



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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Annual Meeting Recap

Members Gather in Pierre for Oahe Electric's 74th Annual Meeting

Oahe Electric Cooperative hosted its 74th Annual Meeting in Pierre, bringing together 320 registered members and serving more than 500 meals. Branding Iron Bistro provided a hearty supper of beef tips in burgundy sauce, baked potato, and corn.

Before the business meeting began, families visited educational displays and enjoyed time catching up with friends and neighbors.

Board President Brandon Haag called the meeting to order, followed by an invocation from Pastor John Fette. Vice President Kirk Yackley then recognized five employees for their dedicated service:

- Austin Bergeson, Journeyman Lineman – 5 years
- Steve Long, Power Supply Specialist – 10 years
- Brady Gaer, Journeyman Lineman – 15 years
- Valerie Marso, Chief Financial Officer – 25 years
- Mark Bruning, Line Foreman – 30 years

The evening included video presentations from Oahe Electric's leadership team. CFO Valerie Marso shared "Powering Through Together", which highlighted rate design strategies along with the cooperative's financial performance and outlook. COO Matt Eldridge presented "Reliability in Action: A Year of Upgrades and Achievements", reviewing system improvements and key operational milestones. CEO Jordan Lamb then delivered his address, "Reliability, Resilience, and the Road Ahead", outlining the cooperative's vision and priorities for the future.

Attorney Jessica Hegge announced the candidates nominated for two director positions, each serving a three-year term: Jim Feller of Blunt, representing Zone 1, and Willie Colson of Pierre, representing Zone 2. With no opposition, both were elected by acclamation.

Following the business portion, President Haag confirmed there was no unfinished or new business to address.

Each registered member in attendance received a \$30 energy credit on their bill. In addition, nearly \$4,000 in extra energy credit door

prizes were awarded during a Facebook Live drawing on Thursday, September 18. The winners of those prizes were:

- Nikki Butzman - \$100 – courtesy of Jerry's Electric in Colman, S.D.
- Derek Gray - \$100 – sponsored by NISC in Bismarck, N.D.
- Stephen Webb - \$100 – provided by American Solutions for Business in Aberdeen, S.D.
- Theodora Adamaski - \$100 – compliments of Eide Bailly, LLP in Sioux Falls, S.D.
- Darin Sanders - \$150 – courtesy of Border States Electric in Rapid City, S.D.
- Roy O'Day - \$200 – sponsored by K & H Electric in Linton, N.D.
- Naomi Cromwell and Ross Kornmann - \$250/each – provided by First Dakota National Bank in Pierre, SD
- Darold Swank and Richard Olson - \$500/each – compliments of Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc.
- Brett Tschetter and Anton Bender - \$750/each – courtesy of Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Oahe Electric extends its sincere thanks to all members who attended, to those who donated door prizes, and to everyone who helped make the 74th Annual Meeting a memorable success.



Jordan Lamb, CEO of Oahe Electric (right) and co-op staff engaged with members at Oahe Electric's 74th annual meeting.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

Board of Directors:

James Feller – Assistant Secretary
605.962.6207
Brandon Haag – President
605.215.6758
Ryan Noyes – Treasurer
605.280.3500
Ross Sperry – Secretary
605.280.7770
Kirk Yackley – Vice President
605.258.2412
Willie Colson – Director
605.222.1328

Employees:

Tyler Arbach – Journeyman Lineman
Austin Bergeson – Journeyman Lineman
Mark Bruning – Line Foreman
Matt Eldridge – Chief Operations Officer
Trudie Feldman – Custodian
Brady Gaer – Journeyman Lineman
Sidney Geigle – Journeyman Lineman
Austin Hammer – Business Procurement
& Development Specialist
Sam Irvine – Executive Services Specialist
Megan Jaeger – Membership Director
Les Job – Journeyman Lineman
Jordan Lamb – Chief Executive Officer
Dan Lettau – Journeyman Lineman
Steve Long – Power Supply Specialist
Valerie Marso – Chief Financial Officer
Tory Smith – Journeyman Lineman

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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.



Valerie Marso
CFO

Cash is Headed Your Way!

One of the greatest benefits of being a member of a cooperative is something called capital credit retirements. And we're excited to share that a retirement of approximately \$400,000 has recently been completed! If you're an active member, you'll see a credit on the bill you received in October, and if you are an inactive member, you will receive a check.

But what exactly are capital credits and why do they matter to you?

As a member of a cooperative, you're not just a customer — you're a member-owner.

Each year, after covering the costs of delivering reliable service (like electricity or other co-op services), any remaining margins — what would be called "profits" in a regular

business — are allocated back to members in the form of capital credits. Generally, this is done in May or June after the cooperative financials have been audited by an outside firm. The amount you receive is based on how much business you did with the co-op that year. This system helps the cooperative stay financially healthy while keeping your rates fair and stable.

