

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Get Out & Vote!

It's Your Civic Duty

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Election Day is June 2; Go and Vote!



Jordan Lamb
CEO

Looking back just a few decades here in central South Dakota, if you needed light after the sun went down, your options were a bulky kerosene lamp... or to wait until morning.

Electric cooperatives were only organized because enough people got together to solve a problem in their community. In just a few short years, those first co-op members brought power to the prairie. Without their determination

and commitment to build a better future, co-ops would have never formed. Perhaps some of us today would still use kerosene lamps.

At Oahe Electric Cooperative, we believe that in order to build strong communities, people need to get involved. And one of the best ways to do that is by exercising your right to vote.

The pursuit of a better tomorrow – the same spirit that sparked electric cooperatives during their founding – is just as impactful today. Unfortunately, in many cases, people sit on the sidelines.

Recent national voting statistics paint a grim picture. You may be surprised to hear that turnout in the 2024 general election was just 64%. For midterm elections, it's even worse – just 46% of voters nationwide turned out for the 2022 midterm elections.

In this issue of Cooperative Connections, you'll read different



perspectives on the importance of voting. From co-op leaders with military service history, to others who serve in local government, they make the case for why it's your duty to go vote.

When you vote, you have a say in the decisions that affect your everyday life. As we celebrate the United States' 250th Anniversary, we also stop and remember all of the fallen heroes who gave their lives for this cause; a land where people elect their own leaders and control their own government.

That's something that sets our country apart. According to Freedom House, only about 43% of countries hold meaningful elections. We've fought for this privilege of self-determination, yet half of the people stay home during elections.

Here's our challenge for you: make a plan to vote June 2. Bring a friend, spouse, parent, son or daughter; it's their privilege too! What are you waiting for? Get out and vote!

Prioritize Your Safety Year-Round

At Oahe Electric Cooperative, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year-round. From our co-op crews to you, the consumer-members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

To Oahe Electric, safety is more than a catchphrase. It's all of our responsibility to keep employees safe. Additionally, we want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That's why you'll see Oahe Electric hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, to demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, we'd like to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard. Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle – by having too many devices running on one circuit.

Label circuit breakers to understand the circuits in your home. Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you "daisy chain" them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don't exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

We encourage you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors. Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year while keeping our community safe around electricity.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

Board of Directors:

- James Feller – Assistant Secretary
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- Brandon Haag – President
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- Mark Bruning – Line Foreman
- Matt Eldridge – Chief Operations Officer
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- Brady Gaer – Journeyman Lineman
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- 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.



Giving Back: Supporting Our Community at Feeding South Dakota

At Oahe Electric Cooperative, we believe in powering more than just our communities – we believe in supporting the people who call them home.

Recently, a group of our employees spent time volunteering at Feeding South Dakota, working together to make a meaningful impact in the fight against hunger. During their visit, the team packed 400 food boxes and prepared an additional 600 boxes for future use, helping ensure that individuals and families across the region have access to

nutritious meals.

Opportunities like this not only allow us to give back, but also strengthen the teamwork and sense of purpose that define our organization. We're proud of our employees for stepping up, lending a hand, and making a difference where it matters most.

Thank you to Feeding South Dakota for the important work you do every day – and to our team for representing our values so well in the community.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH: TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY

At your local cooperative, Electrical Safety Month is recognized every May, but the importance of practicing safety year-round is always emphasized. From co-op crews to the consumer-members served, everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers daily life, but it can also be dangerous — something your local cooperative understands firsthand from working with it 365 days a year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase. Cooperative leadership recognizes the responsibility to keep employees safe while also helping protect members and the broader community. That's why your local cooperative hosts safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, highlighting the dangers of electricity. These demonstrations often include emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, along with discussions about the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the widespread use of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

Watch for frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged from age, heavy use or excessive current flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them to avoid shock hazards.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Running too many devices on one circuit can lead to overheating and potential fire risk.

Label circuit breakers. Understanding your home's electrical system can help prevent overloads. If your home is more than 40 years old and you plan to install large appliances, contact a qualified electrician.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug one extension cord into another. "Daisy chaining" can cause overheating and fire hazards. Do not exceed the cord's wattage, and avoid using extension cords as permanent solutions. If additional outlets are needed, consult a licensed electrician.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk with children

about playing it safe and smart around electricity, including staying aware of overhead power lines near outdoor play areas.

Providing a reliable energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year is a top priority. Equally important is keeping the community safe around electricity.

Contact your local cooperative for additional electrical safety tips or to request a safety demonstration at a school or upcoming community event.



"Do not fly kites by power lines!"

