

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Preserving Our Past

**Historical Society Unveils
New Cultural Heritage Center**
Pages 8-9

Co-op Summer Outreach
Pages 12-13



Dog Days of Summer



Jeremy Lindemann
CEO/GM

Hello, Lake Region Electric members! I hope you have had a chance to enjoy some of the best parts of summer. Around here, that might mean a day at the lake, a parade, a rodeo, or a town festival. Whatever filled your summer calendar, I hope you made the most of it.

As summer starts to wind down, August often brings some of the hottest days of the year. The dog days of summer can drive up your home energy use. However, not to worry there are some simple ways to stay comfortable without driving up your electric bill. Here are a few items that can help.

- Set your thermostat as high as comfortably possible.
- Change air filters regularly.
- Use ceiling fans to keep cool air moving.

These small steps can help your cooling system work more efficiently. If your system has been struggling this summer, it may be time to think about an upgrade. For helpful guidance on finding a contractor, be sure to read Laura London's article in this month's newsletter. If you need recommendations for how you can save money with a new HVAC system, please do not hesitate to call our friendly, knowledgeable staff.

With sizzling summer days, we seem to brew up some thunderstorms! Now is a good time to review your storm preparedness plans. In case of storm-induced power outages make sure flashlights are easy to find, phones and backup battery packs are charged. I always like to run my backup generator this time of year as well. It is good for the generator to run a bit, and it gives peace of mind to know it will start when you need it. If you use a portable generator, always operate it outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents to help prevent carbon monoxide dangers. Remember to stay clear of downed power lines and please report any downed lines to our outage number. We have 24-hour dispatch seven days a week. To report downed power lines or power outages, call 1-800-657-5869. You can also log on to our website to see the live outage map. This map will show the outages in your area, and you can rest assured we will restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

Your electric cooperative is committed to providing safe, reliable, and affordable power. We are here for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and as always, we will keep the lights on for you!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

Board of Directors

Kermit Pearson, President
Rodney Tobin, Vice President
Cody Paszek, Secretary
Andrea Kilker, Treasurer

Amy Kuecker
Thomas Steiner

Mark Wismer

Danny Smeins, LREA Attorney

General Manager

Jeremy Lindemann

Staff

Donna Sattler, Director of
Finance/Office Services Manager

Dan Williams,
Line Superintendent

Brett Kwasniewski,
Manager of Member Services

Tim Gaikowski,
Manager of Technology Services

Nate Baumgarn,
Director of Staking and Engineering



Lake Region Electric Association, Inc. is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Like us on Facebook:
Lake Region Electric Association Inc.

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

24 hour Dispatching/Outage Line
1-800-657-5869

COME SEE US AT THE FAIR!



Thursday, August 3rd 9am - 5pm
Horticulture Park on the SD State Fairgrounds

Step into South Dakota's Touchstone Energy interactive tent at the State Fair and experience fun, learning, and excitement for all ages!

★
Kid's Activities

★
EV Interactions

★
Prizes & Give-aways

★
Line-worker Demonstrations

There's something for everyone under our tent — don't miss it!

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



DAY
County
FAIR
August 5-9

Thursday-Sunday: Animal & Livestock Shows

Friday: Ranch Rodeo

Saturday: Harvey Opitz Day

Kids Tractor Pulls

4-H RIB Supper

Demolition Derby

Dance

Sunday: 4-H Livestock Sale



Kid Zone
FARM SAFETY PARTY

August 13th
10:00am-2:00pm

Brought to you by these cooperatives:








As unmanned aerial systems (UAS) increasingly populate recreational and professional skies, safety remains paramount – especially near critical infrastructure such as overhead power lines. Today we reaffirm that drones should be flown in open spaces away from electrical lines and substations to prevent power outages and dangerous debris that can threaten public safety.

A drone colliding with a power line can cause outages and, if lines are downed, create serious electrical hazards for anyone nearby. Touching downed lines or debris that has fallen on fences, trees or other objects can result in severe injury or death. If you encounter downed power lines, immediately call 911 and notify emergency personnel and the utility company.

