

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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The Passing of the Torch



This will be the last manager column that I will write to the Lake Region Electric membership; I will be retiring in September. As I look back at my career of 37 years in the electric cooperative industry, I think of the many people that have been a great part of my success. I have worked for and with many people throughout my career, some of the best. I want to

thank you all for the relationships that we have built. There is not enough paper to write down all of the names of those

who have made an impact, not only on my career, but my personal life as well. Recently, I was at an event with other cooperative managers when I was given a microphone and asked to say a few words. I jokingly said, "I will miss you all, but not for long." The truth is, I will miss you all. I have had a wonderful career and I thank you all for being a part of that.

As I prepare to pass the torch, I feel extremely good about the direction that Lake Region is heading. Lake Region has a solid membership, board of directors and employee base. Lake Region is financially strong, and we have all worked together, spending considerable time planning for the future. I know I can count on the wonderful folks at Lake Region to welcome their new General Manager with open arms.

It is time for me to go spend a little more time being grandpa and try to relax when Kendra lets me.

Thank you and God Bless,

Timothy McIntyre
General Manager and CEO



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

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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.

Subscription information: As part of their membership, Lake Region Electric members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. (USPS 018-904) Periodicals Postage Paid at Webster, SD 57274 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Lake Region Ripples Cooperative Connections, PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274. Telephone 605-345-3379; Toll Free 1-800-657-5869; Fax 605-345-4442 E-mail: lakeregion@lakeregion.coop

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Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Now is the time to schedule annual maintenance for your home's heating system. During fall months, HVAC technicians are typically less busy, making this an excellent time for maintenance and any necessary repairs before the winter months.

A qualified technician can clean filters, check for leaks and ensure all system components are working efficiently to keep you home cozy and warm when the temperatures begin to drop..

HAPPY LABOR DAY

WE WILL BE CLOSED
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER, 2

A day to honor the working men and women who have made our lives easier.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Shelly Roth & Jodi Zubke
Joann & Charles Heck
Amy Kessler
Reed & Kristina Kessler
John Wheeting
Demi Dumarce
Danny & Kaela Zenk

WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

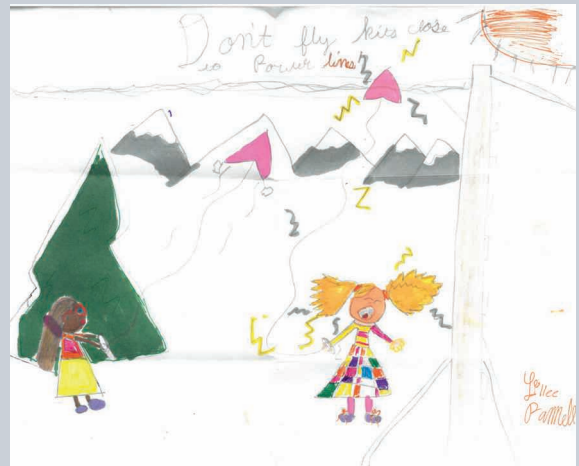
Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecasted.
- **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.

- **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

Source: National Weather Service



Power Line Safety “Don’t Fly Kites Close to Power Lines”

Lillee Pannell, Age 11

Lillee Pannell cautions kite flyers to be careful around power lines. Great advice, Lillee! Hobie’s parents are Scottie and Kimberly Pannell, members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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

Summertime SWEETS

SUMMER FRUIT TART

Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust
1 egg white, lightly beaten
1/3 cup sugar
2 tbsps. cornstarch
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ginger
2 cups sliced peeled peaches,
(about 3 peaches)
1 cup blueberries
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

Method

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Prepare crust as directed on package. Place on foil-lined 12-inch pizza pan. If necessary, press out any folds or creases. Brush crust with about 1/2 of the beaten egg white. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and ginger in medium bowl. Add fruit and vanilla; toss gently. Spoon into center of crust, spreading to within 2 inches of edges. Fold 2-inch edge of crust up over fruit, pleating or folding crust as needed. Brush crust with remaining egg white. Bake 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