Casen Yuker

Casen cautions readers not to fly kites around power lines. Thank you for sharing your picture, Casen! Casen's parents are Lance and Tarah Yuker from Aberdeen 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.

Delicious DESSERTS

RHUBARB CAKE DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 cup sugar
4 cups rhubarb, diced
2 cups half and half

Method

Prepare cake mix as directed on package and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Mix sugar and rhubarb together. Spoon evenly over cake batter. Pour half and half over top of rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes. This is like an upside-down cake with custard on the bottom of the cake.

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

FUZZY NAVEL CAKE

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 instant vanilla pudding (large, 5.1 oz. size)
3/4 cup peach schnapps
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup orange juice
4 eggs

Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar
4 tbsps. orange juice
2 tbsps. peach schnapps

Method

Spray a 12-cup fluted baking pan with cooking spray, dust with flour. Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended, spread evenly in pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool cake for 20 minutes. Run a long, sharp knife around the edges to loosen, and invert onto platter. Whisk glaze ingredients together until smooth. With wooden skewer, poke holes on top and around sides of cake. Spoon glaze over the warm cake, allowing to seep in holes, and drizzle down the sides and center. Cool completely before slicing.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
Pinch salt
1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple, undrained (in natural juice, not heavy syrup)

Frosting

1/2 cup butter, softened
1 8 oz. cream cheese softened
1 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

Method

Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended. Bake in greased 9x13 pan at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Combine cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar. Spread frosting on cake while still warm. Garnish with some toasted coconut if desired.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix 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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by William Berry via Shutterstock.

Appreciation & Celebration of Excellence



Valerie Marso
CFO

April is a busy month around here – Lineman Appreciation Day, Administrative Professionals Day, and Oahe Electric’s Birthday - and as we celebrate these occasions, we also want to take a moment to express our deepest gratitude to you, our members.

It is because of your trust, dedication, involvement and continued support that Oahe has been able to grow and thrive.

Thank you, Linemen!

On April 18th, we honor our courageous and dedicated linemen who work tirelessly to keep the lights on and the power flowing to our homes and businesses. Linemen are truly a breed of their own, braving dangerous conditions, working in all kinds of weather and climbing poles to maintain and restore power. Their commitment to keeping us safe and connected deserves recognition year-round. We encourage you to [t#ThankALineman](#) on this day and beyond for their invaluable work.

Admin. Professionals Day

On April 22, we celebrate the heart and soul of our office – administrative professionals. These talented individuals are the

backbone of our workplace, providing crucial support that keeps everything running smoothly. Whether it’s managing schedules, organizing events or other behind-the-scenes tasks, our office staff make a difference every day. Let’s take time to show appreciation for their commitment and diligence.

Oahe’s Birthday – April 26

On April 26th, we celebrate Oahe Electric’s 80th Birthday. We invite you to join us for cake, ice cream, and prizes Wednesday, April 29. Oahe Electric started with a simple yet powerful vision: providing reliable and affordable electricity.

It wasn’t an easy road at first. We faced challenges, but the commitment of those who believed in our mission kept us going. Thanks to the hard work of our linemen, office staff, and, of course, members, we built a foundation to carry us through the years.

As we navigate this busy month, let’s show appreciation for those who go above and beyond. Whether it’s honoring a lineman for their courageous work, thanking an administrative professional for their tireless support, or celebrating another year of Oahe’s growth, if you appreciate the light turning on when you flip the switch – let someone know! Let’s continue working together to make the coming years even brighter. Thank you for being a part of the journey – we couldn’t have made it this far without you!

Have a Successful Planting Season Rooted in Safety

As farmers return to their fields for spring planting, Oahe Electric urges them to be alert when working near overhead power lines. Operating large equipment near these lines is one of the often overlooked, yet potentially deadly, hazards of farm work.

Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a 10-foot clearance minimum from power lines. Sometimes a power line is closer than it looks - helpful safety steps include using a spotter and designating preplanned routes to avoid hazards.

Be aware of increased height when transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors now have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators near power lines, and never attempt to raise or move a power line.

Simply working too close to a power line is dangerous as electricity can arc or “jump” to conducting objects, such as a ladder, pole or truck. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call Oahe Electric for help. If the power

line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground. Even if a line has landed on the ground, there is still potential for the area to be energized. Warn others nearby to stay away and wait until help arrives.

If exiting the cab is absolutely necessary because of fire, the proper action is to jump – not step – with both feet together, hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

Who’s Graduating This Spring?

We know we have many seniors in our service territory who will be graduating in the near future, and we want to hear from you!

