

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Former co-op general manager Jim Moore is one of the original organizers of the Line Patrol Charity Ride and was the designated lead rider in 2021 as the group embarked on its adventure

## Line Patrol Charity Ride

20 years of assisting co-op families  
Pages 8-9

Food co-ops meet community needs  
Pages 12-13

# Contributing to the co-op's success is a humbling experience



**Kermit Pearson**  
Board President

Thinking back to the time I got the phone call from the Lake Region Electric nominating committee asking if I would be interested in serving on the Board of Directors, it was a decision that I never took lightly and one that I do not regret.

I never set out to have a long career serving Lake Region Electric, but as events and time have progressed, that is exactly what happened.

Once I got involved and got to know some of the people, I found out how important it was to provide some leadership.

My desire to serve my fellow members, the co-op and my community grew the more time I spent serving. I was chosen by my fellow directors to represent Lake Region at East River Electric and ultimately, East River directors chose me to serve on the Basin Electric Board.

This has evolved to participating in our state-wide organization as well as regional and even national organizations.

I have witnessed, and been part of, many changes and challenges during my time serving at Lake Region Electric. I have tried to take my leadership skills, and any other skills that I have to offer, and use those as a way of serving and giving back to the community.

It has been a wonderful experience to be able to contribute and to see some of the policies that you help develop come to fruition and benefit the membership.

From the beginning, co-op members across this country pooled our resources and came together to form not-for-profit organizations that benefit the individual, the community, the state and the country.

I have sat in the Oval Office, three chairs down from the most powerful man in the world having discussions in order to help my rural community and I have talked with you, my neighbors, and fellow members of this cooperative in the board room and at our annual meetings.

All of these conversations continue to help me lead this cooperative so that we can effectively serve our members.

That can-do attitude that you see in rural America and that ability to come together, particularly in times of conflict and times of stress, has served us well over the years and it will continue to serve us well.

That is why we must resist attempts to split us apart and to break away from what has held us together for so long and will continue to serve us into the future.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

**Aaron Abrahamson  
Rick & Liz Schaff  
Jacob Debaun  
Cathy Stiegelmeier  
McKenzie Anderson  
Paul Bezdicek  
Jacob Siglin  
Alyssa & Scott Green**

**Sheila Anderson  
Cody Valnes  
Matt & Nicole Muth  
Lucas & Corina Brockhaus  
Nicole Christensen  
Shirley A Johnson  
Ronald Snaza**

## COOPERATIVE

CONNECTIONS

### LAKE REGION ELECTRIC RIPPLES

(USPS 018-904)

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## Historical Tidbit: First 180 miles of line energized in 1946

#### THE FIRST ELECTRICITY FLOWS THROUGH LAKE REGION LINES

This year Lake Region Electric Association celebrated its 81st anniversary. However, the first Lake Region Electric lines were not energized until 5 years after the cooperative was started in 1941.

October 11, 1946 was a cold, cloudy day with temperatures ranging from a low of 26 degrees to a high of 41. The bitter northeast wind that we are all so familiar with was doing its best to dampen the spirits of the directors, board members and guests in attendance as Lake Region Electric Board President John Smith closed the switch energizing the first 180 miles of electrical lines for rural farmers in Lake Region territory.

H.L. Wilson, the manager at the time, reported that by noon on October 17th a total of 72 farms were connected to power through these lines in the South Webster, Southwest of Waubay, and East



Lake Region Electric made a big difference to area farms in the mid-1940s.

Butler vicinities and in Webster, Lynn and Raritan townships. Transformers were being installed in the south Britton and Southeast Britton territory.

Poor weather over the previous month had created bad road conditions that made construction difficult and delayed construction in northern areas but many of those farms would be energized in the coming weeks.

# Practice fire safety this fall and winter

When the weather turns colder, you inevitably start hearing more news about house fires. Even a small fire can be devastating.

Most house fires are caused by cooking that gets out of hand. But the second most common cause is materials in the home that catch fire. This often occurs when a heat source, such as a space heater or flying embers from a fireplace, comes into contact with fabric or paper, which then ignites. Once a fire starts, it can move so rapidly that even the best efforts to put it out may fail.

When it comes to old houses, the risks are even higher. The older the wood is that a house is constructed of, the faster it burns. Once flames invade the walls of an old house, they move with frightening speed.

Fire protection in any home is necessary, but even more careful precautions should be taken if your house is older. Here's how to help ensure the safety of your house and everyone in it.

**SMOKE DETECTORS.** These are the first and best line of defense; they allow you to get out of the house at the first whiff of smoke. Six in 10 deaths in house fires occurred in homes that did not have working smoke detectors. Go beyond the federal recommendations and put a smoke detector in every room. Stay on the even safer side by opting for those that detect both smoke and carbon monoxide.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.** Keep small fires from getting out of control with fire extinguishers that are easily accessible. Choose several extinguishers that are light enough for even kids to handle. Make sure they have simple pull mechanisms that don't require much strength. Look for fire extinguishers that work for various parts of the house; for instance, an extinguisher in the kitchen should be able to handle grease fires.

