lineman in 1980, bolstering his pay and increasing his responsibilities.

Rodney at work as a young lineman in the field.



Connecting to co-op co-workers and community, storms among Rodney Haag's Oahe Electric memories

"It was a great incentive to move forward with my skills," he recalled.

Their first of three children, Brandon John, was born Dec. 29, 1979, while the couple was still living in their Blunt apartment. Realizing they needed to expand their living arrangements, Rodney and Janice drove 20 miles to Pierre and purchased their first true home, a single-wide trailer, and had it moved to a lot in Blunt.

"But we weren't thinking," Rodney recalled. "It only had two bedrooms, even though we thought at the time that it was beautiful." Two years later, the second of their growing brood arrived on May 28, 1982, a bundle of joy they named Riley Phillip.

"Now we have a two-bedroom home and two children, so we built bunkbeds," Rodney remembered. "We built them outside on the deck and put them together, then they wouldn't fit through the bedroom door. So, we disassembled them and rebuilt them again in the bedroom."

The day after Christmas 1985, the couple welcomed their only daughter, Ali Jane. The arrival of their third baby in a small, cramped trailer signaled the need to expand their living quarters, Rodney and Janice said.

"We just had to upgrade and we started looking at double-wides, ended up in Rapid City and purchased a 28-by-60-foot, three-bedroom residence that met our needs quite nicely," said Janice.

Three decades later, the Haags were still living in that double-wide. After years of upgrades, landscaping and Rodney's relentless efforts to beautify the place, neighbors, friends and family agreed that they would never guess that the family lived in a manufactured home.

"We always wanted to add onto it and one of my sons would say, 'Mom, this house is perfect,'" Janice said with a grin. "And Rodney would always say, 'Honey, I'm going to build you a beautiful, big house someday,' and I would respond, 'This is all we need.'"

With Rodney's tendency to manicure his yard and pay particular attention to their outdoor living area, the Haag's house became a magnet for all of the neighborhood children.

"Our community was quite close and connected," Janice said. "And, our backyard was the football field, so we wouldn't plant trees there until the children grew up.

All the neighborhood kids would wear helmets and pads and our yard was filled with football kids nearly every day and night. It was the best town to raise a family and our oldest son, Brandon, would often say, 'Mom, thanks for raising us in Blunt.'"

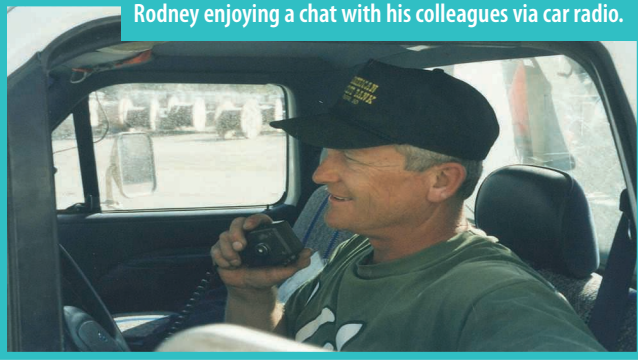
At work, Rodney remained committed to doing the best job he could and serving Oahe Electric's members, sometimes at all hours of the day and night.

"It's rewarding work," he noted. "You'd go out at night and help a member who is out of power and you restore it and it's a real feeling of accomplishment. It just makes you feel good."

And, that dedication would be rewarded.

At 28 years old, with six years of employment at Oahe Electric under his tool belt, Rodney sought his first promotion to line foreman, overseeing five linemen with whom he had been working for a half-dozen years.

Rodney enjoying a chat with his colleagues via car radio.



On Feb. 1, 1984, Oahe's board of directors gave him the position. He would serve in that post for the next 23 years, before being named line superintendent in January 2007.

"I loved it," Rodney said. "I was the boss."

Even though he was younger than some of those linemen he oversaw, Rodney remained committed to doing the same work he had been doing. But now, he was charged with overseeing that work, assigning work orders, tracking hours and mileage and other duties in Oahe Electric's near-2,000-square-mile service territory.

That included monitoring jobs in the midst of freak winter storms – the bane of every electric co-op's existence.

"We've had some bad storms here," Rodney said, reflecting on more than four decades of involvement. "In 1995, I was line foreman, and in January we lost over 400 poles and we had a lot of members without power. The snow was flying, there was frost and ice buildup that just kept getting bigger and bigger and then the wind came up – a lineman's nightmare, wind and ice. There's nothing you can do, but sit in your truck and watch as pole after pole snaps off like toothpicks.

"Three months later almost to the day, in April, we had a heavy wet snow and 560 poles are down and hundreds of members are no longer receiving power," he said with a sigh. "Each one probably took us the better part of a week to address and get service restored to every member. That latter storm brought with it mud and water that reached nearly to our linemen's waists in the ditches. We'd ram our digger trucks down as far as we could get in the ditch, set a new pole, bring in the buckets, string the line, then pull those pieces of equipment out of the muddy ditch with a four-wheel-drive tractor. When we were done and power had been restored, we had to call DOT to bring in graders to clean off all the mud from the roadways. We tore up a lot of ditches, but you do what you have to do to restore power to the members."

After encountering those two winter blasts – the worst he'd ever experienced – Rodney said he truly understood the nature and value of cooperatives.