To ensure safe and compliant drone operations, follow federal registration and business-approval requirements, and stay informed about local, state and community regulations. FAA safety guidelines remain essential: Inspect your drone for damage before each flight and repair any issues prior to use. Fly at or below 400 feet unless FAA authorization or an allowed exception applies. Maintain visual line of sight; do not fly beyond it. Avoid airports, manned aircraft, stadiums and crowds of people. Do not fly for unapproved commercial purposes without FAA authorization. Refrain from flying in bad weather, including low visibility or high winds. Never fly recklessly or endanger others; violations can result in fines and penalties.

It is encouraged that drone operators plan routes

that maximize safety and minimize proximity to power infrastructure. Responsible pilots, adherence to FAA guidelines and awareness of local rules can prevent outages, injuries and potentially tragic consequences. For more information on legal requirements and best practices, consult FAA resources and your local utility providers.

Together, we can enjoy the benefits of drone technology while safeguarding our communities and critical electrical infrastructure.

As drone use expands, operators should build safety into every mission from the outset. Calibration, pre-flight checklists, and robust maintenance programs help catch issues before takeoff. Operators are encouraged to use situational awareness tools, such as real-time weather updates and wind assessments, to adjust flight plans accordingly. Community education events and outreach can foster a responsible culture among hobbyists and professionals alike, reinforcing the shared responsibility to protect power networks and nearby residents. By prioritizing safety, we preserve access to this transformative technology for all.



"Call 811 before you dig – always."

Laina Nelson, age 10

Laina reminds members to always call 811 before digging. Thank you for sharing your picture, Laina! Laina's parents are Nathan and Kristen Nelson – members of H-D 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.



Family FAVORITES

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted. Makes 9x13 inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

WALLEYE WITH HORSERADISH SAUCE

Ingredients:

2 lbs. walleye fillets
1 cup Lawry's Herb & Garlic marinade
1 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt
1 tsp. lemon pepper
1/4 cup butter
2 tbsp. horseradish
2 tsp. dill

Method

Marinate fish in herb & garlic marinade for 30 minutes. Drain. Sprinkle with season salt and lemon pepper. Bake fish until it flakes. Melt butter in saucepan. Remove from heat and add horseradish. Spoon onto fillet after cooked. Sprinkle on dill and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

BBQ MEATBALLS

Ingredients:

Meatballs

3# ground beef
1 can (12 oz.) evaporated milk
1 cup oatmeal
1 cup cracker crumbs
2 eggs
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. chili powder

Sauce

2 cups ketchup
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 tsp. liquid smoke, or to taste
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/4 cup finely chopped onion

Method

Mix all meatball ingredients together and shape into meatballs. Place meatballs in a baking dish.

Mix all sauce ingredients together and pour over meatballs. Cover and bake at 350°F for one hour. The meatballs can be made ahead of time and frozen for several weeks. This makes a large batch, so it can be divided into smaller batches and frozen.

Karen Soulek
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.

EMPLOYEE NEWS WELCOME TAYA BAUER

Taya Bauer joined the employee team at Lake Region Electric Association on May 4th. She will be working in the office as the Consumer Accounts and Accounting Clerk, focusing on assisting members who call or visit the office and directing

them to the correct department. She will be working collaboratively with Autumn in preparing monthly member bills and will provide back-up for Justin in accounting and work orders.

Taya grew up in Minnesota, but don't hold that against her; she adapted to South Dakota quite well while attending SDSU. She and her husband Jordan, who is a salesman at Dave Hahler Automotive, make their home in Webster. Taya and Jordan are doting pup-parents to their two precious Golden Retrievers, Honey and Jorgie. Besides being an avid reader and fan of the Old Farmer's Almanac, Taya enjoys embroidery, reading, flowers, and cheering on the Philadelphia Eagles.

Next time you see Taya, please welcome her to the Lake Region Electric family!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Vera Heminger
Wayne & Katherine Nolte
Mark & Ashley Hamilton
Chris & Betsy Alberty
Marissa Redday
Dalene Brock
Madison Oberg

Richard & Berdene Olson
Family Trust
Madison Oberg
Hayden Pigors
Russell & Joyce Toben
Kelvin Diller
Arik Gray

Have you moved? Do you know someone who has? Check our list of refund checks that could not be delivered. If you see a name you recognize, please let them know, or call our office.