McCormick

RHUBARB PIE

Crust

1-2 cups flour
1/2 stick butter or margarine
1/4 cup water

Add ingredients and knead to complete a pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine
1 cup sugar
3 eggs, separated
2 tbsps. flour
1/8 tsp. salt
2 1/2 cups rhubarb
Smucker's Caramel Sundae
Syrup

Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 degrees until golden brown. You may also add more Caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

**Lisa Soukup (Kummer)
Tea, S.D.**

PEACH DELIGHT

Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, melted
1 3/4 cups flour
Pinch of salt
2 tbsps. sugar
2 cups water
2 cups sugar
4 tbsps. cornstarch
3 oz. package peach jello
1 tbsp. butter
10 fresh peaches

Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine butter, flour, salt and 2 tbsps. sugar. Mix and pat in 9x13 inch pan which has been sprayed with Pam. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool when done baking. Combine 2 cups sugar and 2 cups water. Whisk in 4 tbsps. cornstarch until smooth. Cook until thickened in the microwave – stirring often. Remove from microwave and add 1 tbsp. butter and package of peach jello (do not add any water). Stir until dissolved and let cool. While cooling, dip fresh peaches in hot water and plunge in cold water bath. Remove skins and pits. Place back in cold water until all peaches are peeled. Drain peaches, slice into bite size pieces and mix into cooled peach glaze. Carefully pour the glaze over the crust and chill until firmly set. May be served with whip cream. You can substitute strawberry jello and sliced strawberries in place of the peaches. This makes a delicious cool summer dessert.

**Shirley Fletcher
Rapid City, S.D.**

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Unclaimed Capital Credits

Help Us Get Our Member's Money to Them

A number of payments for members with inactive accounts have been returned to Lake Region as undeliverable by the post

office. We are asking for your help getting unclaimed payments to previous account holders.

If you know the current address or phone number of anyone listed here, please notify them to contact us: Lake Region Electric Association by calling 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869 or by sending an email to lakeregion@lakeregion.coop.

Thank you for your help!

Ackerman Paul
or Barbara Ackerman
Alberts Tim
or Jodie Alberts
Azure Jr Val
or Angel Azure
Azure Venique
Barse Cheyenne
or Mary Barse
Becker Doug
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Buffalo Mitch
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Davis Karen
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Eagle-Anderson Nadine
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Ewalt Charles
Etl George
Falk Pat
Farmer Gabrielle

Feather Dawn
Fluke Joyce
Frazier Grace
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Friebel Greg
or Mary Friebel
Gill Joanna
Goff Ronnie
Gordon Scott
Haber Chad
Hansen Andrew
Hanson Joel
Halbert Likness Lis
Halsam Jr. James E
or Julie Huso
Harty Kenneth
Haug Joshua
Hillberg Jerry
Hawkins Beverly
Heezen Jon
Hegge Lavern
Heitman Mary
Hill Ruth
Hoag Barry
Hoeger Jerard
HolyBull Amanda
Horst Virgil
Hubble Andrew
Huffman Tom
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Johnson Alex
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or Myron Jordan
Joyner Mary C
Joyner Herman Tami
Kellen Est David
or Marilyn Kellen
Kessler Kristen
or JD Kessler
Kluck Doug

King Michael
Knock Russell
Kolkman Gene
Lake Ryan
Larsen Lance
Larson James
Lien Richard
Lufkins Amanda
Marian Est Lew
or Tammy Paul
McKay Joyce
McKittrick Roger
McMurtry Sharon
Meester Mark
Micka Ed
Nerison Jamee
Neilan Kaci
Neugebauer Ronald
or Lynn Neugebauer
Nolan Allen
Nyhus Jeanine
Owens Hauser Ellen
Palleson Sarah
Parrow Mike
or Dennis Parrow
Payne Steven
Peck Everett (Fred)
or Caron Peck
Peckham Rick
Peterson Joseph
or Debbie Peterson
Plenty Chief Lynelle
Price Dawn
Privatt Carl
Rabenberg Maurice
Rathbun Est Arlyce
or Mark Rathbun
Redday Darren
Redday Dennis
Redday Jr. Gordon
Redday Tiger Jessica
Redday Tamara
Redwing Norman
Rickert Craig
Robinson Charles