While capital credits are allocated to your account each year, the co-op doesn't return them immediately. Instead, they're used to help fund infrastructure, maintenance, and operations — reducing the need for outside loans and keeping costs down for everyone. Once the co-op's financial position allows, a portion of those capital credits are retired — meaning they're returned to members IN CASH.

When you see that credit on your bill or receive your check in the mail, know that it's more than a refund — it's a reflection of your ownership, your support, and your role in making the cooperative stronger for everyone.

Your Co-op's Thank-You Notes

Herb and I would like to express our appreciation to you for the wonderful evening at the Larkspur on Saturday, September 13. The food and hospitality couldn't have been better. Thank you so much!

Happy Members,
Harb and Arlene Pitan
P.S. — enjoyed visiting with the other members

Thank you Oahe Electric,

National Child Safety Council takes pride in working with dedicated law enforcement departments such as yours, who are committed to teaching your children and community how to prevent accidents and needless tragedies through child safety educational programs. Your generosity will allow your local law enforcement to distribute these materials to a larger number of children and individuals in your area.

On behalf of your local law enforcement department, parents, and their children, we thank you for recognizing the needs for this type of life-saving prevention program.

Your donation may directly save the life of a child.

Sincerely,
Safetyup and National Child Safety Council

Stay Safe This Holiday Season:

Tips for a Merry and Accident-Free Celebration

The holidays bring families together with twinkling lights, festive meals and cozy traditions. But they also bring seasonal risks that can turn celebrations into emergencies if precautions aren't taken. Local safety officials are reminding residents to keep safety in mind when cooking, decorating, and entertaining this year.

Extension Cords

With more lights and electronics plugged in during the holidays, extension cords are often stretched to their limits. Experts urge homeowners not to overload outlets and to replace any cords that are frayed or damaged. Only outdoor-rated cords should be used outside, especially in snowy or wet conditions.

Families should avoid running cords under rugs or across doorways where they can overheat or become tripping hazards.

Turkey Fryers

Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners have grown to include deep-fried turkeys, but safety must come first. Fryers should only be used outdoors, on a flat surface and far away from buildings, garages or wooden decks. Fire officials caution that a partially frozen or wet turkey can cause oil to boil over and ignite, leading to severe burns or home fires.

A fire extinguisher rated for grease fires should always be kept nearby, and fryers should never be left unattended while in use. One distracted moment can cause a disaster.

Ladders

From hanging lights to topping off the tree, ladders are part of the holiday routine. Falls are among the most common seasonal injuries, so ladders should be set on level ground and never leaned against unstable surfaces. Having another person hold the ladder is strongly advised.

Candles and Fireplaces

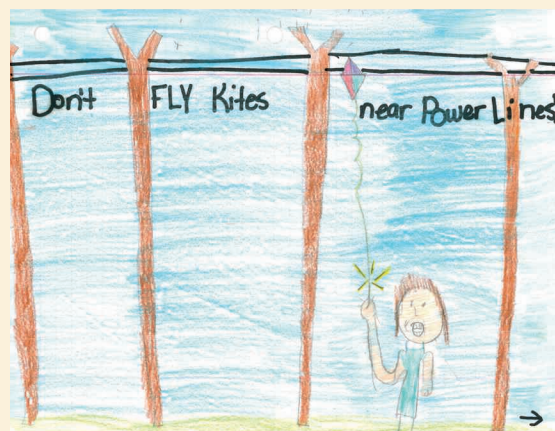
Candles and fireplaces are popular during the holiday season, but they also raise the risk of home fires, especially when combined with the extra decorations and greenery that fill many homes in December. According to the National Fire Protection Association, candles cause an average of

46% of fires in December each year. Never leaving a flame unattended and incorporating a few safety rules can prevent a devastating fire.

Lights and Decorations

Before hanging holiday lights, inspect strands for cracked socket, frayed wires or loose connections, and replace any damaged sets. Outdoor lights should always be weather-rated, and lights should be turned off before bedtime or when leaving the house. Timers and smart plugs can help make this easier.

Decorations should be securely fastened to prevent them from tipping or falling, especially in homes with children or pets. Heavy ornaments should be placed higher on the tree, out of reach of small hands and wagging tails. Fire officials also recommend choosing flame-resistant or non-combustible decor whenever possible and keeping all decorations away from heaters, fireplaces or open flames.



"Don't fly kites near power lines!"

Kristen Vanden Berg, Age 11

Kristen cautions readers on the dangers of flying kites near power lines. Great picture, Kristen! Kristen's parents are Andy and Geraldine Vanden Berg from Corsica, S.D.

