

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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# Auld Lang Syne



**Tim McIntyre**  
General Manager

Another year has flown by and the New Year's traditional song Auld Lang Syne echoes in my head like a friendly little ear worm whispering memories of the past year. Despite rising costs and political unrest around the world, 2023 was pretty good for the members of Lake Region Electric.

- \$832,000 in capital credit retirements returned to members of Lake Region Electric.
- \$400,000 in bill credits given to members of Lake Region Electric from Basin's excess revenue returns.

We are having load growth in our territory, with some large grain drying and processing units, new builds, and lake homes, as well as the number of people working from home.

We were blessed with beautiful weather this past fall and early winter which really helped our crews to get out there and continue our construction season and line retirement just a little longer. We did have some ice storms last winter, but damages

were quickly assessed and repaired, and outage times were minimal.

This past year wasn't all sunshine, there were some challenges including trucks breaking down and the frustration of procuring parts, but those are things we come to expect. We experienced some hold-ups with loans and grant approval, but we have been working hard to get those through to continue with our cooperative in a good financial position.

Looking ahead to 2024, Lake Region is currently undergoing a cost-of-service study to look at our rates and how to fairly distribute this among the cooperative members. We are also continuing with construction, converting lines to underground and planning for load growth. As always, safety training and implementation will be our top priority in the coming year.

Happy New Year & God Bless,  
Timothy McIntyre



**2024 Rural Electric June 15-24 Youth Tour**

**All-Expenses Paid Courtesy of Lake Region Electric**

**High School Juniors & Seniors**

***This is your chance to see the incredible sights of Washington, D.C. and make once-in-a-lifetime memories.***

Applications are available on our website or by contacting the LREA office.

[www.Lakeregion.coop](http://www.Lakeregion.coop)

Laura London  
605-345-3379

**Applications are due no later than December 27th.**

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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LAKE REGION RIPPLES COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Lake Region Electric Association, Inc., PO Box 341, 1212 N Main St., Webster, SD 57274. Lake Region Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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## CO-OP NEWS



# Forum held ahead of 2024 Legislative Session

#### Laura London

Lake Region Electric

Lake Region Electric Association joined with Northern Electric, FEM, and Cam-Wal to host the 2023 Northeast Rural Utilities Legislative Issues Forum in November. The event is held annually so that state legislators who represent our respective service areas in northeastern South Dakota can gain a better understanding of issues affecting the power industry and for legislators to share their perspective on legislation they are concerned with. Scott Moore from FEM was MC for the evening.

Staff and directors from the four cooperatives, as well as East River Electric and SDREA, shared information on several topics involving the power industry that will affect our cooperative members.

Chris Studer, East River's Chief Member & Public Relations Officer, presented facts on power supply, reliability, power generation, and challenges we are facing.

Upcoming legislation related to pipelines, eminent domain, and the definition of common carrier was discussed.

Additional legislation related to railroad, right-of-ways, metering and zoning restrictions may arise this session.

National topics of discussion were the EPA Power Plant Rule, supply chain issues and EV charging.

The forum informed members and generated valuable discussion. State lawmakers in attendance were Rep. Scott Moore, R-Ipswich, Rep. Brandei Schaeffbauer, R-Aberdeen and Rep. James Wangness, R-Miller.

Several legislators reached out to the state's rural electric cooperatives in leui of attending the forum. Others made no attempt to respond to the forum invitations whatsoever.

Lake Region feels it is important to continually educate ourselves and others. We invite discussion on upcoming legislation with our representatives who were unable to attend the forum to help broaden understanding of the impact of legislation on our electric cooperative and our members.

#### District 01 Legislative Contact Information:

##### Rep. Tamara St. John

Address: 702 Old Agency Dr. #142,  
Sisseton, SD 57262  
Home: 605-268-0920  
Email: Tamara.StJohn@sdlegislature.gov

##### Rep. Joe Donnell

Address: PO Box 145, Sisseton, SD  
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Email: Joe.Donnell@sdlegislature.gov

##### Sen. Michael H. Rohl

Address: 38635 129th St., Aberdeen,  
SD 57401  
Phone: 605-773-3821  
Email: Michael.Rohl@sdlegislature.gov

# January is National Radon Action Month

### Radon is a Natural Danger

About one in 15 homes in the U.S. has radon levels at or above the the EPA action level, according to the National Cancer Institute. You can't see or smell radon, and scientists estimate 20,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. each year are attributed to it.

Radon is produced from a natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It enters homes, offices, schools and other buildings through cracks in floors and walls, construction joints or gaps around service pipes, electrical wires and sump pits. The Environmental Protection Agency reports elevated levels of radon gas have been measured in every state and estimates nearly one out of every 15 homes in America has elevated radon levels.

People who breathe in these radioactive particles, swallow water with high radon levels or are exposed to radon for a long period of time are susceptible to lung damage and lung cancer. Smokers who are exposed to elevated levels of radon gas have a 10 times higher risk of developing lung cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control.