or Carol Robinson
Roman Jeffrey
or Mary F Roman
Rosand Robert
or Linda Stanfill
Rozell Lana
or Linda Roberts
Samson Herbert or Abigail
or Touchmark@ All Saints
Sayers Randall
Sass Est Kenneth
or Chris Sass
Seaboy Sarah
Seaboy Walter
Seas Blake
Shepherd Est Kenneth
or Karen Shepherd
Shepherd Raymond
Shortall Joseph
Sigaty Est M M
or Nancy Sigaty
Soukup Chris
St. John Elmer
Stokke Kendall
Strand Est Duane
Swanson Adelaide
Ter Eick Mary J
Tobin Greg
Tracy Mark
Turner Dawn
Weagel Don
or Monte Bundy
White Felonna
Williams Imogene
Wilson Michael
Winckler Paul
Woldt Sr. James L
Woytcke Jesse
Wycoff Mary K
Hilltop Aerial Inc.
Dakota Grain Enterprises
Dakota Nation Broadcasting
Northern States Fiber Inc
or Stephen Black
Marcy Lucy
Petroleum Partners



Photo credit: Jackie Jensen

LISA LOCKHART

Winning at What She Loves While Enjoying a Beloved American Pastime

Jocelyn Johnson

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It's been her hustle and passion since she was six years old, and it's made her one of the best competitors in the world. South Dakota's Lisa Lockhart is an elite barrel racer from Oelrichs, S.D., and in her own words, "There is no off-season."

Dandy was the little Shetland pony that gave Lockhart her start on her family farm in Montana. She recounted her memories of racing him around her parent's yard and signing up for local rodeo events with him.

"I was definitely a horse-crazy little girl from the get-go," Lockhart said. "My pony was my babysitter in the

front yard."

Even though opportunities were limited in the early '70s when she started rodeo, Lockhart became a success story through dedication, lots of practice and the help of her family. She credits her sisters, Debbie and Angela, for being the pioneers of barrel racing in her own family as well as her husband, Grady, for his ongoing support.

"We enjoy it as a family," Lockhart said. "Grady was a calf roper, and we actually met at a rodeo. We're best friends and have like interests... it takes a village, and I am thankful for the village. It's definitely a team effort. I couldn't do it by myself."

Along with their kids – Alyssa,

Thane and Cade – the Lockharts have enjoyed rodeo and bonded over the experiences, conversations and goals they share.

Lockhart trains and buys her competitive horses but explains that having history and longevity with a horse impacts the level of success she has with them. She noted that having a personal bond with each horse not only impacts their performance but is also something she enjoys.

"They are such unique individuals, just like humans are," Lockhart explained. "Being able to tap into that personal relationship with each horse has an impact on our level of success. I love these equine athletes."

She's pocketed a handful of reserve world championships, three American Rodeo championships and more than \$3.1 million in career earnings; but Lockhart's current goal is to make it to her 18th consecutive National Finals Rodeo.

"I have a passion for the horses and am a competitive person by nature," Lockhart noted. "Your horsepower dictates where you go and how successful you may be. I'm always going to ride horses and I'm always going to train horses – I love it, but the level of competition I can attain depends on my horsepower. Sometimes, you got to go through a lot of horses to try and find the next champion."

Lockhart expounded that success is earned through training and passion. The horse matters, but the dedication of the racer will dictate how far they go.

When asked what her advice would be to young racers, Lockhart stated: "I think there is a lot of opportunity out there for people to learn – with technology. Educate yourself and spend the time practicing it. Knowledge is at your fingertips. Just like everything in life, if you want it, you have to work for it. It's not handed to you."