Send Oahe Electric a graduation announcement at P.O. Box 216, Blunt, S.D. 57522, and you might just receive a graduation gift!

CO-OP FAMILY LEGACY

Mother & Daughter Duo Find Careers in Co-ops

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Ask any longtime electric cooperative employee what makes the co-op network special, and the answers often sound the same: It feels like family.

For Sharla and Amanda Haugen, that's more than a figure of speech. Working for electric cooperatives on opposite ends of South Dakota, the mother and daughter pair share a commitment to service and community.

Sharla is the manager of dispatch at Sioux Valley Energy in Colman, overseeing 24-hour radio dispatch for line crews from Sioux Valley Energy, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative, Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative, Union County Electric Cooperative, Nobles Cooperative Electric and the City of Brookings.

Sharla has worked at Sioux Valley Energy for 35 years, starting as a dispatcher nearly a decade before Amanda was born. Amanda understood at a young age that whenever there was a severe snow, wind or ice storm, her mom would be out the door and off to work to help get the lights back on.

"Seeing how my mom dropped everything to serve the members and go above and beyond, and my dad supporting her role, it really opened my eyes to what a co-op does for a community," Amanda said.

Growing up in rural Moody County on Sioux Valley Energy lines, Amanda was very involved in the co-op. In high school, she helped serve the meals at district meetings, attended annual meetings, and even traveled to North Dakota on Youth Excursion – a co-op event promoting youth education in energy careers and production. On the trip, Amanda toured the Antelope Valley coal-fired power plant and other facilities, getting a behind-the-scenes look at how electricity is generated and transported to co-op members. She also participated in Sioux Valley Energy's youth leadership programs, which prepped students with professional skills for future careers.

"The Empower Youth Leadership program went over different leadership skills and how to find strengths and weaknesses," Amanda recalled. "That involvement is really how I got ingrained with the co-op."

Years later, as Amanda worked to finish her marketing degree at Lake Area Technical College, she was on the hunt for internship openings to help kick off her career.

"I gave it to God and put it in his hands," Amanda said.

One Thursday afternoon, during class, Amanda's phone started



Now living at opposite ends of the state, Sharla and Amanda enjoy time together in the Black Hills during visits. When in each other's company, other family members suggest there's perhaps too much talk about electric cooperatives. Photo submitted by Sharla Haugen.

buzzing over and over again. When she glanced down, she saw multiple missed calls and texts from her mom. West River Electric Association had an opening for a member services representative at their Rapid City office, and applications were due the next day.

"Friday morning, I worked on a revamped resume and cover letter and sent it off," Amanda said. West River Electric Association reached out shortly after for an interview, and less than two weeks later, Amanda was offered the job.

"It's like the stars aligned," Amanda said. "When I told my mom, she was ecstatic – I'm pretty sure she started crying."

For Sharla, it was a joyful moment, knowing Amanda was part of the co-op family that had treated her so well over her decades at Sioux Valley Energy.

"If Amanda got out there and she had car trouble, I knew the co-op people would take care of her," Sharla said. "It was just a sense of relief for me to know if something were to happen, there'd be people there to help her."

Amanda, now five years into the job at West River Electric, works on the co-op's Cooperative Connections magazine, communications and public relations, and youth initiatives similar to the ones at Sioux Valley Energy that lead to her co-op career. Much like her mom, Amanda said her co-op now feels like family.

"Coming to work every day, you kind of have this second family that always has your back," Amanda said. "They are there for you and will help you whenever you need it."

That's exactly what Sharla wanted for her daughter.

"Co-ops are big on employee growth, so I knew Amanda would always be learning and improving. I knew she wouldn't be stagnant in a career at a cooperative because they're always investing in their employees. It was just such a proud moment when she joined the co-op world."

ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Chuck Sloan • Piedmont, S.D.

Board Treasurer, West River Electric Association

U.S. Air Force 1983-2003

Chuck Sloan has spent much of his life serving his nation.

Sloan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1983 and served 21 years on active duty before retiring as a master sergeant in 2004. In that time, he was stationed at bases all around the world, including Oman, South Korea, Turkey, and the Pacific. Since 2004, Sloan has worked as a civilian at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where today he is Chief of Operations Compliance.

Serving in the military, Sloan observed firsthand how seriously service members took absentee voting and civic participation, despite being thousands of miles from American soil. Their passion helped ignite Sloan's own admiration for America's democratic system of government.

"If I found somebody a little laissez-faire about voting, saying, 'my vote probably won't count,' I would give them a spiel," Sloan explained. "Yes, your vote does count, and you'll want to be able to say that you made that vote."