It may take years before health problems appear. Your chances of getting lung cancer from radon depend mostly on:

- How much radon is in your home
- Where you spend most of your time (the main living and sleeping areas)
- The amount of time you spend in your home
- Whether you are a smoker or have ever smoked

### Test Your Home

Old homes, new homes, homes with basements and homes without basements can have radon problems. Testing is the only way to determine how much radon is present.

Consider hiring a professional tester. Short-term (2-90 day) and long-term (more than 90-day) test kits are available, with the long-term kit producing more accurate results. The EPA website can help you find a radon test kit or measurement and mitigation professional near you. Do-it-yourself test kits also are available at many local hardware stores.

No level of radon exposure is considered completely safe, however the EPA only recommends reducing radon levels in your home if your long-term exposure averages four picocuries

per liter (pCi/L) or higher. A pCi is a measure of the rate of radioactive decay of radon gas. This decay causes radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe.

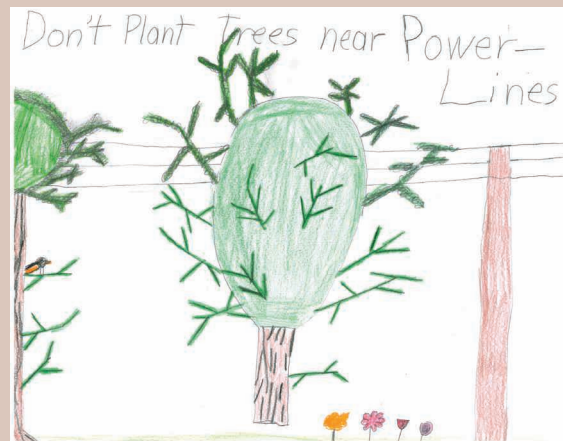
### Reduce Radon Gas in Your Home

The American Cancer Society says a variety of methods can be used to reduce radon gas levels in your home, including sealing cracks in floors and walls and increasing ventilation through sub-slab depressurization using pipes and fans.

The EPA recommends using a state or nationally certified contractor, because lowering high radon levels often requires technical expertise and special skills. Two agencies have set the standard for participants seeking certification:

- The American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists
- National Radon Safety Board

Always test again after the work is finished and then every two years. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated January as National Radon Action Month, a time when health agencies across the country urge all Americans to have their homes tested for radon.



### Don't Plant Trees Near Power Lines

#### Annette Tschetter, Age 9

Annette Tschetter instructs readers to not plant trees near power lines. Annette is the daughter of Ryan and Elaine Tschetter from Revillo, S.D., members of Whetstone Valley Electric.

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



# SOUPS & STEWS

## PUMPKIN APPLE SOUP

### Ingredients:

3 tbsps. butter  
1 cup finely chopped onion  
2 tps. pumpkin pie spice  
1 tsp. ground ginger  
1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin  
1 cup chunky applesauce  
3 1/2 cups chicken broth  
3/4 cup heavy cream

### Method

Melt butter in large saucepan on medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir 5 minutes or until softened. Stir in pumpkin pie spice and ginger.

Stir in pumpkin, applesauce and broth until well blended and smooth. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat. (If a smoother soup is desired, place mixture in batches in blender container; cover and blend until smooth.) Stir in cream. Heat gently before serving, if necessary.

**McCormick.com**

## CREAMY CHICKEN NOODLE STEW

### Ingredients:

1/3 cup butter, cubed  
1 med. carrot, shredded  
1 celery rib, finely chopped  
1/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 carton (32 oz) chicken broth  
1 cup whole milk  
1 cup uncooked kluski noodles or other egg noodles  
2 cups cubed cooked chicken  
1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. pepper

### Method

In a large saucepan, heat butter over medium high heat; saute carrot and celery until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in flour until blended; gradually add the broth and milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes. Stir in the noodles. Reduce heat; simmer uncovered, until noodles are al dente, 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken, salt and pepper. Cook and stir until the chicken is heated through. Stir in the cheese until melted. Serve.

**Susan Mitzner  
Balaton, Minn.**

## CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP WITH ROTISSERIE CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

1 tbsps. vegetable oil  
1 1/2 cups chopped carrots, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 1/2 cups chopped celery, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 cup chopped white onion, (about 1/2-inch)  
1 tbsps. rotisserie chicken seasoning  
4 cups chicken stock  
4 cups medium egg noodles  
2 cups chopped rotisserie chicken  
1 tbsps. parsley flakes

### Method

Heat vegetable oil in large saucepan on medium-high heat. Add carrots, celery and onion; cook and stir 8 to 10 minutes until softened and lightly browned. Stir in Seasoning. Cook 1 minute.

Add stock and egg noodles. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 8 to 10 minutes until noodles are just tender.