CRISP BREEZES AND CORN MAZES

A broken-down 1950s-style Chevrolet pickup welcomes visitors to the Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

Celebrating Autumn on the Family Farm

Frank Turner

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The first signs of autumn sweep across the plains as daylight dwindles and treetops wither into amber. For some, the nostalgia of fall is evoked by the first crisp breeze at a football game or the taste of a freshly picked apple from the orchard. But for Clint and Kelly Brandlee, Lake Region Electric members living in rural Pierpont, the magic of the harvest season begins with the opening of their family-owned corn maze.

The Brandlee family homesteaded their land in 1886 on the western edge of the Coteau Hills, an area characterized by rolling hills, fertile ground and native pastures. With deep roots extending through five generations of ranching and farming, Clint and Kelly's daughters, Jaycee

and Kylie, represent the sixth generation on the farm.

Over the years, the family has maintained their commitment to traditional farming values while embracing innovation. In 2020, Clint and Kelly

transformed their operation into a direct-to-consumer agriculture business, launching Back Forty Beef, LLC. Their new venture allowed them to provide locally raised beef at a fair price while giving customers the opportunity to see



Back Forty Beef hosts a number of family-friendly events including duck races. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

how their animals and crops are raised, from farm to table.

“During the pandemic, people were looking for a direct source for their beef, and we wanted to provide that,” Kelly said.

Through Back Forty Beef, Clint and Kelly supplied their area with local beef and discovered new ways to engage their community. Just last year, the two started an annual tradition by planting a 12-acre, agriculture-themed corn maze as a way to bring something new to their part of the state. In just a year, the maze has become a hub for families to come together and celebrate agriculture and the harvest season.

“We wanted to do something really fun and get families outside in northeastern South Dakota during the fall, and what better way to do that than through a corn maze?” Kelly said. “It’s a way for us to share our passion for agriculture and our story. As a population, we are getting two to three generations removed from the farm. There is less of a connection to rural life, so any time we can provide people an opportunity to get out onto the farm and learn something, that benefits the whole of agriculture.”

This fall, Clint and Kelly are again inviting their surrounding communities to visit their homestead and explore this year’s newly designed maze. The maze is set to be open to the public every weekend after



A bird's-eye view of last year's Back Forty Beef corn maze. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

Labor Day to the last week of October. The theme is pollinators, featuring images of a corn cob, flower, bee and barn. Several twists and turns will be embellished with fun facts about pollinators and crop production in South Dakota, making it an educational experience for all ages.

Along with the corn maze, Back Forty Beef is planning to incorporate other family-friendly activities, including duck races, farm animal exhibits, farm basketball, a straw mountain slide and more. Back Forty Beef will also host a farm store where customers can buy everything from local pumpkins to their homegrown beef.

Other local businesses are also joining

in the fun. A different local food truck is scheduled to attend each weekend during the open season, and local businesses are offering small discounts and deals for participants who complete the maze.

“There are checkpoints in the maze, and each checkpoint is equipped with a fun fact and a partnered local business,” said Kelly. “For example, Dairy Queen is offering a buy one, get one free offer for those who hole punch their card at their checkpoint and read the fun fact about pollinators and production agriculture.”

Clint and Kelly’s efforts to engage the community have resulted in a community that engages with their business. Like many other direct-to-consumer operations, Back Forty Beef has its own website and online shop for its brand of beef, dairy products, merchandise and even hand-poured tallow candles. The Brandlee family has also found success through their beef subscription club where boxes are regularly delivered to the doorsteps of customers every month. Whether it’s through the corn maze or the subscription beef boxes, Kelly said the local community has fully embraced Back Forty Beef.

“We had a lot of people who attended that had never done a corn maze before, so a lot of people were excited to do something new and different,” said Kelly. “We had a great turnout to our maze last year, and that’s why we decided to do it again.”