UNCLAIMED CAPITAL CREDITS

Unclaimed Capital Credits

Help Us Get Our Member's Money to Them

One thing that sets Lake Region Electric Association apart from other electric companies is that we are a member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative. LREA allocates any excess margins to our consumers after paying all the bills, reinvesting in infrastructure, and meeting our financial obligations. Lake Region tracks the allocations and refunds the money back to our member-owners, as cash positions allow. Active Members saw their refund as a credit on their bill that was sent out at the beginning of May. **Inactive members were mailed a check in June. A number of checks were returned to Lake Region as undeliverable by the post office. We are asking for your help getting unclaimed payments to previous account holders.**

Here's where you can help your fellow cooperative members:

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!

First Name	Last Name	& / Or	City/State
Ulysses	Abraham	Cathi Abraham	Browns Valley, MN
Barth	Adolph	Geraldine Adolph	Summit, SD
Bonnie	Anderson		Webster, SD
Roger	Andrews	Andrews Welding	Britton, SD
Eric	Becking		Aberdeen, SD
Mike L	Block		Webster, SD
Jesse	Brakke		Havana, ND
Ronald	Button		Tea, SD
Mike L	Davies		Sisseton, SD
Mark	Deutsch	Monica Deutsch	Eden, SD
Jennifer	Dumarce		Sisseton, SD
George	Dylla	Dorothy Dylla	Watertown, SD
Jennifer	Eastman	Tristan Eastman	Sisseton, SD
Dean	Fisher		Britton, SD
Alan	Franka		Britton, SD
Richard	Gorud		Milbank, SD
Roland	Heminger		Sisseton, SD
Kangi	Hisgun		Veblen, SD
Robert	Horsman		Roslyn, SD
Nathan	Johnson		Webster, SD
George	Kann	Marlene Kann	Britton, SD
Lewis	Lacroix		Veblen, SD
Albin	Lindquist		Webster, SD
Susan	Lufkins		Sisseton, SD
John	McCardle		Rockwood, TN
Jean	Nigg		Edmond, OK
Willis	Quinn		Sisseton, SD
Earlynne	Redday		Veblen, SD
Briana	Rodriguez		Eden, SD
Patricia J	Schmidt		Webster, SD
Victor	Simon		Waubay, SD
Barbara	St John Heminger		Sisseton, SD
Allen	Svare		Lakeville, Mn
Tom	Vrchota	Jessica Pederson	Princeton, MN
Matthew	Ward		Waubay, SD

Business/Organization	Contact Name	
East Highway 10 Steak House	C/O Donald Sjomeling	Britton, SD
Great Western Bank Bender Real Estate	Att: Matt Biggs	Lincoln, NE



SOUTH DAKOTA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A PAST FIT FOR THE FUTURE

A new lobby welcomes visitors to the Cultural Heritage Center.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

Cultural Center & State Museum Reopens After Extensive Renovation

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

After more than two years spent closed for renovation, South Dakota's state museum and cultural center is back up and running to share the story of South Dakota and its people with visitors from across the state and beyond.

The iconic museum built into the Pierre hillside held its grand reopening July 1 in time for the nation's 250th birthday, showing off new exhibits, a gift shop and an expansion that includes a larger meeting room and more space for its archives.

For Museum Director David Grabitske, the reopening marks a new chapter for the South Dakota State Historical Society, which oversees both the museum and state archives housed there. But it also honors the first laws set forth by the Dakota Territory's first territorial legislature, outlining specific steps and functions for historical preservation for untold future generations of its citizens.

According to Grabitske, many of the

first Dakotan settlers were determined to preserve the history they were making day by day as settlers on the vast American frontier.

"The first three acts [by the territorial legislature] were all about transferring property at the end of life – it's all about inheritance," Grabitske explained. "The fourth act of the territory created the historical society. In my mind, the fourth act goes along with those first three acts; it's about how we give things to the future."

Establishing a historical society demonstrated confidence that there would be a future for the Dakota Territory – complete with a permanent population that would live, grow and prosper there.

"We have a mantra around here," Grabitske said. "We collect today for tomorrow's history."

What that sentiment has amounted to is a sprawling collection of more than 17,000 cubic feet of paper, 50 terabytes of data on its servers, and more than 35,000 individual objects.

"The very first collections that arrived were in 1863, and we still have those in our library," Grabitske said. "They were

library books – 514 of them in 11 boxes."

In the process of collecting and disseminating information, historical societies at the time would collect and make copies of books to trade with other historical societies to expand their collections and diffuse knowledge across a wider area and reduce the risk of losing records to fire.