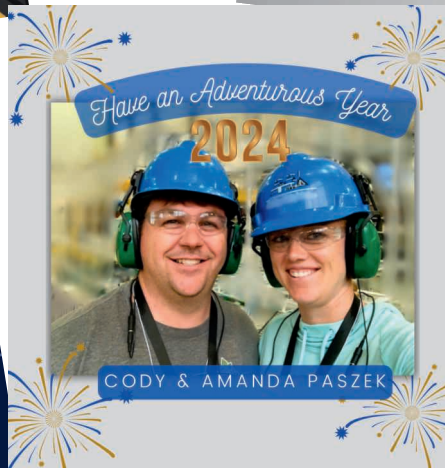
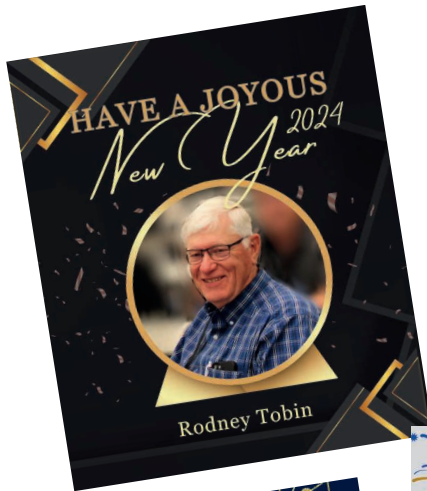
Gently stir in chicken and salt. Simmer 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat. Stir in parsley to serve.

**McCormick.com**

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# Happy New Year from Your Board of Directors!





# Lake Region Electric reflects on 2023

## Operations Department converts 27 miles of line to underground

**Jim Grimes**

Manager of Operations

The Lake Region Electric Operations Department spent much of 2023 working on overhead to underground line conversion projects. As underground lines are completed, crews are tasked with removing old overhead lines and poles—a time consuming process that takes a lot of planning. The payoff is an improved electrical grid that is more reliable, especially during extreme weather events.

Over the last year, Lake Region Electric converted a total of 27 miles of line to underground. Of that total, 17 miles of line were converted to underground in the Lynn Lake area and in areas east of Holmquist Slough. West of Andover, we added some new 3-phase lines to accommodate load growth in that area.

We continued to work with East River Electric on the updates to their system to improve reliability. Improvements were made to the Webster and Veblen substations. We had a couple short, planned outages over the summer to accommodate these upgrades.

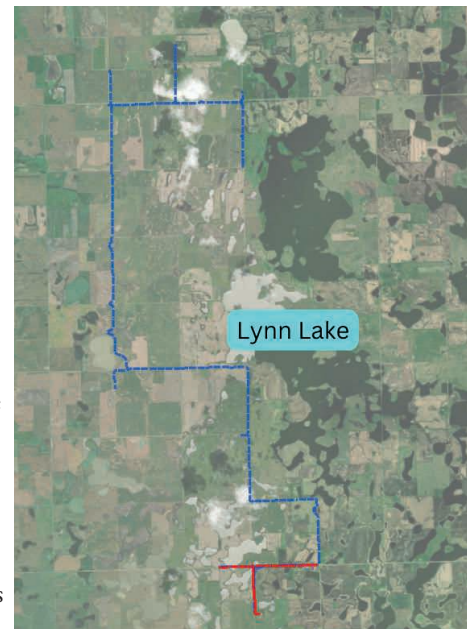
We have several construction projects planned for 2024, dependent on funding, time and supply availability.

One area of concentration will be northwest of Pickerel

Lake; we are awaiting approval of funding for part of this project.

The area near the Britton Golf Course is in need of new lines to accommodate new housing. We have submitted plans to replace overhead lines with new underground in the area west of the Hillhead substation that experiences heavy icing. Additionally, we would like to continue installing underground in the Butler area.

We look forward to serving you in 2024. Happy New Year!



Crews completed a conversion project west of Lynn Lake, which took 17 miles of overhead line underground.





Jewel Cave's walls glisten with a coating of calcite crystals coating that give this cave its unique name. *Image credit: NPS*

## BENEATH THE BLACK HILLS

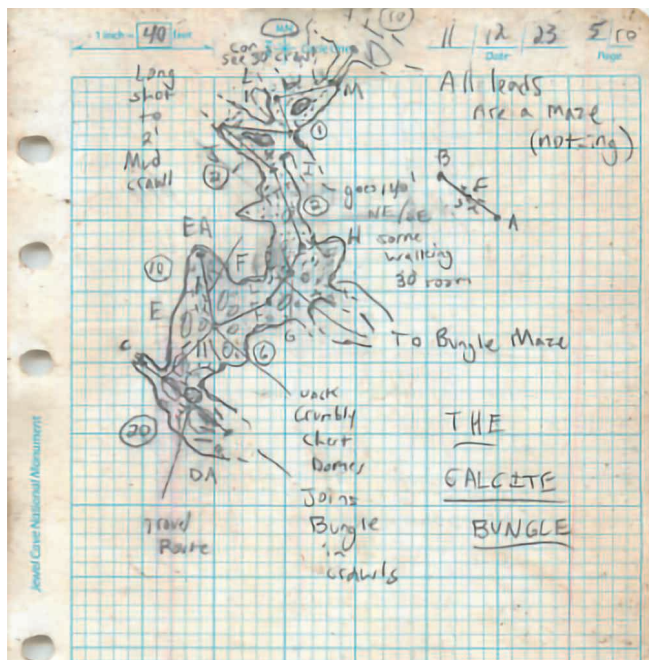
### Charting Untrodden Miles in Jewel Cave

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

In the depths of the Black Hills lies an immense domain of underground caves renowned for their untouched beauty, enticing tourists with the opportunity for stunning photography and expert-led tours. Digging a little deeper, however, reveals that many of these unsuspecting attractions are actually home to a vast network of rooms and passages where no human has ever set foot before. Jewel Cave National Monument, located west of Custer and celebrated for its unique, crystal calcite coating, is one such subterranean cavern that continues to be a frontier of exploration.