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

Holiday SIDE DISHES

CORN CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

2 15 oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
15 oz. can cream corn
1/2 cup butter, melted
1 box Jiffy cornbread mix
1/2 pt. whipped cream

Method

Combine whole kernel corn, cream corn, butter, Jiffy cornbread mix and whipping cream. Mix thoroughly. Pour into greased 8.5"x11" pan and bake at 350° F for 40-45 minutes.

Sharon Houchin
Central Electric

BETTER THAN STUFFING

Ingredients:

1 box chicken/turkey stuffing mix
Chicken broth
Celery
Carrots
Onions
1 stick herbed butter (or make your own)
2 cups chicken/turkey gravy

Method

Prepare stuffing according to directions but substitute water with broth. Dice and sauté celery, carrots (total of two cups) and onions in herbed butter. Fold into stuffing. Put into baking pan and top with gravy. Poke gravy into stuffing – just a little bit. Don't completely mix. Bake at 350° F for 20 minutes and broil briefly at the end.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

RAW VEGETABLE SALSA

Ingredients:

2-4 medium cucumbers, cubed
2-4 medium tomatoes, cubed
1 small onion or 1/2 of a white or yellow onion sliced
1 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. sugar
2 tbsps. apple cider vinegar
Additions: black pepper to taste, chopped basil, or chopped green bell pepper.

Method

Place cubed tomatoes and peeled cucumbers into a bowl. Add sliced onion.

Mix in remaining ingredients and stir. Marinate for several hours or overnight.

This salad keeps for 3-4 days refrigerated.

Raw Vegetable salads full of electrolytes, vitamin C and fiber.

Laurie Wernke
Southeastern Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

With the holiday season approaching and more time spent in the kitchen, consider ways to save energy in the heart of your home. When possible, cook meals with smaller, energy efficient appliances, such as toaster ovens, slow cookers and air fryers. When using the range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. Keep range-top burners and reflectors clean so they reflect heat more efficiently. After your holiday meals are complete, load the dishwasher fully before starting the wash cycle.

Check Out Our Lending Library!

Did you know Oahe Electric has a Lending Library right in our entryway? It's a fun, free way to discover something new to read — anytime you'd like.

For the kids, you'll find a special bookcase designed to look like a bucket truck. Adult titles are available on a separate bookshelf, so there's something for readers of all ages.

The library runs on a simple system: take a book, leave a book — or just take one to enjoy! There's no checkout process, no due dates, and no limits.

Best of all, our entryway is open 24/7/365, so you can stop in and browse whenever it's convenient for you.



HUNTER'S

SAFETY

HuntSAFE volunteer instructors, from left, Kit Talich, Derek Wolf and Greg Miller, demonstrate proper gun safety during a HuntSAFE course. Not pictured is instructor Mike McKernan.

Photo by Frank Turner.

Co-op employees get involved in HuntSAFE

Frank Turner

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For more than 10 years, West Central Electric Cooperative Staff Engineer Kit Talich has volunteered with the HuntSAFE program in his hometown of Murdo. Run by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks with help from local instructors, HuntSAFE teaches young people how to hunt both safely and ethically.

Just last month, Talich was in front of a class at Jones County Elementary School, holding a specially modified firearm designed only for demonstrations. The training guns have no firing pins, but the lessons carry real weight as Talich taught sixth-grade students how to cross a fence safely, keep a muzzle pointed in the right direction and always treat a firearm as if it is loaded.

"I went in for a year or two just to help out," Talich recalled. "Then I took the instructor exam and got certified in 2015, and I've been teaching ever since."

HuntSAFE is designed for youth hunters in South Dakota. In order to hunt under certain youth tags, students must first complete the program and earn their HuntSAFE card. The course covers everything from basic firearm mechanics to safe handling, outdoor ethics and wildlife conservation.

"It's about 10 to 12 hours of classroom in-

struction, plus a field day," Talich explained. "We go over the book material, but then the kids also have to handle firearms, cross fences, shoot clay pigeons and demonstrate that they understand the safety rules."

Talich said his co-op's culture of community commitment has always made volunteering possible.

"The co-op has always been very supportive," Talich said. "They've encouraged me to take time out of my day to help with the program. Everyone's on board with safe hunting and safe handling of firearms. It fits right in with the cooperative principle of concern for community."

While many of the students go on to hunt deer, pheasants or other game, Talich emphasizes that HuntSAFE is about more than just filling a tag.

"A lot of these kids may never go hunting, but living in rural South Dakota, chances are they'll be around firearms at some point," he said. "The most important thing is that they know how to safely handle a firearm or that they have the confidence to speak up if someone else isn't handling one safely."