**INSTALL ARC-FAULT INTERRUPTERS.** These ingenious little gadgets detect the electrical arcing that occurs when an old wire buried deep in your wall begins to fail. Speak with an electrician about where best to install interrupters and how your particular ones work.

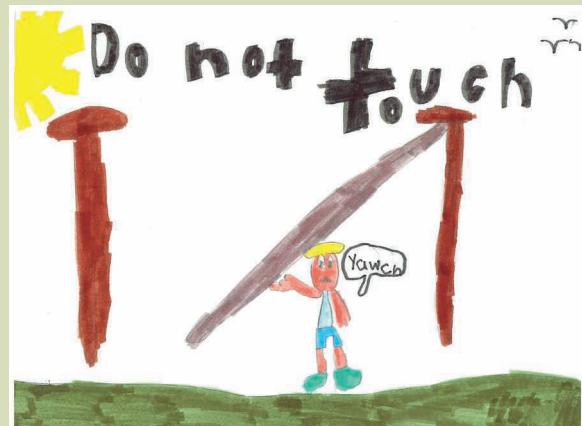
**MAINTAIN IT ALL.** Finally, test everything on a regular basis. Smoke detectors should be tested every month, their batteries replaced every six months, and old smoke detectors replaced every 10 years. Opt to purchase an extra fire extinguisher so your family can take it to the backyard and practice using it.

## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES REPRESENT AT DAKOTAFEST



Electric cooperative representatives were on hand at the 2022 Dakotafest in Mitchell to share information about energy efficiency and electric-powered lawn implements and to showcase a 2022 Ford Lightning electric pickup truck provided by Vern Eide Ford. Shown left to right are Sheila Gross, Jared Rakness, Jennifer Gross, Patrick Soukup, Kristie Hauck, Brett Snyders and Tara Miller.

To see a video of this event and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



### Do not touch power lines

**Kendyl Gill**

Kendyl knows that electricity always seeks a path to the ground and that all power lines should be treated as if they are energized. Kendyl is the child of Brent and Emily Gill, and they are members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

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.

# PRIMO PASTA!

## PASTA WITH ZUCCHINI AND TOMATOES

### Ingredients:

7 oz. short whole wheat pasta like penne fusilli or farfalle  
2 lbs. zucchini, chopped  
1 lb. grape or cherry tomatoes cut in halves  
3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil  
6 garlic cloves minced  
1/3 c. Parmesan cheese grated  
1 c. parsley or 1/2 cup basil finely chopped  
1 tsp. salt  
Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

Cook pasta per package instructions undercooking by 2-3 minutes or until pasta is cooked but firm. While pasta is cooking, preheat large ceramic non-stick skillet on medium-high heat and swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat. Add zucchini and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Return skillet to stove, swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat, add tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute, stirring a few times. Turn off heat and add cooked pasta and zucchini, remaining 1 tbsp. of oil, salt, pepper, cheese and parsley or basil; stir and serve. Adjust seasonings to taste.

[ifoodreal.com](http://ifoodreal.com)

## MEXI-CORN LASAGNA

### Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained  
1 can Mexican corn  
1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce  
1 c. Pace picante sauce  
1 tbsp. chili powder  
1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin  
16 oz. low-fat cottage cheese  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 c. parmesan cheese  
1 tsp. oregano  
1/2 tsp. garlic salt  
12 corn tortillas  
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

### METHOD

Combine first six ingredients in large skillet. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Combine cottage cheese, eggs, parmesan cheese, oregano and garlic salt; mix well. Arrange 6 tortillas on bottom and sides of a lightly greased 13x9x2 baking dish, overlapping as necessary. Top with half the meat mixture. Spoon cheese mixture over meat. Arrange remaining tortillas over cheese. Top with remaining meat mixture. Bake 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Remove from oven and sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Let stand 10 minutes, serve with additional picante sauce. Serves 8.

**Carol and Rollie Smith,  
Brandon**

## BAKED SPAGHETTI

### Ingredients:

8 oz. package angel hair pasta  
1/4 c. chopped parsley  
1 lb. ground beef  
1 lb. ground pork  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. garlic salt  
1/2 tsp. black pepper  
1 1/2 tsp. sugar  
1 tbsp. Italian seasonings  
2 c. tomato sauce  
1 c. water  
2 c. canned crushed tomatoes  
2 bay leaves  
2 garlic cloves chopped  
1/2 c. green peppers chopped  
1/2 c. onion chopped  
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese  
1 c. shredded Monterey Jack cheese

### METHOD

Cook pasta and set aside. Add 1 tbsp. olive oil to pasta and stir in to keep it from sticking together. Precook beef and pork together with salt, garlic salt and black pepper. Drain grease off and set aside. In a large pan add parsley, Italian seasonings, tomato sauce and water, garlic, green peppers, onions and crushed tomatoes. Bring sauce to a boil then reduce to a simmer and continue to cook for 30 minutes. Add cooked meat to the sauce. Let set while preparing the baking pan. Grease a 9x13 inch pan. Layer sauce with spaghetti noodles in the pan. Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes. At 30 minutes pull spaghetti from the oven and mix cheeses together then pour on spaghetti evenly. Bake 5-10 minutes until cheese is melted

**Jane Cave, Sioux Falls**

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Who we are

**100% OF DIRECTORS ARE MEMBERS  
25% OF EMPLOYEES ARE MEMBERS**

**Director Mark Wismer:** "I think electric cooperatives are a vital part of our rural economic infrastructure."

**Director Tom Steiner:**

"One of the good things about a co-op is that you can't be a board member, unless you are a consumer. Every decision that we make at the board level affects us equally as it does every other consumer."