Jewel Cave has thousands of miles of unexplored passages, crawlways and chasms that await discovery, making it one of the largest cave systems in the world. The immensity of Jewel Cave and others like it in the Black Hills has inspired multiple



A field sketch from the four-day Veterans Day weekend expedition. *Image credit: NPS*

generations of ambitious cave explorers who have devoted years of their lives to mapping out new areas of these underground expanses.

Despite their efforts, only a small fraction of Jewel Cave has



been navigated and mapped, leading to new cave discoveries being recorded even now.

Recently, a group of National Park Service volunteer cave explorers, led by volunteer Chris Pelczarski, expanded the known limits of Jewel Cave in an expedition over Veterans Day weekend of this year.

In total, their journey lasted four days. Bringing only what they could carry, the small group of cavers wriggled through miles of passages without natural sunlight or ready supplies to ultimately be the first to step into what was previously untrodden terrain.

To achieve their goal, the volunteers tackled the 3-D maze that defines the Jewel Cave network, hiking and climbing steep underground terrain. Despite the challenge, Pelczarski said the ending discovery made the whole journey worthwhile. When discovering something new, the challenge pales in comparison.

“The experience of pushing the edge of something is very unique,” said Pelczarski. “When entering a new space, it weighs on you that it’s the first time that a human has ever interacted with that space. As explorers, we have an incredible amount of responsibility because we are the ones who share that story with others and set the tone of that space.”

In total, the explorers discovered and charted just over one mile of new passages during their Veterans Day expedition, uncovering new passages and even a distinctive split in the rock their group named ‘Fruit by the Foot,’ due to the volunteer group garnering a “fruitful yield” of discovery from the rock formation.

The broader work of these cavers has led to several breakthroughs over the years, including the discovery of Jewel Cave’s first cave lake, Hourglass Lake.

“In 2015, our explorers got to a point where the lowest part of the cave dipped into the Madison Aquifer. It was Jewel Cave’s first cave lake,” said Michael Wiles, Chief of Resource Management at Jewel Cave National Monument. “Since that initial discovery, 12 more lakes have been

found within Jewel Cave.”

With the possibility of discovery around every corner, Wiles regards volunteer explorers like Pelczarski as torchbearers in a continuing legacy created by the many cave explorers that came before them, including South Dakota caving legends Herb and Jan Conn and Wiles himself.

“Herb and Jan are icons in the Black Hills area and throughout the world because they were the first to document and map the cave back in 1959,” said Wiles. “They fell in love with the cave and it really captured their imagination.”

Together, Herb and Jan discovered the first 70 miles of Jewel Cave. Building from Herb and Jan’s initial discoveries, Wiles, with the help of volunteers like Pelczarski,

has been involved in the mapping of an additional 150 miles of cave since the Conns retired.

To date, 218.8 miles of Jewel Cave have been discovered. However, Wiles explained that barometric airflow studies indicate that the cave could be up to 14,000 miles long, and only 3% of the cave’s estimated total length has been mapped and discovered.

“Jewel Cave, for practical purposes, isn’t going to end,” said Wiles. “We know that the cave is hundreds if not thousands of miles long and that, alone, is exciting.”

With only a fraction of the total cave discovered, it’s evident that several years of cave discoveries lie ahead.



Volunteer cave explorer Dan Austin sketching a passage of Jewel Cave. Using coordinates to draw a survey line in the book, Austin draws the cave walls around the line to represent the cave walls around him, adding additional notes as needed. *Image credit: NPS*



Office staff help register members during the 2023 Annual Meeting.

## Office staff keep member services modernized

**Donna Sattler**

Director of Finance/Office Services Manager

Unlike some of the other departments at Lake Region Electric, it isn't easy to explain what we have done over the past year and what our plans are for 2024 because we do a little bit of everything, focusing on the overall success of your electric cooperative.

Often times, an office employee is your first point of contact when you stop in or call Lake Region Electric. Our staff takes pride in providing our member-owners with the best service possible.

The department stays busy processing utility billing and payments, managing member accounts, paying the cooperative's bills, managing investments, capitalizing the cooperative's plant assets, and maintaining and balancing the cooperative's financials.

To help members with their busy lives, Lake Region offers a variety of options to remit payment on their electric and service department bills. You can mail a check or money order, pay on-line or over the phone using the automated system or talk with office staff.

If you are in town, stop by the office and say hello as you drop off your payment, or use the drop box outside. Office staff is never too busy to talk with members and we do our best to help explain billing and usage questions but sometimes those concerns come up after hours.