In the safety course, Talich often highlights four core safety rules: always treat every gun as if it is loaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction, keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot, and be sure of your target and what is beyond.

"If you follow those four, the chances of anyone getting hurt are very, very low," he said. "It's rewarding to watch them learn and take it seriously. And it's rewarding to know they're taking those lessons home – sometimes even teaching their younger siblings or cousins what they've learned."

After nearly two decades at the cooperative, Talich is preparing to join Sioux Valley Energy — a career move that also means stepping away from his role in the HuntSAFE classroom. To ensure the program continues, another West Central Electric employee is ready to take his place. Derek Wolf, who has already been helping in the classroom alongside Talich, said he is thrilled to continue representing West Central Electric in the program.

"I just grew up around hunting and firearms, and I think it's a neat program for kids to be involved in," Wolf said. "Whether they end up hunting or just knowing gun safety, I think it's huge. Obviously, Kit's been doing it a lot of years, and he saw I was interested. With him stepping out, it just made sense to step in."

Looking back at 10 years of volunteering, Talich said he is glad to see another co-op face step forward to champion gun safety.

"It's important to me that the program keeps going strong," Talich said. "It's good to know there are people like Wolf who are willing to step up and carry it on."



CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

Exploring Structured Family Caregiving Services for South Dakota's Caregivers

Frank Turner

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November is recognized nationally as Family Caregivers Month, a time to honor the essential role of caregivers and highlight the resources available to them and the loved ones they support.

Yet, families face a growing challenge: how to care for aging loved ones when services are often far from home. Nursing homes or assisted living centers may be located hours away, and even when they are nearby, the cost or availability of space can present real barriers.

One answer has been the Structured Family Caregiving program, launched by the South Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) in 2019.

According to Heather Krzmarzick, Director of the Division of Long-Term Services and Supports within DHS, the program is one of many resources at DHS that are

Several resources are available for caregivers in South Dakota through the Department of Human Services.

Photos by Homecare Services.

available to help older adults and their caregivers. It provides training, coaching, ongoing support and even a modest stipend to those offering significant care for an older adult in the home.

“Structured Family Caregiving serves caregivers who live with their family member and provide substantial care for them, including personal care, supervision, medication management and other things, such as managing finances and transportation for necessary appointments and community activities,” Krzmarzick said.

In many ways, the program echoes the electric cooperative story. Just as co-ops once brought electricity to rural areas that were otherwise overlooked, the program helps families meet a need that might otherwise go unserved. In places where nursing homes or assisted living centers are many miles away, the program gives families a practical way to continue care at home, often the place where people feel most comfortable.

“Structured Family Caregiving is important because it

supports the vital work of family caregivers, strengthens families and improves outcomes, especially in underserved or isolated regions,” she said. “The program honors South Dakota’s values of strong families, independence and community.”

In addition to expanding community-based care options to rural areas, the program allows families to potentially prevent or delay the move to a nursing home and reduce the economic burden that often comes with that transition. Krzmarzick said DHS also offers other programs for those that may need a little extra assistance to remain safely in their homes but don’t require the intensive services of a nursing facility.

“Each caregiver has unique needs and preferences,” she said. “As such, the services and supports are designed to meet the varying needs of each caregiver and help care for a person at home as long as possible.”

To be eligible for the program, the care recipient must be 65 or older or

18 or older with a qualifying disability and meet both functional and financial criteria to qualify for the program.

Since its creation, the program has grown steadily, giving more families the tools to succeed. Krzmarzick said it has allowed many older adults and adults with disabilities to remain in their homes while supporting family caregivers with knowledge, training and a small amount of financial assistance.

Agency Director Steven Novotny with Homecare Services of South Dakota, Inc., one of many in-home care providers in the state, said that few other programs reach and serve those who need care quite like the program.