You'll find those 160 years' worth of books, deeds, contracts and reports



On the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Little Bighorn, Curator of Collections Katy L. Schmidt holds a can found on the battlefield.

Photo by Jacob Boyko

throughout the high-ceilinged, climate-controlled archive wing of the building – but you'll also find objects that aren't necessarily old or inherently valuable.

"The reason we add something into our collection is because it's historic, and what we mean by historic is it has significance and integrity," Grabitske explained. "Something being 'old' just fixes it in time. What makes something historic is that it is significant – it tells the story of people in South Dakota, and it has integrity, which means a certain completeness to tell that story."

To illustrate the point, Grabitske described a recent addition to the museum's collection – a painted tire with the words "no hunting."

"You see these things going down the road [in South Dakota], and we realized we were missing [one for the museum]," he explained. "We found one near Timber Lake which had a story. The lady who gave it to us (family of Dorothy Dopp, courtesy of the Timber Lake & Area Museum) had put it up in 1967 and she had faithfully painted it over the years and knew the dates she had painted it. We don't need 400 of these tires – we need one to represent the whole state."

Visitors to the museum this summer can experience the first three rooms of the updated exhibits. These sections house a welcome area, 'What is History?' exhibit and a gallery. The remaining sections are slated for completion in December 2026 and will feature exhibits on South Dakota's environment, people, politics, conflicts and more.

For more information on the Cultural Heritage Center and the South Dakota State Historical Society, visit history.sd.gov.



An exhibit showcasing the famous people of South Dakota.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



This plaster doll (left) was gifted to South Dakota by Japan in 1927 to commemorate the United States' 150th birthday. Fifty years later, for the nation's 200th birthday, Japan gifted South Dakota another doll (right).
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Museum Director and South Dakota State Historical Society Assistant Director David Grabitske walks through the extensive art archive, revealing a painting of an electrical lineman working through a winter storm.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Grabitske demonstrates the new movable shelves installed over tracks within the floor. This upgrade will maximize the available archival space.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

HIRING A CONTRACTOR

Laura London

You've got the vision for your next project; you maybe even have plans drawn up. Now you are ready for the next step, but you aren't sure exactly sure what that is. Deciding whether you should tackle it on your own or if hiring a contractor is the way to go is likely your next step.

These days, there are so many instructional videos and creative DIY options that people can often get by doing some work themselves. There are other things, however, that you cannot, or should not, do on your own, no matter how handy you are. How do you decide who to call for

help with your project? Whether you are building a new home, shop, barn, or you are renovating an existing structure, you are making an investment. Knowing what to look for and what questions to ask can save you time, money, and a load of frustration. When hiring a contractor of any kind, make sure to do some checking, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Word of mouth is still the number one advertising platform so talking to several people you know is always a good first step in an important process, but don't stop there.

When considering a contractor, check to see if they have the proper

credentials. Does their trade require any special licensing? South Dakota requires statewide licensing for plumbers and electricians. According to the Department of Labor website, "The South Dakota Electrical Commission works to keep the citizens of our state and their property



HIRE A PROFESSIONAL

DON'T LEAVE ELECTRICAL SAFETY UP TO LUCK

Safe Electricity.org®



Preventing Home Electrical Fires

Fire departments respond to an average of **46,700** home fires each year caused by electrical failure or malfunction.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA):
Over a recent 4-year period...

30% happened in cold weather months (Nov. – Feb.)

Fires caused an estimated average of:
390 Deaths
1,070 Injuries

1 Wiring and related equipment were involved in the **greatest** number of home electrical fires.

Lighting, a lamp or a bulb was involved in the **second largest** number of fires.

2

WARNING SIGNS of electrical issues:

- Damaged cords and flickering lights
- Discolored outlets and switch plates
- Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses

Hire a licensed contractor to ensure that your home's wiring is **installed to code** and functioning properly. Learn more at:

Safe Electricity.org®

Source: NFPA's Electrical Fires Report, 2022

safe from the hazards associated with using electricity.” They do this by administering laws and regulations as well as conducting inspections in accordance with the National Electrical Code (NEC.) Lake Region’s Manager of Member Services, Brett Kwasniewski, explains that the NEC is a basic safety standard, “Following electrical codes is the minimum amount that you need to do in order for your wiring to be safe. Codes and regulations can change, so we need to take continuing education classes to stay up to date. Contractors who aren’t licensed aren’t necessarily doing that, which leads to some big safety concerns.” Keep in mind that even though South Dakota only requires electricians and plumbers to be licensed at the state level, it’s a good idea to check your local ordinances for general contracting and HVAC regulations. Anyone you have working for you should be bonded and insured. Everyone wants to save money, but you don’t want to take safety risks in the process; having a bonded, insured contractor will take some of that liability off of you.