One way that many members can monitor their usage, billing, and account information is by enrolling in SmartHub. We recently transitioned to a new look for SmartHub, designed to make the site easier for members to navigate.

Communications is another area that the office department focuses on. We know that keeping our members

informed is key to good service; we use multiple avenues of communication to share information with our members and communities we serve. Cooperative Connections is our member newsletter that is published in conjunction with SDREA, circulated to over 2,500 members. We invite everyone to follow our Face Book page and website as we use those avenues to share a variety of information related to the cooperative and our communities.

Lake Region utilizes a software program to keep members informed of planned outages, ongoing outage updates, past due balances, the annual meeting and much more. We can only alert members using the information we have in the system, so it's imperative that you keep us informed of your up-to-date contact information!

Office staff performs a multitude of tasks during an outage event that most people don't even think about. It's easy to remember the linemen and electricians are the ones out in the elements restoring the power, but the crew back in the office are actively working to make sure everything and everyone is taken care of.

Some tasks that people don't often consider are answering phones, monitoring radio traffic, mapping outages, communicating with members via phone calls, and social media.

We also work on making sure the crews are getting meals and other necessities to keep them going so that they can get your power restored. The office staff works to secure mutual aid from other cooperatives.

After a severe weather event, we are responsible for applying for funds to help with the cost of damages in order to help keep the costs down for our members.

We are grateful for our members, and it is our pleasure to serve you.

Happy New Year!



## Service Department continues to prioritize and plan amidst supply shortages

**Brett Kwasniewski**

Member Services

The service department has been working hard! We have had so many wiring jobs coming in that we are still scheduling months out. In addition to consumer wiring for homes, businesses, shops and various farm jobs, the service department has to sometimes interrupt or change schedules to accommodate unscheduled repairs.

Our top priority is to help members who have outages. We simply cannot let members go without power, so outages must always be taken care of as soon as possible.

When farmers get busy with grain handling in the fall, we're busy with calls to make repairs dryers and grain bins. In order to do our part to keep harvest going, we'll divert the crew from working on scheduled wiring to assist with a grain dryer.

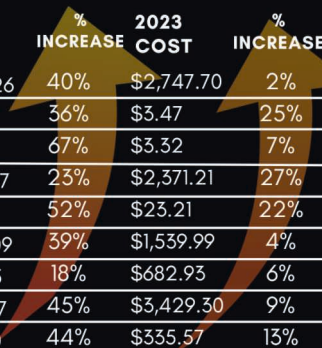
We'll try to remind members to ensure livestock waterers are in good working order before winter hits, but things happen.

When tanks freeze over, we need to get heating elements re-energized so livestock has access to water.

Every week, we get multiple calls from our members for yard light repairs or replacements. Keeping a yard light on is important for many reasons, including safety. That said, we're not always able to respond to these calls immediately. But we do open orders for each case. If the guys can fit a yard light repair or replacement in while they are in the area, they will.

Over the past year and going forward the only yard light Lake Region will install for replacement is an LED light. The Service Department is installing 59w LED lights only. This is a very robust light that currently comes with a 10-year warranty. We can no

### Costs For Materials Continue to Rise



ITEM	2021 COST	2022 COST	% INCREASE	2023 COST	% INCREASE
Meter Socket - 200 AMP Double	\$1,924.46	\$2,691.26	40%	\$2,747.70	2%
Cable - 1/0 URD Full	\$2.03	\$2.77	36%	\$3.47	25%
Wire - URD Triplex 4/0	\$1.86	\$3.09	67%	\$3.32	7%
Basement - 3/0 Transformer	\$1,512.50	\$1,863.67	23%	\$2,371.21	27%
Ground Rods -Copper	\$12.53	\$19.05	52%	\$23.21	22%
Meter Socket - 200 Amp Single	\$1,059.00	\$1,476.09	39%	\$1,539.99	4%
Meter Socket - 200 W/B	\$549.09	\$645.95	18%	\$682.93	6%
Meter Socket - 400 Amp Socket PAD	\$2,164.08	\$3,152.17	45%	\$3,429.30	9%
Basement - Fused Cabinet	\$205.87	\$297.30	44%	\$335.57	13%

longer get mercury vapor lights and the high-pressure sodium lights need repair or replacement within three to five years, and have a limited, one-year warranty. The switch to using only LED lights makes the most sense for our members.

Going into 2024, things do not appear to be slowing down for the Service Department. Lead times for larger projects are still a challenge, mainly due to supply shortages.

We are starting to get inventory built up for planned jobs, but the shortage isn't expected to improve for certain items. If you are planning a project, contact as soon as you begin to formulate your plan. That way, we can plan with you and have the parts or equipment needed to wire your project.

Your service department is staffed with a fantastic group of guys who are looking forward to helping you with your projects. We would like to thank the members that have used the service department for their electrical needs throughout the years!

## IT Department stays vigilant on cyber security front

**Tim Gaikowski**

Technology Department

The Technology Department has been focused on information security and cyber security this past year. This is an on-going process, and we need to stay diligent and aware of existing and new security threats that are constantly out there trying to get information.