He continued, "If you don't choose to exercise that responsibility, then later on if you're displeased, you really can't

complain about it because you didn't make a choice – If anything, vote and give yourself the opportunity to legitimately complain!"

Sloan said people should never underestimate the importance of showing up and making their voices heard, because in close races, one vote can tip the scale.

"There are many instances when one vote may have been a determining factor," Sloan said. "It may not be a general election, but how about in a state or local election where one vote can be the deciding factor? That happens more often than one would think. Your vote matters, no matter what you do."

Sloan brought that civic-mindedness along with him to West River Electric Association, where he serves on the Board of Directors and helps make decisions in the interest of his neighbors and communities he represents.

Sloan said it all just comes back to civic responsibility and staying involved.

"From the time I turned 18, I've never missed a vote," Sloan said. "It's second nature. It's too important to not do."



VOTING STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES



Evan Buckmiller • De Smet, S.D.

General Manager, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative

De Smet School District Board

For Kingsbury Electric Cooperative General Manager Evan Buckmiller, his call to public service came after a mid-term resignation on the De Smet School District

Board left a vacancy that needed to be filled.

"The board had to appoint someone to fill the seat," Buckmiller said. "Initially when I was asked, I didn't know if I wanted to do it, but I also knew that my wife and I have two young kids in the school system, so I agreed to fill the spot until the next election."

Buckmiller wasn't expecting to develop a passion for civic-service, but six years and two election cycles later, he's still representing the De Smet community on the school board.

"It's for my kids, to make sure they have the best education opportunities possible to prepare them for their future," Buckmiller added.

He said that while serving on the school board has been a

rewarding endeavor, there are also moments that are discouraging; some people will sit out elections, but are also vocal about board decisions they disagree with.

"I receive phone calls about how we are doing everything wrong, but they don't want to step up to be a part of change," Buckmiller explained.

His advice is simple: show up.

"Public participation at the monthly school board meetings is always encouraged," Buckmiller said. "When a community is engaged, there is more diverse input and you get to see the needs of everyone. The needs for one person might not be the same as another, and when you are sitting on a board you want to hear the needs of everyone so you can make the best decision possible for everyone."

Buckmiller said when more people get involved and exercise their civic duties, the communities like his are better for it.

"Being active in the community makes the community stronger and allows different opinions to be heard," Buckmiller said.

"When you show up to meetings and vote, you are giving the board direction so they can make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone."

STICK UP FOR YOURSELF & VOTE



Don Schurdevin • Elk Point, S.D.
Board President, Union County Electric Cooperative
U.S. Navy 1962-1968

Serving on the Union County Electric Cooperative board for more than 25 years, Don Schurdevin has built a reputation for steady leadership and a strong commitment

to the cooperative and its members. But before serving his neighbors and community on the co-op board, Schurdevin first served in a different way. He served not just his Union County neighbors, but his entire country in the U.S. Navy. Schurdevin enrolled during his junior year of high school in 1962, serving active duty in Vietnam from 1963 to 1965, some of that time aboard the USS Midway. The experience helped shape his views on patriotism, civic duty and personal responsibility.

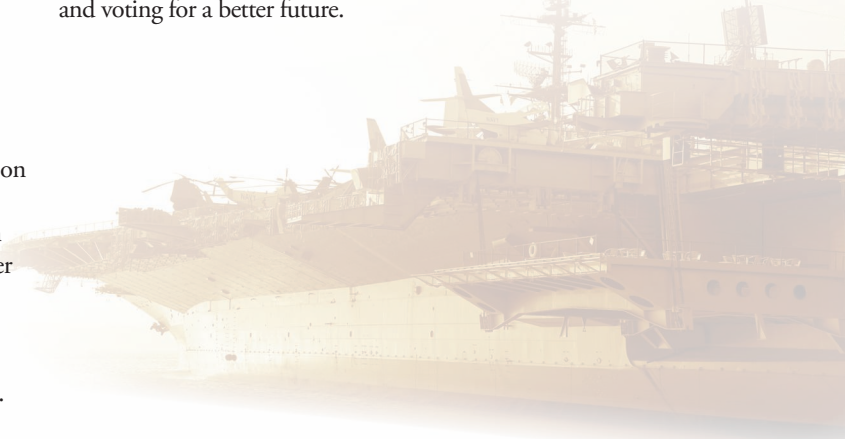
“In the navy, you learn to get along with people, but you learn to also stick up for yourself, because nobody else – is so you better take care of your own business,” he said.

That’s the attitude that Schurdevin brings to his civic participation. He said serving in the military gave him a deeper appreciation for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including voting.