Work permits are an important aspect that people often overlook when planning a project. You need to make sure that permits are applied for and that your contractor is posting them. Depending on the type of permit, they can be obtained through state, city or county application. It may seem inconvenient, and some people are under the impression that permits are just so the government can take your money or get their nose in your business; the truth is that permits help ensure that safety standards are observed. Proper permitting is important for inspections and insurance reasons. Wiring done without a permit can cause your power company to deny you service. Wiring or building done with proper permits can help avoid insurance denials if an accident or fire should occur.

Another good tip is to get quotes from multiple contractors, at least three, if possible. Asking for detailed quotes or estimates can help avoid future frustration and unforeseen expenses. There are excellent contractors and tradesmen in our area who are great to work with. If you have questions or concerns regarding your electrical service with Lake Region Electric, call our office. We would be happy to answer questions and can get you set up with a secondary line locate, if your project requires any digging.

CONSIDERING A HOME WIRING PROJECT?

Don't be a weekend warrior

Home wiring projects may sound easy — and even look easy on YouTube tutorials — but tackling wiring projects without the proper knowledge and expertise could result in a fire. **Those qualified to work on electrical components are armed with the following:**

SKILLS

They can demonstrate their skills in all aspects of electrical work.



KNOWLEDGE

They have the knowledge to complete projects safely and successfully.



TRAINING

They are trained in proper installation and know how electrical systems work.



EXPERTISE

They can identify hazards and reduce risks when it comes to home wiring.



The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) defines a qualified person as: "One who has demonstrated skills and knowledge related to the construction and operation of electrical equipment and installations and has received safety training to identify the hazards and reduce the associated risk" (NFPA 70E).

When in doubt, hire a licensed contractor to do the work.

CO-OP SUMMER OUTREACH

Join Us at S.D. State Fair, Dakotafest, Minn. Farmfest

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Attention all co-op members! If you're heading to the South Dakota State Fair, Dakotafest or Farmfest this summer, stop by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booths for some great family fun and a chance to win a prize!

Make sure you fill out your coupon on the back of this magazine and bring it with you to the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair or Dakotafest for your chance to win one of two electric grills sponsored by Karl's TV & Appliance.

South Dakota State Fair – Sept. 3, 2026

South Dakota's electric cooperatives will host the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives booth at the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, Thursday, Sept. 3, 2026.

This one-day event will feature a slew of energy-themed activities, from bucket truck rides lifting you more than 50 feet above the state fairgrounds to an interactive pole climbing demonstration complete with real spiked boots and climbing gear that linemen use every day on the job. We've also partnered up with South Dakota One Call to remind you to always call 811 before you start digging – but your kids are welcome to use our mini excavator in our sandbox to uncover buried treasure!

While you're here, check out our on-site displays for select highly efficient, all-electric heat pumps and mini-splits, water heaters, yard tools and more!

Find our booth near the Horticulture Building.

Dakotafest – Aug. 18-20, 2026

You'll want to stop by the South Dakota Touchstone Energy Cooperatives building at Dakotafest in Mitchell, Aug. 18-20!

Join us for fresh-off-the-grill brats, oven-baked cookies and freezie pops as you learn about the latest in home energy savings and efficiency. We'll have other cool stuff for you to check out, including an automatic lawn mower, a solar panel display and an EGO Power+ Portable Power Station.

Minnesota Farmfest – Aug. 4-6, 2026

Minnesota members, come visit your electric cooperative at Minnesota Farmfest near Redwood Falls, Aug. 4-6, 2026. Members may enter a raffle drawing for one of five battery-operated yard tools. We'll even have the high-voltage trailer on site for a live demonstration to remind visitors to be safe around overhead and buried power lines.



Kids perfected their utility pole climbing skills at the South Dakota State Fair.

Photo by Jacob Boyko



Touchstone Energy Cooperatives host a booth at Dakotafest in 2025.