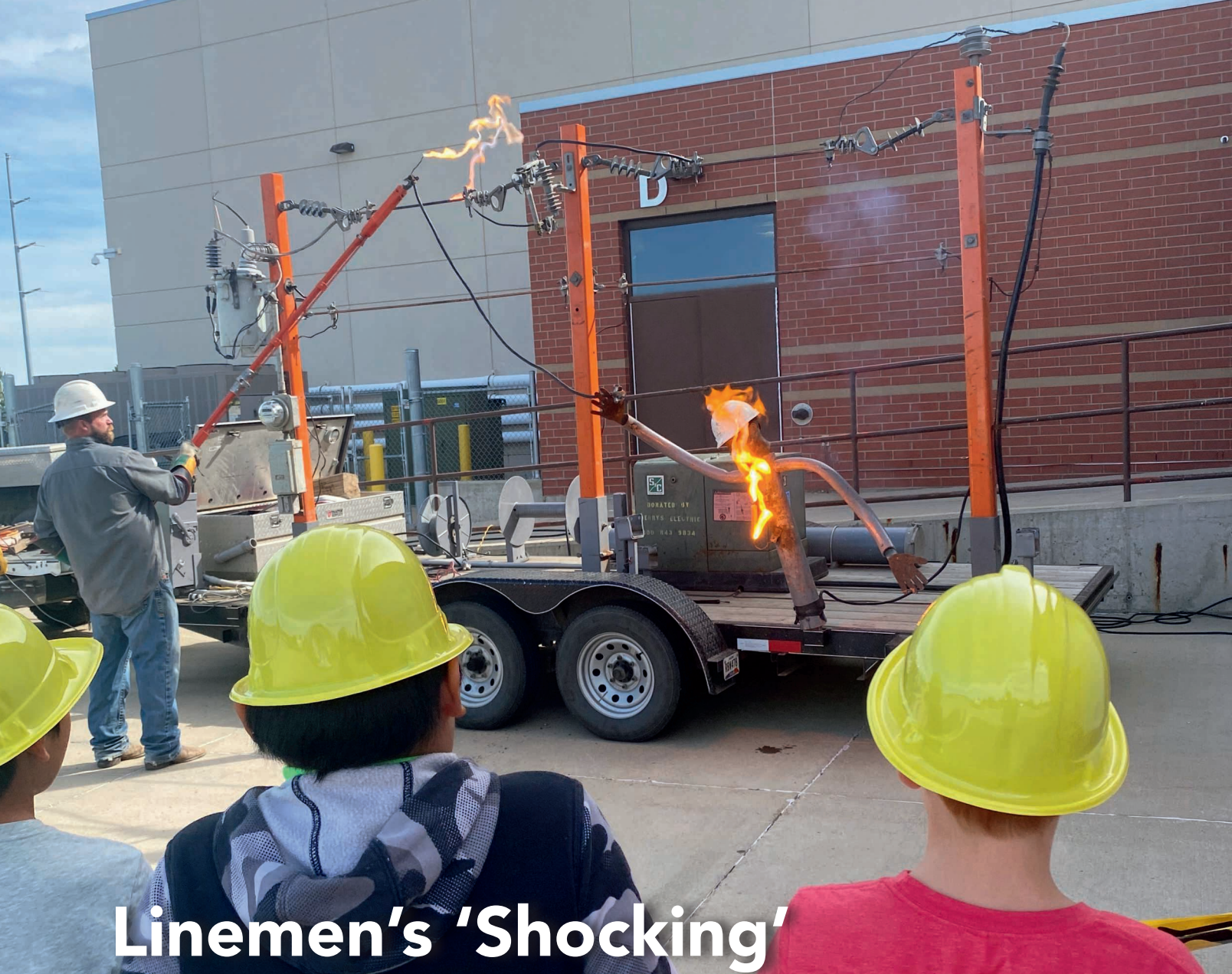
“Structured Family Caregiving has the unique ability to serve consumers in every community across our state, large or small. Under this program, individuals can receive care from a trusted family member or friend, which allows them to remain independent and living in their community,” he said. “Our caring staff at Homecare Services of South Dakota have seen

firsthand the positive impact on families when we are able to provide support and training to the caregivers that are stepping into what is often a challenging role caring for a loved one.”

Krzmarzick said the Structured Family Caregiving program is just one of many support options that DHS offers individuals and their caregivers in South Dakota. Resources are available online at dhs.sd.gov or through Dakota at Home, South Dakota’s Aging and Disability Resource Center, at 1-833-663-9673.

“All caregivers, not just those utilizing the Structured Family Caregiving Program, may access free training and resources to help improve confidence in their caregiving abilities, reduce stress and prevent burnout,” Krzmarzick said. “Caregivers may also be eligible for other programs that offer respite options. Our Dakota at Home specialists are dedicated to helping you find services and supports to meet your specific needs or the needs of a family member.”





Linemen's 'Shocking' Lessons for Local Schools

Oahe Electric Cooperative is making the rounds at local schools, reaching more than 600 local students with something pretty eye-catching: the High-Voltage Demonstration Trailer.

The mobile setup comes loaded with real electrical equipment and gives students a front-row seat to see just how powerful (and dangerous) electricity can be.

With sparks flying (safely, of course), students watched how electricity reacts in different situations, like when a power line falls, or what can happen if the wrong gear is used near live wires.

The demonstrations are led by Oahe Electric's own linemen who use their everyday experience on the job to explain what's really going on and why safety around electricity is so important.

"Education is the first step in prevention," explained Oahe Electric CFO Valerie Marso. "When we show kids what electricity can actually do, we're helping them make smarter, safer choices, whether they're playing outside, climbing trees, or seeing a downed wire after a storm."