Schurdevin believes participating in elections is one of the most important ways citizens can stay involved in their communities and help shape the future of their community, state and country.

“I think I voted in every election since I could,” Schurdevin recalled. “School board election, county, state – if I was able to vote I was voting.”

That sense of duty carried into his years of cooperative service. As a director, Schurdevin remains focused on serving members and ensuring the co-op continues to meet local needs. Schurdevin encourages others to “stick up for yourself” by staying informed and voting for a better future.



LEADERS DEPEND ON YOU SPEAKING UP



Chris Rahn • Mission, S.D.
Member Services Manager, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative
Todd County School District Board, Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Chris Rahn was not always interested in his local government. In fact, up until just several years ago, he sat many elections out.

But through his work at Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative and the commitment to community that came with it, Rahn gained a new perspective on civic participation, realizing that change only happens when peoples’ voices are heard.

“I believe everybody who has an opinion should come out and vote,” Rahn said. “One vote matters. One vote can change an entire election.”

Rahn’s indifference to voting began to change as he was asked to take on more responsibilities with the co-op. Cherry-Todd Electric General Manager Tim Grablander nominated Rahn to the Rushmore Electric Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, where Rahn now serves as president.

Shortly after, he was encouraged by local community leaders to apply for a board seat with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The tribal

council voted to seat Rahn on the judiciary committee, leading to his first real experience with public service. Like flipping a switch, Rahn’s enthusiasm led to his appointment to other tribal boards, including the Tribal Utilities Commission, Tribal Tax Commission, and the Rosebud Energy Services Company.

Rahn said serving in tribal government opened his mind to the impact he can have on his community. That realization inspired Rahn to run for his first publicly-elected position as a school board member for the Todd County School District.

“I wanted to be more involved in my daughter’s education and just listen to the community’s input,” Rahn said, restating the importance of community members actively engaging with elected officials and sharing feedback.

He continued: “I feel like I’ve been able to bridge the gap between the people I represent and the administration and other public leaders.”

As Rahn looks ahead to years of future public service to work for a better community, he encourages others to step up as well — and all it takes is a vote.

“If you speak up, your voice is heard,” he continued. “When everyone’s voice is heard, we can make better decisions for the community as a whole.”

Photos by Shutterstock

Oahe Electric Awards \$7,500 in Scholarships to Area Students



Jonah Webb

Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. has awarded Jonah Webb a \$2,500 scholarship, which is provided by Oahe Electric in conjunction with Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, N.D.

Jonah is a senior at Highmore-Harrold High School in Highmore, SD. Some of the activities he is active in are National Future Farmers of America (Vice President), Future Business Leaders of America (Vice President), National Honor Society (Secretary), Future Community and Career Leader of America, and is his class's Treasurer. He is also an active member in 4-H (President) and his church's youth group. Jonah is attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for the Power Sports and Marine Technology course. He is the son of Jeremy and Amy Webb of Harrold.

Congratulations Jonah, keep up the great work!

In addition to the \$2,500 scholarship with Basin Electric, Oahe Electric also awarded an additional \$5,000 in scholarships. The scholarships were awarded to Cheznie Heezen (senior at Stanley County HS), Nolan Peterson (freshman at SDSU), Evian Johnson (senior at Brookings HS), and Chesley Clair and Carson Glodt (seniors at TF Riggs HS).



Cheznie Heezen

Cheznie is involved in National Honor Society and 4-H, as well as being her class's Treasurer. She is very active in her community, volunteering for Meals on Wheels, Feeding South Dakota, collecting donations for the Angel Tree, Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Center and Pennies for Robert through Countryside Hospice. Her intention is to attend Southeast Technical College and begin the LPN to RN program, after which she plans to move back to the Pierre area and work at Avera St. Mary's Hospital. Cheznie is the daughter of John and Roxanne Heezen of Pierre.

Congratulations Cheznie, we wish you the best of luck in your career goals!



Nolan Peterson

Nolan is an avid baseball player, while also participating in the Sharp Shooters Disc Golf League, the SDSU Intramural Softball League and the SDSU Waterski Club. He also spends a lot of his time volunteering, including the Recycling Club, Feeding South Dakota, highway cleanup, The Banquet, and collecting donations for food pantries and Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Center, all while still making it onto SDSU's Dean's List. He is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering, with minors in Mathematics, Aerospace Engineering and Sustainable Energy Systems. With these degrees, his hope is to design and build new parts and machine components for vehicles to increase their performance and decrease their effect on the environment. Nolan is the son of Chris and Josie Peterson of Pierre.

Congratulations Nolan, we hope you realize your dreams and find much success!