We have reviewed our firewall and security measures and made appropriate changes and upgrades to secure LREA network, data and devices.

There has been a lot of focus on staking and mapping with line upgrades and new services. Staking and mapping provide an accurate GIS Engineering model to better our inventory and aid in design and planning of future line upgrades.

Nathan Baumgarn handles our staking, mapping and Easement processes and has advanced LREA greatly in these areas to better

our inventory and Engineering model.

There have been many calls for locates that the technology department handles. A lot of drain tile, fiber and power work has been done.

Lukas Pearson joined the IT Department in September. He has previous experience with locating and has been training in various aspects of the job including metering, troubleshooting and reports/usage monitoring.

We continuously monitor our metering and are researching new technologies to better utilize data to improve outage times and reliability. We also monitor metering usage, voltage and demand to better serve our members.

We plan on continuing to monitor and mitigate cyber threats in the upcoming year, provide internal support for employees, and perform metering and locating services to our members.





The Sanford Underground Research Facility partners with more than 2,000 scientists from more than 200 global institutions and universities, enabling groundbreaking research across multiple disciplines.

# STRIKING GOLD IN SCIENCE

## Unearthing Research at the Sanford Underground Research Facility

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Years ago, the Homestake Mine in Lead, South Dakota, lured prospectors with the promise of riches during the gold rush era. Yet today, the site where miners once delved for gold now hosts scientists pursuing their own discoveries, not for gold, but for discoveries in particle physics and dark matter at the Sanford Underground Research Facility.

The mine's transformation into a

state-of-the-art research facility really began in 1970 when Raymond Davis Jr. began what is now known today as the Homestake experiment, a research project that would forever change the entire landscape of western South Dakota. Seeing beyond the precious metal, Davis envisioned the Homestake Mine as the perfect location to conduct research on the illusive neutrino particle. Conducting neutrino research underground was a crucial component of the project because the deep

environment of the mine shielded his experiments from cosmic rays, allowing for more accurate detection of neutrinos. While the Homestake Mine was still in operation, Davis worked among the bustle of mining activities to conduct research, which led to groundbreaking discovery in neutrino research and ultimately to a Nobel Prize in 2002.

As Davis concluded his groundbreaking neutrino research, a chapter was closing for the Homestake Mine. According to the facility's website, Homestake was North America's largest and deepest gold mine at the time of its closing, producing approximately 41 million ounces of gold in its 126-year lifetime. When the mine was decommissioned in 2002, it threatened to not only leave a vast cavern in the earth but also a significant void in the local economy. Davis's success, however, prompted South Dakota's leadership to step in at a critical moment and



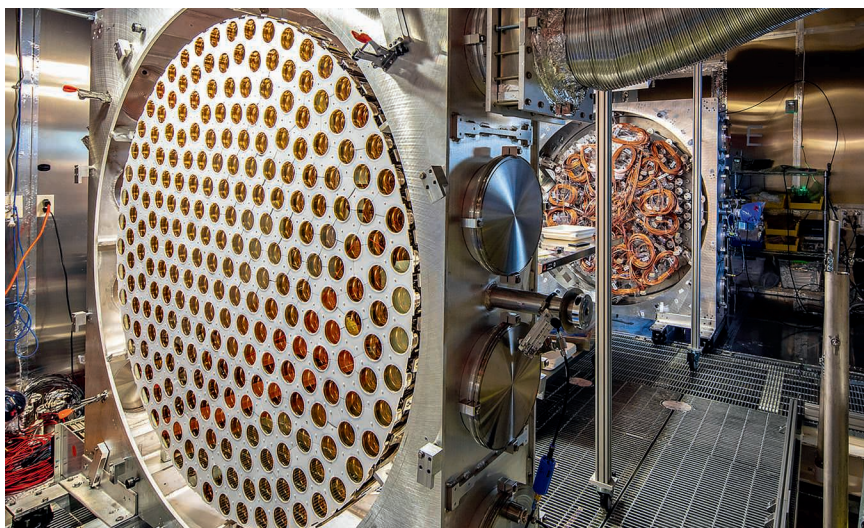
repurpose the mine into a bastion of scientific research.

Mike Ray, Media Relations Manager at Sanford Underground Research Facility, reflected on the state's response to the mine's closure. "Those in leadership at the time saw that this mine was closing and the terrible economic impact that the closure was going to have on the northern hills and this community, but they saw a light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

The light at the end of the tunnel became the Sanford Underground Research Facility. To advance one of South Dakota's most ambitious projects, the state secured a \$70 million donation from philanthropist T. Denny Sanford and a land donation from Barrick Gold Corporation, the mine's owner. The state then established the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority, which contributed an additional \$40 million to realize the project. These donations paved the way forward to begin construction on a space for some of the most advanced science projects ever made.

The herculean effort, Ray explained, was not only to mitigate the negative economic impact of the mine's closure but to create something even more impactful for South Dakota and its residents. Today, the Sanford Underground Research Facility collaborators include over 2,000 scientists from over 200 institutions and universities worldwide. It is expected to garner an estimated \$2 billion net economic impact in South Dakota by 2029.