It's all part of Oahe Electric's mission to serve the community — not just by keeping the lights on, but by keeping people safe. Teaching kids (and even adults) how to be smart around electricity can help avoid accidents and even save lives.

So if you hear about the High Voltage Demo Trailer coming to your school, know this: it's not just cool to watch; it's knowledge that could one day make all the difference.

CO-OPS IN THE CLASSROOM



Thank you Oahe Electric for coming to our Classroom to teach us about Electricity.

THANKS - Luke H. Brooklyn
Jase Aaydeh Mellette Peyton Ava Zadiak
Rollih isagorn Emily Quinn
malaina Ian Brycen Tillie Caysen
Bromxx Izaiah cenny Maddie
Nedra Carter Brody -slay

Thank you Oahe Electric for coming to our classroom to teach us about electricity.

Stella Jax Eustonia Joshud
Aisha Morgan Kennedy colesyn Dustin
Clara marrison Tenley Sawyer G
Jana A

Thank you Oahe Electric for coming to our classroom.

Nolan Melati cas Teegan
Dominic Eli Jayce
cece Brecken Emily
Nick Rider Anthony RONAN
Dylan Elijah Kalissa
Devonté wendy
Chanel Emerson Marti no
Ayrallize





LINEMENS' TRAINING READYED CREW FOR CHAINSAW ACCIDENT

(From left) When Brandon Schmiege cut his forearm, fellow linemen Tristan Hall, Luke Koval and Brian Davis knew exactly how to respond.
Photo submitted by Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

When a Routine Day of Trimming Trees Turned Critical, Cooperative Employees Were Prepared to Help

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Perched within the manlift on a bucket truck, Brandon Schmiege methodically sawed away large tree branches near overhead power lines, dropping them to the ground more than 50 feet below.

It's nothing out of the ordinary, explained the 19-year veteran lineman from Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative in Milbank, South Dakota. After a while, you become accustomed to the work – and its hazards.

From the bucket he was standing in, Brandon reached with

his chainsaw for one of the last few cuts he'd need to make. But as he began the cut, the chainsaw kicked up and he lost control. Steadying himself and throwing the brake on the saw, Brandon looked down at his left arm. He'd been badly cut.

"I saw quite a bit of blood right away," Brandon said. "My first thought was that I needed to get down fast."

Gathering his strength and trying his best to stay calm, Brandon maneuvered his bucket down through the tree limbs back to the ground where linemen Brian Davis, Luke Koval and Tristan Hall noticed something wasn't right.

"I think we all sensed something happened," Brian explained. "The way he was coming down like that, and he'd just fueled up the saw, so we were wondering what had happened."

Luke ran to go shut off the woodchipper, which was drowning out Brandon's yelling. As the engine died, they finally heard Brandon yell, "Call for help!"

Brian raced to the truck to radio back to the office in Milbank, calling in a “Mayday” along with the crew’s location.

With a first-aid and tourniquet kit in hand, Brian sprinted toward Brandon, where Tristan and Luke had removed Brandon’s safety harness and wrapped a towel over the wound on Brandon’s forearm and applied pressure to slow the bleeding.

As the team secured a tourniquet tightly around Brandon’s upper arm, the crew kept in touch with the office by cell phone. The office staff, having called 911 as soon as they heard ‘Mayday,’ worked together to relay the street address and details of the injury to emergency dispatchers.

Seeing the urgency of the situation, the team placed Brandon in the service pickup and Tristan began driving him to the hospital. As the linemen were driving back into town, the ambulance met them and took Brandon to the hospital in Milbank where they stabilized him and discovered he’d severed two arteries in his forearm. He was then transferred to

Sioux Falls and underwent surgery.

Luckily, Whetstone Valley Electric and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association had conducted first-aid training for linemen just several weeks before. The instruction included CPR, AEDs, tourniquets and wound care.

“Regular first-aid training and keeping first-aid supplies on hand is so important because our linemen are often out somewhere rural,” explained Joe Denison, SDREA’s loss control professional and certified paramedic for the Arlington and Lake Norden ambulances. “If we have to wait 30 minutes for an ambulance, that can be too late.”

Whetstone Valley Electric General Manager Dave Page says despite the incident, he finds it encouraging that the employees followed procedure — maintaining clear communication with each other and with 911, administering first aid on site, and knowing exactly what to do each step of the way.

“It wasn’t only the training that was provided, but it was the attention that

these guys gave to that training - where it stuck, and their response was automatic,” Dave said. “In addition, the Mayday training that we do here at Whetstone went a long way to help us all stick to the plan and see a successful outcome.”