Chesley Clair

Chesley is active in the South Dakota High School Rodeo Association, the Pierre/Ft. Pierre High School Rodeo Club (Vice President), 4-H, the Gov2Gov Mentoring program and National Honor Society. Chesley plans on attending Lake Area Technical College, where she will pursue a career in Licensed Practical Nursing. She is the daughter of Matt Clair and Misty Korkow Clair of Pierre.

Congratulations on your achievements Chesley, and best of luck with your future goals!



Carson Glodt

Carson is involved in National Honor Society, Boy Scouts (Eagle rank), Skills USA, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and also spent time as a Senate Page in the SD Legislature. Carson plans on continuing his education at the University of Utah, and will major in Mechanical Engineering and minoring in Aerospace Engineering. He hopes to have a career designing aero parts for cars and aircraft. Carson is the son of Jason and Michelle Glodt of Pierre.

Congratulations Carson and good luck achieving your goals, we wish you the best of luck on your journey!



Evian Johnson

Evian is active in Competitive Dance (MVP, Senior Captain, and All State), the Clay Target Team, JAG (Vice President), and Choir (Choreography Award). Evian's future plans include attending Lake Area Technical College and pursuing a career as a Surgical Technician. Evian is the daughter of Matthew and Jackie Johnson of Brookings.

Evian, we are thrilled for you to embark on this journey and wish you great success!

Oahe Electric Cooperative Billing & Payment Options

Budget Billing

Discover the convenience of having 12 equal, monthly payments for your electric bill. The sign up months for Budget Billing are **May and June**. If you would like more information or to have your budget bill amount calculated, call the office at 1-800-640-6243 or email mjaeger@oaheelectric.com

Smarthub: E-bills, Online Payments

Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc members have the opportunity to view and pay their bills online. Subscribers are able to sign up to receive an e-statement and access our account management tool by going to our web site at www.oaheelectric.com and clicking on the "Register for Smarthub link." Once you have registered as a new user, you can easily access your account. Smarthub offers features such as viewing previous month's bills, downloading billing data, payment history and **paying your bill via credit/debit card**. You can also sign up for automatic payments on Smarthub. While you can still receive a paper bill in the mail if you wish, if you sign up for paperless billing, you will receive a one-time **\$5 credit on your next bill!** When the new bills are calculated each month (around the 10th) you will receive notification via e-mail that your new account information is available online.

Automatic Bill Payment Plan

With the Automatic Bill Payment Plan, you won't have to spend time writing or mailing checks. Plus, your bill will be paid on time, even when you are on vacation. Paying your utility bill won't take any time at all! As an additional bonus, you will receive a one-time **\$5 bill credit** when you enroll in the program! Each month the amount due for your electric bill will be paid automatically from your checking/savings account or will be charged to your credit/debit card. The payment will be listed on your monthly account statement and on your next bill from Oahe Electric.

BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Basin Electric's Pioneer Generation Station, located near Williston, N.D.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Basin Electric Expands Generation Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Although the flick of a switch can seem close at hand, the electricity that powers our world is often generated many miles away.

For rural cooperative members, electricity often comes from North Dakota, where Basin Electric Power Cooperative operates a fleet of power plants to serve rural communities across nine states. As demand continues to build across that system, the infrastructure behind it is growing right alongside it.

This steady growth has shaped the work now underway across Basin Electric's service territory. In response, the cooperative has kept up with demand by expanding existing generation facilities, building a new power plant and supporting the system with additional transmission projects in just a few short years.

"We're seeing load growth across our system, and it's coming from a combination of residential, agricultural, commercial and energy development," said Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric's senior vice president and chief operating officer. "When you step back and look at it as a whole, it becomes clear that we need to continue building to keep pace with that growth."



New transmission lines in western North Dakota support Basin Electric's newest generation assets.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Pioneer Generation Station

To maintain reliability and keep the lights on for their members, Basin Electric recently expanded its generation capacity through new development to Pioneer Generation Station near Williston, N.D.

Originally developed in the early 2010s, the facility grew in phases over time. Those additions turned Pioneer Generation Station into one of Basin Electric's most important generation assets, but within a decade, the pace of that growth had begun to change.

"Coming out of COVID, not just us but everybody

was seeing rapid increases in loads,” McCollam said. “At that point, we were asking what we could do the quickest to add capacity.”

To meet the need, Basin Electric moved forward with Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. The cooperative completed the project in 2025, adding about 580 megawatts of generation and bringing the site’s total capacity to 822 megawatts, enough to power roughly 400,000 homes.

The expansion moved quickly in part because Basin Electric built on what it already had.