Submitted Photo



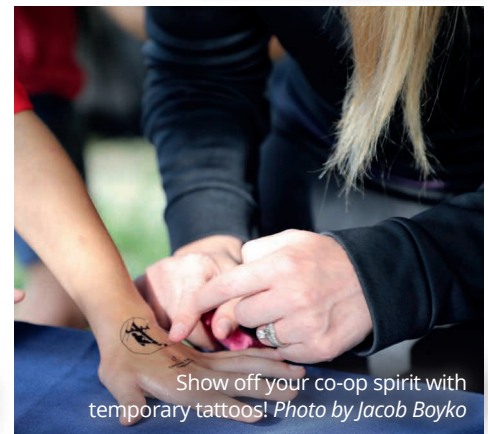
Charles Mix Electric Lineman Joe Michael shows off the bucket truck at the State Fair.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Fairgoers get a lineman's view of the State Fair! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A future lineman readies for his climb.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Show off your co-op spirit with temporary tattoos! *Photo by Jacob Boyko*



A line forms for bucket truck rides.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Booth visitors can win prizes by playing Plinko.
Submitted Photo

DAIRY GOOD NEIGHBORS TOURING WASHINGTON DAIRY

Laura London

First impressions of Washington Dairy, located near Bryant South Dakota, are reminiscent of the first line in the beloved children's book *Big Red Barn*, by Margaret Wise Brown. Just as the book begins, "By the big red barn, in the great green field..." so did a two-hour tour for the Board of Directors and staff of Lake Region Electric Association. As we passed by fields green with new crops, the big red barn came into view. Everything was neat and clean, from the sculpted green lawns surrounding well-kept buildings to the tidily stacked bales alongside haylage and silage piles ready to feed roughly 12,500 head of dairy cows lowing in the nearby cattle barn.

The red barn in our story is for people, not animals, and this is where we started our tour with an introduction, initial question and answer session, and safety talk in the conference room. We learned a few interesting facts about Riverview, the parent company of this innovative newer dairy farm. The Fehr family settled in West Central Minnesota in 1939, as the Great Depression was coming to an end. They were ready to raise crops and feed beef cattle. In the 1990's some of the younger generations returned, with aspirations to get into farming, so the family started exploring ideas. Riverview is now family and employee owned and has grown to 22 locations. The company is about 75% employee-owned so employees are literally invested in what they do and treat each other as family. The team at Riverview believes in "providing a culture of opportunity by fostering a respectful, ethical work

environment, ensuring animal health and comfort, being stewards of the land and adding value to the communities in which we live." The company even offers what they call Riverview Academy, a series of classes covering everything from relationships to finances to help their employees succeed in their personal lives and integrate into their communities. There are signs posted all over the property — red signs with the words "Be Kind" refer to Riverview's animal welfare program; yellow signs with the words "Be Safe" refer to Riverview's employee safety program; and white signs serving as a simple reminder of Riverview's core values: Candor, Spirit of Humility, Integrity, Strong Work Ethic, and Keep it Simple." LREA

Director Andrea Kilker commented that Riverview's principles and beliefs essentially embody the cooperative principles that guide Lake Region. "The efficiency of the dairy is surprising, but what impressed me the most was their focus on growing people," said Kilker.

Forty seven people work at the Dairy, including onsite veterinarians. Some employees even live on the property. Our guides for the tour were Riverview employees Kayla Schmidt and Sonny Nickeson. Kayla hails from Minnesota and has discovered that the dairy life is home, stating she has "found her tribe" here at Riverview. Kayla and her husband, who also works for the dairy live on site where they are raising their family, "My kids go out and play soccer with our coworkers in the evening, everyone watches out for everyone else; it's pretty neat." Sonny may be a familiar name with many people in Lake Region territory, as he comes from this area and does a lot of his work in Veblen.

After learning a little about the





background of the dairy, the group donned safety vests identifying us as visitors then headed to the parlor where some content looking Holstein-Jersey cross cows rode around on a carousel while being milked. This specially designed rotary milking parlor holds up to 128 cows. The rotary is essentially a big timer; the cows ride around for approximately eight and a half minutes, being milked for about five and a half minutes. Sonny explains, “5 minutes, 20 seconds seems to be about the perfect time to milk. The rotary milking parlor helps ensure that all the cows are milked for the proper amount of time.” The cows are sorted off the parlor to be inseminated, hoof trimming and for pregnancy checking. Use of the rotary system minimizes stress on the cows and decreases their time away from the barn where they eat, drink and rest until their next milking. Cows are away from their pen for about 45 minutes; during that time, their pens are cleaned and fresh bedding put down. The 22 acre barn is designed for optimal air flow that keeps the cows at a comfortable temperature and reduces pests. Another feature of the barn design is red light therapy that switches on at 4:00 in the afternoon. It serves dual purpose: red light is said to help maintain the cow’s circadian rhythm by lowering disruptions in melatonin, and it helps the dairy save money by decreasing