Beyond its economic contributions, the lab holds potential for groundbreaking discoveries across various disciplines, including projects researching biology, geology, engineering or particle physics. Notably, the lab is currently home to LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector and DUNE, the Deep



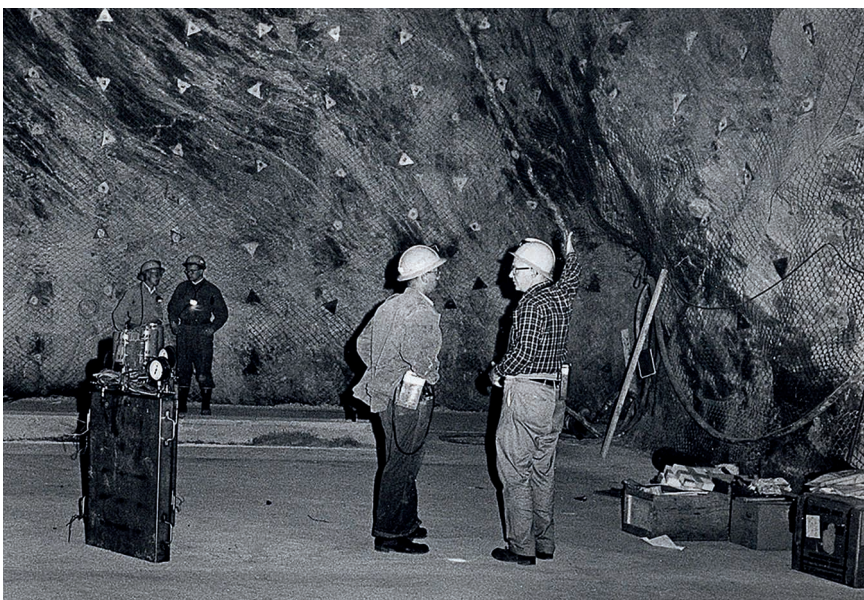
An array of the LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector.  
Photo Credit: Matthew Kapust, Sanford Underground Research Facility.

Underground Neutrino Experiment, among several other significant projects. While LUX-ZEPLIN and DUNE are distinct projects, both seek to provide fundamental insights into our current understanding of the laws of physics.

"There are so many examples of how fundamental research can take decades to lead to innovation," Ray said. "The beauty of this is that we don't always know where this research will

take us, but if we don't do this kind of exploration, we will never know the applications of these far-reaching projects."

Regardless of the outcome, the Sanford Underground Research Facility will continue to not only preserve the historic legacy of South Dakota's Homestake Mine, but also place South Dakota at the forefront of discovery and innovation for years to come.



A historic view of the Davis Cavern that hosted Ray Davis's Nobel Prize-winning solar neutrino experiment. The cavern has since been expanded and its walls have been coated with shotcrete, a type of spray-on concrete, to accommodate research on dark matter.  
Photo Credit: Anna Davis, Sanford Underground Research Facility.





Shown in front of the True Dakotan building on Main Street in Wessington Springs are newspaper/print shop staff (left to right) Delia Atkinson, Office Manger; Kristi Hine, Editor/Publisher; Cathy Perry, Proofreader; shop dog Lincoln. Among the oldest buildings in Jerauld County, the building has always been a newspaper and/or print shop. Constructed in 1915, the True Dakotan recently underwent a complete renovation after a fire in June 2020.

# SMALL TOWN NEWSPAPERS

## Connecting Communities

**Shannon Marvel**

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Rural, small-town newspapers are an important cohesive element that keep communities together.

Many of South Dakota's community newspapers have faced economic difficulties, yet their dedication to their mission is what drives them to find innovative ways to persist.

According to South Dakota NewsMedia Association's Executive Director David Bordewyk, a combination of factors have made it difficult for small, community newspapers to thrive

as they once did in decades past.

"There's a lot of advertising that used to be in traditional media that has moved into a digital realm such as Google, Facebook and other platforms. That's been a huge disruption. Then there's the whole thing about the internet and how people consume information," Bordewyk said.

The pandemic had a major impact on the newspaper business and accelerated online advertising.

Inflation has also increased production and postal service costs considerably, which has made it tough for small, rural newspapers to balance their books and maintain profits.

"Almost all of our community newspapers rely on a postal service to deliver the newspaper to subscribers. And we've seen a 40 percent rise in postal rates over the last three years," Bordewyk said.

How do newspapers deal with that?

Some newspapers have done a good job of capturing that digital market, Bordewyk said. Others have really gotten aggressive at increasing their prices, with some having to increase subscription rates from \$40 to \$80 per year.

Regardless, there's value in a community newspaper.

Who else is going to consistently cover city council and county commission meetings, or local school activities and sports? Kristi Hine knows that value well.

Hine is the publisher and editor of the True Dakotan, a weekly newspaper that covers local happenings in Jerauld County, based in Wessington Springs.

"Newspapers play such an important role to keep communities together," Hine said.