“We had the site and the people that worked there, so we could add onto it a lot quicker than we could analyze and research new sites,” McCollam said.

Bison Generation Station

Still, Basin Electric continued building for traditional member load growth, beyond Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV, turning to a new project: Bison Generation Station.

Located near Epping, N.D., the natural gas-fueled generation project is being built from the ground up as a large-scale, natural gas facility designed to meet future demand. Once completed, the combined-cycle power plant will produce approximately 1,490

megawatts of electricity, making it the largest power plant solely owned by Basin Electric – almost double the capacity of Pioneer Generation Station. The plant is expected to come online in two phases, with the first unit operating in 2029 and the second in 2030.

Unlike Pioneer Generation Station, which expanded over time, Bison Generation Station is being built as a single, large project.

“We had a history of building small units, piecemealing them in as quickly as we could. That worked for a long time, but eventually we reached a point where we needed to think about building differently,” McCollam said. “There was a point where we recognized that continuing to add smaller pieces wasn’t going to be the most effective approach. We needed to build something at a scale that would allow us to stay ahead of that growth.”

Serendipitously, the transition from Pioneer Generation Station to Bison Generation Station happened on the same day. Basin Electric finished construction at Pioneer and turned the facility over to operations, then received the permits to begin construction on Bison.

“I’m kind of a nerd,” McCollam

said, laughing. “I’m nerdy enough to think this wasn’t a coincidence, and the power plant gods were smiling on us.”

Once complete, it will become a central part of Basin Electric’s generation portfolio.

“It’s going to be the flagship of our gas fleet,” McCollam said. “It’s being designed with the understanding that the system we’re serving today is going to continue to grow.”

Looking Ahead

According to McCollam, these new generation assets are a response to the organic growth Basin Electric is seeing across its traditional membership, including residential demand, agriculture, commercial activity and energy production.

“We support that growth where it happens, and we make sure the system can deliver power where it’s needed,” he said.

For Basin Electric, the work underway now is part of a longer process to ensure reliability in a time of growing energy demand.

“The entire purpose of Basin Electric is to provide reliable service to our membership,” McCollam said. “As that system grows, we have to continue building to keep up with it.”



FROM FIELD TO FUEL

A new multi-seed crush processing facility, served by Central Electric Cooperative, is now operational after two years of construction near Mitchell. Photo submitted by High Plains Processing

New High Plains Processing Seed-Crush Facility Opens Near Mitchell, S.D.

Frank Turner

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A new multi-seed crush processing facility is now operational after nearly two years of construction, and its impact is taking shape across the region.

Located two miles south of Mitchell, the High Plains Processing plant is a large-scale seed crush and refining facility, powered by Central Electric Cooperative in the heart of South Dakota's soybean country.

The facility is backed by South Dakota Soybean Processors, the majority owner and operator, which also operates soybean crush facilities in Volga and Miller, along with a large group of local investors.

"There's a lot of local influence in this plant," said Pat Gathman, general manager of the facility. "Many of the investors originally invested in South Dakota Soybean Processors in Volga, and others invested directly into this project here in Mitchell."

That local investment shows up not

just in ownership, but in how the facility fits into the broader agricultural system. For local producers, it means more of what they grow can be processed closer to the farm.

"Instead of having the soybeans go to an elevator to be processed someplace else, they're being processed right here in Mitchell," Gathman said. "It gives farmers a better opportunity from a market standpoint."

For Central Electric Cooperative members, the plant represents one of three industrial loads being served by the cooperative. In addition to strengthening the local economy, large industrial loads like the multi-seed crush facility provide a consistent demand for electricity and help justify new investments in local infrastructure.

"The soybean plant brings new revenues to Central Electric Cooperative, which helps minimize rates for the entire cooperative membership," said Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen.

As part of the proposal process and selection as the electric provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative built a new substation and made additional system upgrades to serve the facility. Central Electric Cooperative also completed system improvements to support the load.

"The work was completed over a two-year window," Schlimgen said. "The project was on time and under budget during the worst of the supply chain delays."

Inside the facility, energy from the electric cooperative is used to turn familiar crops into multiple usable products, with the primary goal of separating oil from soybeans, sunflowers and camelina and preparing it for a range of markets. Currently, the plant is only accepting soybeans.

"We go through the preparation area where we crack the beans, heat them up, separate the hulls from the soybean itself, flake it, and then send it over to the extraction area," Gathman said.

The process separates oil from the soybean. The oil is refined and prepared for a range of uses, including renewable

fuels and food products, while the remaining material becomes soybean meal, a high-protein livestock feed.