Owner-operators of Back Forty Beef, Kelly and Clint Brandlee and their two daughters, Jaycee and Kylie. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

The Growing Cost of Electricity



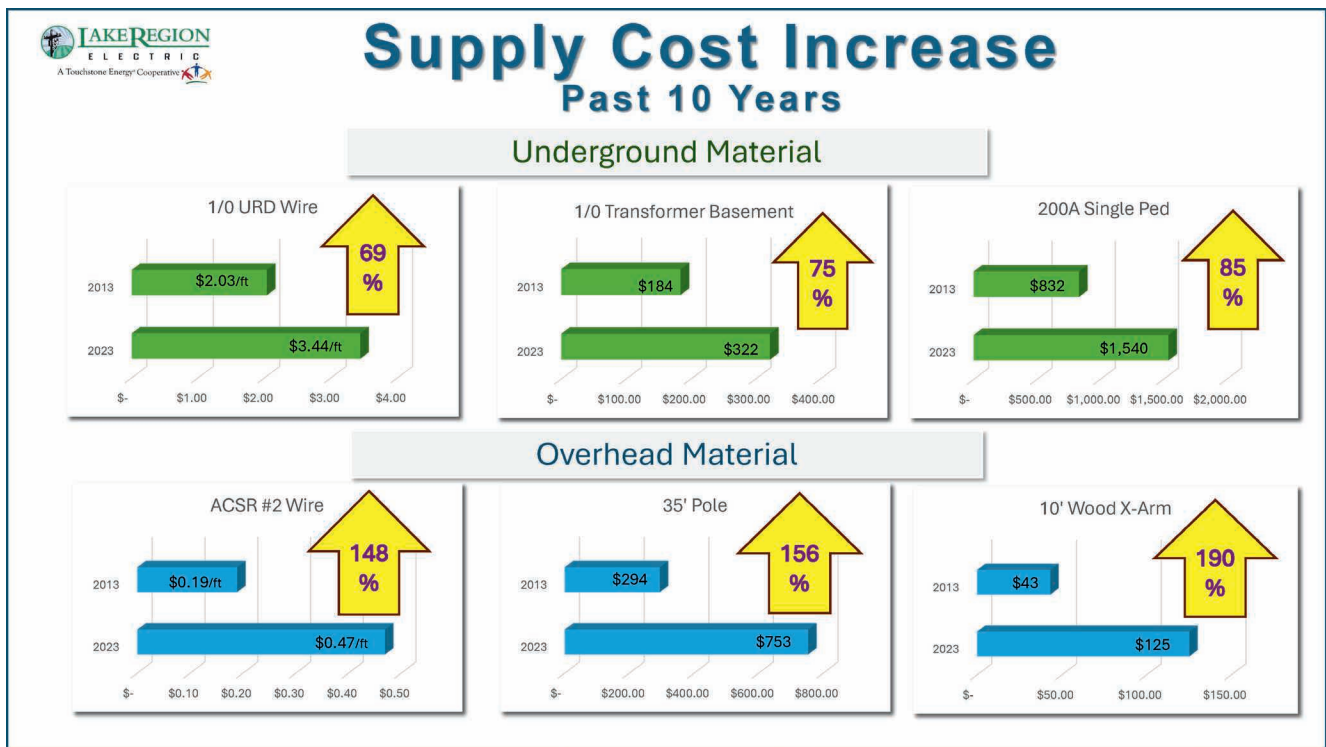
Laura London

Lake Region Electric Association has been working diligently to keep power costs down for our members. The most recent cost of service study indicated that a rate increase was necessary to keep the cooperative in good financial standing, so in May we experienced the first rate increase in ten years. The increase was expected, and unnoticed by many, but the office has fielded a few calls from low use members concerned about the increase to the base rate.

The base rate is what members pay regardless of the amount of electricity they use. Lake

Region Electric is responsible for providing and maintaining the equipment necessary to bring power to every meter all year long. As a cooperative, the cost of maintaining all of the infrastructure is distributed fairly amongst the membership.