the amount of electricity used. Each cow is milked twice a day, producing about 80,000 gallons of milk from Washington Dairy each day to be made into cheese in South Dakota. You might be surprised to learn that milk from South Dakota dairies goes on to make some of your favorite snack foods from Doritos, Kraft, Papa Murphy’s, and many more.

Mutually beneficial partnerships with their neighbors help keep dairies running smoothly. The ability to develop relationships and use resources close to home by partnering with people in the area is a priority when planning a dairy. It takes an average of one acre of farmland to sustain a dairy cow. At Washington Dairy, one million pounds of total mixed ration (TMR) is fed each day. Approximately 6,500 acres of corn silage and 2,500

acres of alfalfa haylage are harvested and purchased from neighboring farms every year. The dairy will even arrange to chop and haul for their neighbors, saving both parties time and expenses. Some neighboring farms use manure from the dairy as fertilizer. LREA Director Cody Paszek enjoyed the dairy tour, “I’ve seen dairies before, but I’m really impressed with what good neighbors they are, how they cooperate with surrounding land-owners, and how they integrate employees into the community.”

People may express concerns about the dairies strain on resources. Sonny says, “Resistance to dairies is mostly emotion based. Once people actually take a tour and understand the dairy and how we do things, it helps.” The dairy uses about 30 gallons of water a day per cow. Lake Region Electric Director Mark Wismer commented, “This is such a well-run operation that’s incredibly efficient. I’m fascinated with the way the dairy grounds are designed to capture rainwater runoff, even from the roofs, and recycle as much as possible.” Wismer also mentioned the electric load; a dairy like this uses about eight to nine thousand kilowatts of power a day which can benefit a rural electric cooperative.

Keeping a dairy running smoothly doesn’t just require happy healthy cows, it requires food, bedding, water and power, but mostly good people and good neighbors. Riverview is checking all the boxes.



REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



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.

JULY 30
Spurs Grand Classic Equestrian Competition
9 a.m.
Aberdeen, SD
605-226-1099

AUG. 1
3rd Annual Celebration in the Park/Rib Cook-Off
1-9 p.m.
Groton, SD

AUG. 1-2
Family Camping Weekend
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

AUG. 5
Ag Appreciation Day
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Sioux Empire Fair
Sioux Falls, SD

AUG. 5-9
Day County Fair
Webster, SD

AUG. 8
Peever 125th Celebration
9 a.m.-12 p.m.
Parade, Bean Bag Tournament, Tractor Pull, Street Dance
Peever, SD

AUG. 8-9
South Dakota Senior Games
Events for People Ages 50+
Huron, SD
Register by July 26
SouthDakotaSeniorGames.org
605-295-2039

AUG. 13-15
Watertown Senior Games
Watertown Parks & Rec.
\$5 per event, \$20 unlimited
WatertownParksandRec.com
Watertown, SD
605-882-6260

AUG. 13
Co-ops Farm Safety Day
Brown County Fair Kids Zone
Aberdeen, SD

AUG. 27-30
Steam Threshing Jamboree
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

SEPT. 3
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives at the South Dakota State Fair
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
State Fairgrounds –
Horticulture Park
Huron, SD

SEPT. 10-12
DKG Used Book Sale
Wylie Park Pavilion
Aberdeen, SD
605-225-6713

SEPT. 12
James Valley Threshing & Tractor Club
Andover, SD
jamesvalleythreshers.com

SEPT. 12
Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale
8 a.m.-3 p.m.
Groton, SD

SEPT. 12
Harvest Bash
Webster, SD
WAC@webstersd.com

SEPT. 19
Your Race, Your Pace
9:30 a.m. Start
Wylie Park Pavilion
Aberdeen, SD
Register: runsignup.com/race/sd/Aberdeen/raceatourpace
605-380-6762

OCT. 2-3
Pumpkin Fest
Webster, SD
WAC@webstersd.com

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.