“We bring it into our oil refinery where we refine it, bleach it, deodorize it and send it to storage,” Gathman said. “From there, it can go out by truck or rail to be turned into renewable fuels.”

The Mitchell location was selected in part because it brings together several key pieces of infrastructure needed to support a facility of this scale. Rail access, utilities and proximity to soybean production all played a role in the decision.

“We’ve looked at Mitchell for many, many years,” said Tom Kersting, CEO of South Dakota Soybean Processors. “You’re on a mainline railroad, it’s good soybean ground, and there’s a strong production history in that area. As we look at other seeds like sunflowers or camelina, you don’t have to go very far west of Mitchell before that becomes even more suitable.”

He added that finding a location with the right infrastructure is becoming increasingly difficult.

“There’s just not a lot of good sites left if you want to be on rail, next to a natural gas line, have a good electrical source and access to wastewater,” Kersting said. “There are a lot of infrastructure needs for a large facility like this, and it’s tough to find all of that in one place.”

That infrastructure includes electric service, which was a key part of the project from the beginning.

“Central Electric has been great to work with,” Kersting said. “They built a large substation not just for this plant, but to expand service throughout the area. It’s been a great partnership, and they’ve been very accommodating and easy to work with.”

Since becoming operational, the plant has already made an impact on the local community. The facility employs about 80 people, with the majority coming from the surrounding area.

“We’ve got some outstanding employees here that are really a part of things,” Gathman added.

For Gathman, the experience of moving to Mitchell has stood out just as

much as the work itself.

“The community has been outstanding,” he said. “Not just from the neighbors that we live around, but the community as a whole. It’s been very welcoming and very inviting.”

After moving multiple times throughout his career, including time spent outside the country, the difference was noticeable.

“My wife and I have moved 12 times, mostly around the U.S., and we did a stint in Brazil,” Gathman said. “I grew up in Fargo, and I love Fargo, but it was nothing compared to the reception we got when we came here.”

That sense of connection is something he hopes to carry forward.

“I can’t say enough about it,” he said. “I really want to help pay that back in the long term.”

As High Plains Processing continues to ramp up, its presence is expected to grow alongside it. The facility adds new demand for infrastructure, new options for producers and a new step in how agricultural products move through the region.



High Plains Processing celebrates the groundbreaking of its seed-crush facility in 2023.
Photo submitted by High Plains Processing

MAY 18
**Voter Registration
Deadline for Primary
Election**

5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 1
**Last Day to Request
Absentee Ballot.**

5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 2
Primary Election
7 a.m.-7 p.m.
(South Dakota)

Photo by Shutterstock

MAY 2-10
**Rustic Designs & More Spring
Show, Flea Market**
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

MAY 2
Consignment Auction
7 a.m. Gates Open
10 a.m. Auction
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 2
Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
2-8 p.m.
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656

MAY 3
Prairie Village Opening Day
2 p.m. Train Ride
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 6-7
**Energize! Exploring Innovative
Rural Communities Conference**
Hosted by SDSU Extension
Community Vitality
Community Center
Wall, SD
extension.sdstate.edu/energize

MAY 9
1880 Train Opens
Hill City, SD

MAY 15-17
Open House Weekend
Free Entrance
Custer State Park
Custer, SD

MAY 16
2nd Annual Bird Bash
8 a.m.-1 p.m.
Bear Butte State Park
Sturgis, SD
605-390-2901
valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com

MAY 23
Free Christian Men's Event
8 a.m.-2 p.m.
The Barn at Aspen Acres
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MAY 30
**Familyfest Fun Cruise
& SDSC Safety Fair**
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Bucket Trucks, Safety & More
Sioux Falls, SD
thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/

MAY 30
Frühlingsfest
Spring Street Market
1-5 p.m.
Main Street Square
Rapid City, SD
605-718-8484

MAY 30
**Miss Prairie Village/Miss
Prairie Princess Pageant**
6:30 p.m.
Lawrence Welk Opera House
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JUNE 4-6
Black Hills Quilt Show
Thurs. 5-8 p.m.
Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Rushmore Hall
at the Monument
Rapid City, SD

JUNE 13
Journey Into Historic Pickstown
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Ft. Randall Town & Museum
Pickstown, SD
605-487-7299

JUNE 13
Luce Pioneer Day
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Rope & Candle Making, Butter
Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking
Lake Herman State Park
Madison, SD
605-880-5077

JUNE 19-20
77th Annual Czech Days
Tabor, SD
www.taborczechdays.com

JUNE 24-27
Crystal Springs Rodeo
Clear Lake, SD
605-874-2996

JUNE 26-27
Buckhorn Rodeo
Britton, SD
605-880-5077

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.

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.