"We cover everything from local government to high school sports to features. I just did a feature about these women who did a Christmas village exhibit at the county courthouse. It's peeling back the layers and truly telling the community's story. Without the local newspaper, there's no one to tell that story. Larger outlets may come cover a story if you have a tornado or your sports team is doing really well, but it's the community newspaper that'll be listening in on what the city council is going to say at their meeting," Hine said.

Community newspapers, in that sense, really are the eyes and ears for the community. The important goal of the community newspaper is to connect the community, Hine said. "Especially in this world when it's so easy to be on different sides of the spectrum. Community newspapers are the fabric that holds communities together, no matter what side of the aisle their readers land on," she said. "Especially in this world when it's so easy to be on different sides of the spectrum. Community newspapers are the fabric that keeps communities together, no matter what aisle their readers land on," she said.

Hine bought the True Dakotan eight years ago in March of 2015. Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, the newspaperwoman



has found herself enthralled with the small Jerauld County community.

Over the last eight years, Hine said she's seen more changes in the newspaper industry than her predecessor saw in the last 40 years.

"There's been a great deal of change," Hine said.

She's gotten more creative with advertising, using social media as a tool to promote local businesses. If a business is hosting an event or wants to promote a special sale, the business will do a Facebook live with Hine.

The True Dakotan also offers an online E-Edition and weekly newsletter, though the original print product is still the largest circulation.

Advertising and marketing aside, it all comes down to local news content.

"That's the driving force as we enter this evolution of newspapers. We're at the crux," Hine said.

To the northeast in Day County, the Reporter and Farmer newspaper is being led by Amanda (Fanger) Dulitz, a young reporter-turned-publisher, who recently purchased operation last year.

"Community newspapers are the lifeblood of a community. The strength of a community is reflected in the strength of their community newspaper. We're the bulletin board of the community. We're the cheerleaders of the community. We keep people connected," Dulitz said.

Dulitz found her passion for rural newspapers in South Dakota as soon as she picked up the reporter pad in 2007 after graduating from high school.

She worked at the Onida Watchman for a short time before heading east to Webster, where she took on the role as a news reporter for the Reporter and Farmer. Fast forward a couple decades and now Dulitz is the owner of the Reporter and Farmer.

She noted that costs were pretty stable at the newspaper for awhile, but seemed to sharply increase as soon as she signed the dotted line giving her ownership of the

operation.

"I'll probably have to take a look at my rates and lock in my rates for the next year. Everything is just going up, and it impacts the bottom line overall and you've got to do what you've got to do," she lamented.

But without the support of subscribers and advertisers, and really the entire community as a whole, the newspaper couldn't fulfill its purpose of keeping everyone on the same page and in the know.

The relationship between a community newspaper and the community itself is something Dulitz compares to a team of horses.

"The newspaper keeps everybody in an area knowing what's going on and pulling in the same direction. One horse can only pull so much, but if you put them together they can pull double.

That community unity – the newspaper – is what yokes people together and gets people pulling together," Dulitz said.

She understands that without the community support, there'd be no newspaper.

"We've got some of those readers when the paper gets back from the press on



Kristi Hine, editor/publisher, True Dakotan and Delia Atkinson, office manager

Friday – they're standing there waiting for the paper to be dropped off. They're the first ones in the door letting us know about some breaking news event that we haven't heard about yet," she said.

"Constantly, readers and advertisers let us know what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong. We need that. We need that mutual push and pull. We recognize that our readers and advertisers are key to our business and we appreciate it."



From left is Publisher Amanda (Fanger) Dulitz, circulation manager Pat Sass, graphic designer Megan Garry, writer Kevin Winter, sales representative Kirstin Ure (front), print tech Jessica Washenberger and proofreader Linda Holberg.



**Jan. 26-27**  
**Pro Snocross Races**  
 18 Seventy Six Dr.  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

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.

**JAN. 5**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 6**  
**Live on Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 10**  
**45th Annual Ranchers Workshop**  
 9 a.m.  
 Sinte Gleska University Multi-Purpose Center  
 Mission, SD

**JAN. 12**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 13**  
**Knights of Columbus Bowling Tournament**  
 1 p.m.  
 Meadowood Lanes  
 Rapid City, SD

**JAN. 20**  
**Live on Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 23**  
**A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 25**  
**A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)**  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 26**  
**Granite Sports Fantastic Friday**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hill City, SD

**JAN. 26-27**  
**Reliance Area Community Development 29th Annual Dinner Theater**  
 6 p.m.  
 Reliance Legion Hall  
 Reliance, SD

**FEB. 3**  
**Live On Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 3**  
**Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby**  
 11a.m.  
 City Boat Landing  
 Hendricks, MN

**FEB. 10**  
**Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off**  
 11a.m.  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 10**  
**Tour de Chocolate**  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 17**  
**Live On Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 18-20**  
**MASC presents Disaster! the Musical**  
 Vesta Community Center  
 Vesta, MN

**FEB. 20**  
**A Trip to Portugal**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 22**  
**A Trip to Portugal**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Mangiamo  
 Hill City, SD

**FEB. 23-24**  
**Women in Blue Jeans Conference**  
 Highland Conference Center  
 Mitchell, SD

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