Maintenance costs for Lake Region’s aging system continue to rise. Crews have been working on upgrading, converting and replacing infrastructure. At the beginning of 2024, seventy seven percent of the lines and poles still in use pre-date 1960, some originally installed eighty plus years ago. As we focus on reliability, continued investment in infrastructure is necessary regardless of increasing costs. Over the past 10 years, costs for all of our supplies have increased. Materials are increasing exponentially, for example: a wooden cross arm that you see at the top of a pole that cost \$43 in 2013 cost Lake Region \$125 in 2023; an increase of 190%.



“Members’ needs for electricity, regulatory requirements, and technologies change over time, so the generation and transmission systems need to be able to adapt.”

– Matt Ehrman

Our generation and transmission cooperatives, Basin Electric and East River have also been working strategically to keep our cost of power low while maintaining reliability. Basin Electric will be investing over \$4 billion over the next five years in generation systems to meet the growing need for electricity.

In Basin’s 2023 Annual Report, Matt Ehrman, Basin Electric’s vice president of Engineering and Construction stated, “It’s important to have transmission and generation systems that are adaptable since we’re never quite sure what the future holds. Members’ needs for electricity, regulatory requirements, and technologies change over time, so the generation and transmission systems need to be able to adapt.”

The cost of generating power has increased due to a multitude of factors. Industry regulations are becoming crippling as law makers, who don’t quite understand power generation, introduce and pass rules and legislation that are not currently feasible, cost billions and threaten grid reliability.



Basin Electric and East River depend on a diverse power generation portfolio in order to meet the increasing needs of their members, including the members of Lake Region Electric, right down to the last mile of line. One of our sources of electricity is hydro power that comes from Western Area Power Administration (WAPA.) Much like Basin, East River and Lake Region, WAPA undergoes annual studies to ensure that all of the costs associated with power generation and transmission are being covered through sales.

During drought years, WAPA purchases power from the market in order to supply all of the power contracted to municipalities, state agencies, Native American tribes and power cooperatives, among others. WAPA is also experiencing rising costs for repair and replacement of aging infrastructure, similar to Lake Region, much of their infrastructure was originally installed decades ago when the dams were built. Due to the drought adder, facilities improvements, and other increased costs, we are expecting a cost increase to our hydro power generation in the near future.

The directors, management and employees continue to monitor the cost of power and service, standing by our mission: To provide the highest quality services and products to its members while maintaining competitive rates.

AGING INFRASTRUCTURE
Continued Investment in LREA Infrastructure is Necessary for Reliability
77%
 of LREA Lines Pre-date 1960



RODEO CHAMPIONS

Short Go Finalists Win Touchstone Energy Shirts During the State Competition in Ft. Pierre

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

South Dakota's electric cooperatives united in celebrating rodeo on June 15 during the state high school competition in Ft. Pierre, S.D. Cowboys and cowgirls competed in events that mimic the daily chores of a typical rancher, racing to place in the Short Go.

Short Go state finalists earned the coveted Touchstone Energy shirts that mark them as the top competitors of a beloved rural pastime. After a season of competing, the visual representation of wearing this shirt is

more than a fashion statement.

"These shirts are almost like a trophy," said Kylee Ellerton, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D. "It's something you can keep and look back on to remember."

Ellerton earned the Short Go shirt, sponsored by Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives. She won 10th place in goat tying at state.

"My grandpa and dad grew up rodeoing," Ellerton said. "So, I got started in rodeo pretty young."

High school rodeo events began in 1949, and by 1951, South Dakota was among five states that established the National High School Rodeo

Mataya Ward keeps her eyes on a goat she tied during the Short Go. Photo credit: Charles Minor

Association.

It's a shared heritage for many in the state, and electric cooperatives have a 22-year history of celebrating rodeo by sponsoring the Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirt program. More than \$150,000 has been given to this program since 2002, and these funds are used to honor the contestants who make it to the Short Go round



Photo credit: Charles Minor



Kailey Deknikker rounds a Touchstone Energy barrel during the state Short Go in barrel racing. Photo credit: 4-C Photography

of the state finals competition in their respective events.