Now back on the job, Brandon credits his safe outcome to the co-op’s focus on regular safety training and having first aid supplies in the vehicles.

“I don’t think the makeshift towel tourniquet would have stopped the bleeding,” Brandon said, looking down at the scar on his forearm.

Brian added, “I don’t want to think about the outcome if we didn’t have a plan in place.”

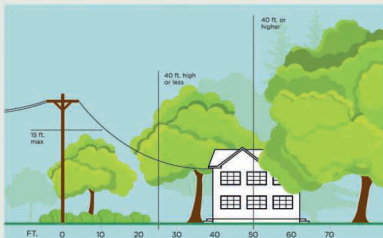
To help prevent those worst case scenarios, electric cooperatives continually scrutinize safety training and workplace incidents. Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is sharing this story with its members-owners and fellow cooperatives to promote preparedness for unexpected incidents like this one, and overall encourage a culture of safety awareness.

3 Ways to Help Limit Tree Trimming

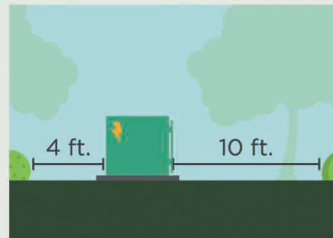
Did you know electric utilities are required to trim trees and other types of vegetation that grow too close to overhead power lines? We know you love your trees, and we will do everything we can to avoid trimming them.

Here’s how you can help:

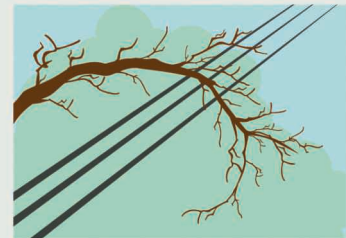
1. Plant trees in the right place. Trees that will be <40 ft. should be planted at least 25 ft. away from power lines (>40ft. should be at least 50 ft. away).



2. Don’t block pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. away from transformer doors and 4 ft. from transformer sides.



3. Report dangerous branches. If you spot a tree or branch that is dangerously close to power lines, please let us know.



Trimming improves safety for all.

Let’s work together to enjoy the beauty of trees and reliable electricity.



SUSTAINABLE SERVINGS

Frederick-Area Family Grows, Packages Specialty Oatmeal

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For Taylor and Cassandra Sumption, there's nothing better than waking up early and enjoying a bowl of their very own home-grown oatmeal.

Well, maybe nothing better except sharing that taste of small-town South Dakota with the world.

Living and working on their five-generation family farm in northeast South Dakota, the Northern Electric Cooperative member-family dreamed, developed and launched Anthem Oats, which they say is a farm-to-table alternative that oatmeal enjoyers can feel good about.

But Anthem Oats isn't just a locally-sourced breakfast; it's a process rooted in sustainability.

The Sumptions' small-business journey began in 2016 when Taylor decided to replace his usual wheat cover crop with oats in his corn and soybean rotation.

"I'm kind of a nerd when it comes to crop rotation," Taylor laughed. "I started working with the USDA research farm north of Brookings, and they do a lot of rotational studies ... What I saw was a tremendous increase in yield for crops following oats."

Those increased yields are a result of the oats recycling nutrients like nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus back into the soil. Oats also increase the amount of arbuscular mycorrhizal fungi in the soil, which the USDA says helps roots intake more nutrients and moisture, making oats an ideal

This field of oats on Taylor and Cassandra Sumptions' farm near Frederick, S.D., will soon be milled and packaged for their oatmeal brand, Anthem Oats.

Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption

cover crop to boost the next season's returns.

But an oat harvest doesn't bring in the same returns that corn and soybeans do – that had Taylor Sumption thinking about ways to add value to his product.

"It was Taylor's idea from the very beginning, from years and years ago, after many long hours in the tractor thinking about how to bring added value to our farm," Cassandra recalled. "And I loved his ideas. He would just kind of bounce things off me every now and then."

One day, it clicked in Taylor's head; he could add value to his oat harvest by producing a one-of-a-kind, high-quality breakfast product.

Taylor got in contact with the South Dakota Value-Added Agriculture Development Center (VAADC), whom he credits for helping navigate the first steps in starting the business.

Maple Pecan is one of Anthem Oats' top-selling flavors. Among other flavor options: pumpkin spice, vanilla chai, peach and cranberry, super fruit, and dark chocolate brownie.





Taylor and Cassandra Sumption sell their home-grown oatmeal in stores across the US.
Photo submitted by Cassandra Sumption

VAADC CEO Cheri Rath says Anthem Oats is one of the center's many success stories, and credits the Sumptions for coming up with a marketable idea and running a sustainable business.