"Co-ops are different," he said. "They help each other. In this instance, several cooperatives throughout South Dakota lent us a hand and that's not unusual. When something so catastrophic happens, we assist each other. That's the name of the co-op game."

That "game" also meant establishing relationships within his co-op "family," as well as within his own community. And, it wasn't always about the work.

Nearly two decades ago, while Rodney was still line foreman, he found himself on a nearby golf course, working with his crew running powerlines to a new home located on the course.

"We took a lunch break," he recalled. "So, one of the linemen picks up nine range balls and says, 'We each get to hit three.' Well, we didn't have a golf club so one of the guys grabbed a spade from a co-op truck. The first guy gets up and one of the linemen throws the golf ball like a baseball pitch and

the other lineman nails it with the spade. It was a pretty good hit. The next one was better yet. He threw the second ball to the same guy and he swings and it comes straight back and nails his forehead. It swelled up as big as the golf ball. We all roared. The things we do out in the country just for a smile. But, that one swing ended the golf game."

Rodney and Janice remained busy at home as well, with three growing children and an active schedule, as well as their commitment to their church – Trinity Lutheran.

"Rodney was always the one who got up early in the morning and fixed the kids breakfast," Janice said of those early years. "And, all the neighbor kids would vouch for that because when they were at the Hags they always had a good breakfast."

"I grew up in a small town and I always wanted my children to grow up in a small town," Rodney said. "There are so many attributes, including a real closeness with your teachers. You still know everybody in your class, and everybody knows everybody. It's a place where your name still means something."

Just a few short months after Rodney was promoted to line superintendent, his manager and the board added to his responsibilities by naming him operations manager, handling internet technologies and other duties. When the general manager quit just months later, Rodney was promoted to general manager in July 2007, a post he has assumed ever since.

The man remains proud of his 43-year tenure at Oahe Electric, even as he walks out the door for a new life in retirement. Rodney also commends the use of emerging technologies that have allowed his cooperative to double the energy load it delivers to members, all while maintaining the same number of employees (14) who worked at the co-op when he started there in 1977.

"Over the past 43 years, everything has become electronic, from switches to oil circuit reclosures that are monitored and changed via electronic controls," he noted. "It involves much less maintenance on equipment, and everything is easier to adjust. SCADA systems allow us to monitor loads from afar, reducing travel and staff time, while increasing overall efficiency. It also reduces costs for our members.

"I started with the old-school way of doing things," he noted. "Now we have remote-controlled digger trucks which helps just one man plant a pole. Improved equipment will go just about anywhere, in any weather. Better and bigger trucks, bigger buckets, allow workers to get the job done quicker and safer. It helps the lineman do their job that much better. We educate our guys with hotline training, metering and underground schools in rotation, providing a continuing update on safety, but equipment advances as well. Safety is a lot better now and we've come so far.

"It means that our employees can go home at 4 o'clock," he added. "I always say it's not about being fast, it's about being safe."

Today, Rodney said he remains so appreciative to his staff, his board, and all those who came before him at Oahe Electric.

"As I grew up in this cooperative, my life just grew into this place," he said. "Whether I advanced or not, no big deal. If I could have been operations manager for the duration of my career, that would have been my dream. But the opportunity came and it was unbelievable. I went beyond where I thought I would ever be with this cooperative. And, in reality this co-op has been great to all of us fortunate enough to work here. That's why I dedicated myself to this cooperative, and that's why so many employees appreciate the opportunity to work for this outfit."

Up next: In Part IV, the final segment in this series, we'll learn about Rodney and Janice Haag's plans for retirement from Oahe Electric and what others have to say about his 43-year tenure and what they'll miss most about the couple.

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

January 18-25

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD
605-717-9294

January 21-24

Elf The Musical, Area
Community Theatre,
Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

January 23

Treasured Lives Presents:
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
1-800-468-6463

January 29-30

Pro Snocross Races, Days
of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

January 29-February 6

Black Hills Stock Show &
Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-335-3861

January 29-31

Winterfest, Lead, SD
605-335-3861

February 5-6

Mardi Gras Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

February 10-13

Watertown Winter Farm
Show, Codington County
Extension Complex,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

February 12-13

SD High School State
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

February 18

The Q's High Line to
Deadwood – A 130-year
Retrospective, Homestake
Adams Research and Cultural
Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

February 18-25

Twelfth Annual Black Hills
Film Festival, Virtual
605-574-9454

February 20-27

SD State High School
Wrestling Tournament,
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

February 25

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood
Live: Neighbor Day,
Washington Pavilion, Sioux
Falls, SD
605-367-6000

March 5-6

SD High School State Debate
& IE Tournament, Central
High School, Aberdeen, SD

March 12-13

St. Patrick's Day Weekend,
Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

March 13

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride
and Tour, Spearfish Canyon
Lodge, Lead, SD
605-641-4963

March 13

St. Patrick's Day Celebration,
Knights of Columbus Hall,
Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

March 13-14

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun
Show, American Legion Hall,
Philip, SD
605-859-2280

March 19-20

Annual Schmeckfest,
Freeman Academy,
Freeman, SD
605-925-4237

March 23-24

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center Fine Arts
Theatre, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead
Hills, Homestake Adams
Research and Cultural Center,
Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

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.