Kailey Deknikker, member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Lennox, S.D., has a passion for rodeo and wishes to go as far as she can in the sport. She will be attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for business management and joining

the college rodeo team in barrel racing and pole bending.

“The shirt shows that your hard work paid off,” explained Deknikker after placing in the Short Go and winning a Touchstone Energy Short Go shirt. “It shows your accomplishment.”

Decknikker placed 7th in barrel

racing after running a time of 18.246 seconds in the 1st Go, 17.802 seconds in the 2nd Go, and 18.078 seconds in the Short Go.

Leighton Sander, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., won 6th place in the bareback riding Short Go competition. Sander works with his family on a cow/calf operation outside of Custer, S.D.

“There’s some pride that goes with wearing that Short Go shirt,” said Sander. “You go to a rodeo and see a couple people wearing those shirts outside of the high school season, and you think, ‘they must have been good enough to make it to the Short Go – I better watch that guy.’”

Sander explained that his draw to one of the toughest events in the sport of rodeo is the adrenaline rush. He hopes to use his bareback riding skills in future horse training efforts while noting, “being able to stick to a horse is important.”

“I don’t know how to explain it,” Sander said. “It’s super scary before you start, but once you climb into that chute and they open up the gate, it’s like eating your favorite cake.”



Finalists wear Touchstone Energy Short Go shirts. Photo credit: Charles Minor



WHAT'S HAPPENING ON RANCHING SODAK?

Laura London

Matt Feldhaus and his wife Kari are living their dream in northeast South Dakota at Feldhaus Oak Creek Ranch. This little piece of heaven on earth is where they made their home, raised three children, a multitude of dogs and so many cattle that Matt sometimes loses track of a couple. It is a peaceful place where the occasional baby eagle feels comfortable taking a rest on the senescent trampoline in the back yard. With their dreams coming true through hard work and perseverance, one thing they didn't plan for was becoming

famous.

"Fifteen minutes of fame," is a phrase most often attributed to the artist Andy Warhol with a multitude of interpretations. However you choose to interpret the saying, Matt Feldhaus has definitely had his fifteen minutes a million times over since his son Dane convinced him to start a YouTube channel showcasing all of the adventures and misadventures of ranching. "He definitely has the personality for it!" boasts Kari, affectionately known as "Mrs. Sassy Pants" by more than 16 thousand followers of their YouTube channel Ranching Sodak.

Dane started a YouTube channel, Hunting Sodak, when he was in high school; just a kid out with friends videoing what they love, sharing it with the world. Dane soon realized what set his videos apart from others was that they were not staged or professional; they were real. The Feldhaus family follows this same motif when filming and producing content for Ranching Sodak. Very little equipment is involved in recording; typically, a GoPro camera, cell phone, and occasionally, a drone are used to capture footage of everyday activities of ranching life. Dane, who has moved away from home to focus on his own business DF Cattle Mats, downloads video that Matt sends to the cloud from an SD card. According to Dane, it now typically takes him about an hour to produce ten minutes of video content.

Ranching Sodak has been wildly successful with 16.2 thousand subscribers and millions of views. One

of the most popular videos, *Restoring 100 Year Old Spring Fed Water Tank*, is 24 minutes long and has over 114,000 views in just over a month. While that is an impressive number, it doesn't compare to one of their "shorts." *Prairie Shrimp* has 1.6 million views; with 32 thousand people taking the time to give it a thumbs up. It's well worth the 15 seconds it takes to watch the video and get a good laugh. Matt gets a gleam in his eye and a chuckle from everyone in the room when he explains his inspiration, or lack thereof, for this video, "Oh, that was just one of those things I did spur of the moment when I was in the pasture looking at a piece of equipment. I saw the cow patties around and thought, 'This would be fun.'" Kari and Dane attest that Matt's personality on video is genuine and the things he says and does on video are truly how life is on the ranch. There is unanimous agreement that there isn't a favorite video but the best are those where the whole family is involved. Matt explains that not only are they creating content that is informative and entertaining for others, but they are making and recording memories that they can reflect on in the future, like a modern family photo album. Kari says that recording their activities, especially the drone footage, also helps them become more efficient in their daily activities, particularly when sorting cattle.