"Anthem Oats takes a traditional commodity and adds value to it, helping their farm diversify and add profitability at a time when commodity prices are volatile," Rath said. "They've done an awesome job of branding themselves and getting out into the marketplace."

According to Taylor and Cassandra, feedback from customers has been overwhelmingly positive, with some customers noting that Anthem Oats' subtle differences have distinguished the brand from competition.

"When selecting our oat variety was we focused on nutrient density and nutritional value," Taylor explained. "Our oats mill a little tougher, but there's a little more flavor and a little more body. Consumers can tell when it's our oats."

Cassandra, now a full-time Anthem Oats employee, oversees the product from the harvest to the shelf, and everything in between. It's an around-the-clock job, and one she had to learn fast.

"I didn't have a clue – this was all so new to me," Cassandra laughed, thinking back to when she first jumped into the role. "I did manage a grocery store in Frederick here for a short time, so that kind of helped me with the logistics of shipping and freight and different things like that."

Today, after more than four years on the market and a continuously growing presence in grocery stores, the Sumption family has unofficially put Frederick on the map as the oatmeal capital of South Dakota.

Cassandra and Taylor also credit their five children, Trevor, Tristan, Preston, Miranda and Marissa for taking time out of their busy lives to help out when they're able, as the family works to build a brand that resonates with consumers in South Dakota and beyond.

"I get to answer all the emails, like all of the consumers' questions, and sometimes there's a complaint, but overall everybody is very kind and sweet in their messages," Cassandra said. "It helps make your day a little brighter, knowing that you're doing something that people actually really appreciate and love, and it just makes you feel good at the end of the day and keeps you going."



What Is the Value-Added Agriculture Development Center?

VAADC is a nonprofit that provides resources for the establishment and success of value-added agricultural businesses.

What Does Value-Added Mean?

When farmers add value to their product, it means they are taking a raw commodity and processing, marketing or otherwise enhancing so it can be sold at a higher price. The Sumption family adds value to their oat harvest by milling, packaging and distributing their product.

What Does VAADC Offer to Start-ups?

VAADC can assist start-ups with feasibility assessments, business plans, grant and funding opportunities, strategic planning and networking. VAADC has assisted more than 300 projects since its founding in 1999.

Who Is VAADC?

VAADC was started by agriculture industry supporters to support producers. VAADC is governed by a board of directors representing the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, East River Electric, Farm Credit Services of America, S.D. Association of Cooperatives, S.D. Bankers Association, S.D. Farmers Union, S.D. Soybean Research & Promotion Council, and the S.D. Wheat Commission.



NOV 22, 26, 28-29
Christmas Tree Sales

Nov. 22: 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Nov. 26: 5-8 p.m.
Nov. 28-29: 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
6B Seed And Supplies
Alpena, SD
www.6Bseedandsupplies.com

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.

NOV. 1
Reliance Christmas Carousel
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Reliance, SD
605-730-1462

NOV. 1
Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Dakota Christian School
Corsica, SD
605-366-7940

NOV. 1
Black Hills Meat Fest
2-4 p.m.
Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
Rapid City, SD

NOV. 1
Fairburn Community Center Bazaar
5:30 p.m.
Linn St.
Fairburn, SD

NOV. 1-2
The Black Market/ Formerly Benson's Flea Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m..
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 3
American Legion Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

NOV. 7-9
Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend
Information on Facebook Page
Hill City, SD

NOV. 8
TNT's Gifts & Goodies Galore
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
510 S. Main St..
Dimock, SD

NOV. 8
Lutefisk Supper
4:30 p.m., 5:45 p.m., 7 p.m.
Call for Reservations
Lake Campbell Lutheran Church
Volga, SD
605-690-4868 – Cheryl
605-693-4325 – Charlotte

NOV. 8
More Than a Meal Gala
5:30 p.m.
Aberdeen, SD
Tickets: 605-229-4741

NOV. 14-15
Junkin' Market Days
Fri. 4-7 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Ramkota Exhibit Hall
Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 15
Club 14 Craft + Vendor Fair
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hendricks Public School
Hendricks, MN
605-690-5586

NOV. 15
Dueling Pianos Playing for Permanency
5:30 p.m.
Holiday Inn & Convention Center
Spearfish, SD
605-722-4558

NOV. 16
An Old-Fashioned Thanksgiving
2 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

NOV. 16
FEZtival of Trees
Mon.-Fri. 4-7 p.m.
Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
802 S. Main St.
Aberdeen, SD
605-225-4841

NOV. 22
Lille Norge Fest
8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Canyon Lake Activity Center
Viking Hall
2900 Canyon Lake Dr.
Rapid City, SD

NOV. 28
Snacks With Santa
2-4 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

NOV. 29
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory Memorial Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-295-4345

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.