There is a lot of content out there today on varying platforms, so what is it that draws viewers and subscribers to Ranching Sodak? According to the Feldhaus's, this is real life; they invite you in and make you feel like a part of the family. For many of their viewers, it's the combination of the personalities and the nostalgia of ranch life. People have written letters making comparisons to their own ranching experiences. Yes, people still write letters. In fact, the Feldhaus's get fan mail, texts, and occasionally phone calls. Matt has his address and phone number right on their YouTube channel. Some people say he's crazy for putting that all out there for the world

to see. His response to this is, "Well, we used to have phone books, this isn't much different." Matt admits there is a little bit of gaslighting that occurs and some negativity from people who don't understand ranching. For the most part though, it's positive feedback. The Feldhaus's have made a lot of new-old friends through Ranching Sodak. In one episode, Matt was "fixing" something and jokingly made a comment, "I guess I could use a new sawzall, so if anyone has an extra one they'd like to send me, my address is below." In true cowboy fashion, one fan sent a brand new sawzall. One particularly touching piece of mail was a box of hats sent from a retired truck driver who had collected hats throughout his trucking years, and he wanted to share that legacy with the Feldhaus family. To Matt, Kari and the kids, it's not about getting stuff or generating income, the joy and satisfaction comes from the connections that you make with real people.

The future is looking bright for Ranching Sodak. They plan to continue to release episodes twice weekly because consistency works. Matt and Kari will continue to work hard and live their dream on the ranch, documenting some of their daily activities and adventures to share with the rest of us. There are some plans in the works for Kari to put together a little bit of marketing and some care packages for their fans that just might include some delectable beef jerky. Dane, aka: "Manual Labor Dane," is pursuing some of his own dreams a little further west where he has invested his heart and soul into his cattle mat business. Ellie will be heading back to school at Lake Area Technical College to further her education, but we are sure to see her working cattle and other ranching family duties in the future, and eldest son Kordell is loving life as an engineer in the Sioux Falls area. "And that's what's happening on Ranching Sodak!"

Check them out at:

<https://www.youtube.com/@Ranchingsodak/videos>.



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SEPT. 17

EV Expo

W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Sioux Falls, SD

SEPT. 20-22

South Dakota Festival of Books

Various Locations
Brookings, SD
605-688-6113

SEPT. 27-29

Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show

Meadow, SD
605-788-2299

OCT. 5-6

Run Crazy Horse Marathons

Crazy Horse
605-390-6137
www.runcrazyhorse.com

OCT. 5-6

Magic Needlers Quilt Show

Codington County Extension
Complex
Watertown, SD
605-881-3273

OCT. 5-6

The Black Market

Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Expo Building
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 6

Giant Pumpkin Festival

Bentley Memorial Building
Bison, SD
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.
605-244-5475

AUG. 24

Veblen Summer Bash

Veblen, SD
701-403-4688

AUG. 28-SEPT. 2

South Dakota State Fair

7 a.m.-8 p.m.
Huron, SD
www.SDStateFair.com

SEPT. 1

Studebaker Car Show

10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Custer, SD
605-673-2244

SEPT. 2

Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show

Starts at 1 p.m.
Clear Lake, SD
605-881-8405

SEPT. 6-7

Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll

Vermillion, SD
www.sdbbq.us

SEPT. 8

Homesteader Day

1-4 p.m.
Valley Springs, SD
Beaver Creek Nature Area

SEPT. 12-15

South Dakota Film Festival

Aberdeen, SD
605-226-5494

SEPT. 13-14

Black Hills Polkapalooza

Each Night at 4-10 p.m.
Palmer Gulch
Hill City, SD
605-574-2525

SEPT. 13-14

Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show

Davison County Fairgrounds
Mitchell, SD
605-359-2049

SEPT. 14-15

2024 Kuchen & Harvest Festival

Delmont, SD
605-928-3792

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.

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