**Director Andrea Kilkner:**

"I've been around cooperatives a lot in my life, but I have been impressed with this cooperative and the strength of the board and the board's relationship with the manager and the manager's relationship with the employees. It really seems like everyone has one big common goal. They are very much focused on providing our members with reliable, affordable power."

**Director Amy Kuecker:**

"I am proud to serve my neighbors as a director on the board at Lake Region Electric."

**Director Cody Paszek:**

"I really enjoy how involved our Co-op is in the community. Whether it's donating bottled water to the area schools or seeing representatives at fairs and shows doing demonstrations and educating the community. I also like seeing how the board members and managers really fight to keep our power cost at the most reasonable rates we can afford! It is nice to know we don't just follow the trend of others and keep raising prices year after year."

**Director Rodney Tobin:**

"We need to inspire the younger generation to get involved to make them see the value of the co-op system."

**General Manager Tim McIntyre:**

"The cooperative model works. It wasn't just used as the start of the cooperative; it is the foundation that we built upon and that we continue to use today."

## Lake Region Electric makes water donations to schools



Lake Region Electric Association makes a variety of donations, mostly monetary in order to support the people and projects in our service territory. We do this as a part of our guiding principles, mainly showcasing our Concern For Community.

For the past few years anyone attending a local sporting event or other school function may have noticed the Lake Region logo on their bottle of water purchased through a vending machine or concession stand.

These donations of bottled water are multi-purpose. In addition to promoting and supporting our local school districts, the bottled water serves as a miniature safety billboard. We are hoping that more than noticing our familiar logo, you take notice of the safety message printed on the label. Safety is a priority for Lake Region Electric and we want our members to get the message and be reminded often, to not become complacent, especially when farming and doing daily tasks.

General Manager Tim McIntyre, Manager of Member Services Brett Kwasniewski and Custodian Kurt Hoines delivered 6,240 bottles of water to four area schools. Each school received 65 cases of custom-labeled bottled water. The labels are printed with the school's corresponding mascot, a safety message and the LREA logo.

**OCTOBER IS  
BREAST CANCER  
AWARENESS  
MONTH**

Lake Region Electric Association Reminds Our Members: Other than skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women. Getting mammograms regularly can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. The United States Preventive Services Task Force recommends that if you are 50 to 74 years old, be sure to have a screening mammogram every two years. If you are 40 to 49 years old, talk to your doctor about when to start and how often to get a screening mammogram.

**CDC** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 2017. Mammogram Photo by: P. Rennert

**LAKE REGION**  
Electric  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

# GOT WATER?

As winter is fast approaching, now is a good time to check to see if your cattle waterers are in perfect working condition. Verifying that you have voltage and correctly operating elements and thermostats at each waterer now is much easier than finding out the hard way once it gets cold!

**LAKE REGION**  
Electric  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

**October is  
National Co-op Month**  
Proud to be your trusted energy partner.

**YOUR COOPERATIVE**

<b>2,608 Members</b>
<b>3,467 Meters</b>
<b>1659 Miles of Energized Line</b>
<b>931 Overhead Miles</b>
<b>728 Underground Miles</b>



Roger Lawien and his wife, Kris, are regular participants in the Line Patrol Charity Ride. Photos by Brad Letcher

## Line Patrol Charity Ride marks 20 years of serving those in need

### Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

When Roger Lawien encountered some unexpected health problems, his fear and anxiety were assuaged by the assurance that he had several key factors in his favor.

He knew he could rely on his faith. He knew he could rely on his family. And he knew he could rely on his fellow cooperative employees across the state.

Lawien, member services manager at Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake, is a part-time volunteer and full-time advocate of Line Patrol, Inc., a charitable organization that exists to provide financial relief for South Dakota electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

Since the program was launched in 2003, hundreds of co-op employees have contributed to the emergency response fund by staging golf tournaments, bowling tournaments, auctions, trap shoots, 5K runs, raffles,

bake sales and more. One of the most popular and highly anticipated events is the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride held each September.

This year's 20th annual event took place on Sept. 10 and was co-hosted by Rushmore Electric, Butte Electric and Grand Electric. More than 200 riders and other participants gathered in Whitewood at the Iron Horse Inn and spent the afternoon motoring through the picturesque northern Black Hills.

Lawien was there perched aboard his prized Indian Roadmaster, soaking in the experience with his co-op friends and feeling grateful to have a dependable network of support that can be counted on not only to help rebuild lines and poles after a storm but also render aid in a personal crisis situation.

"Having been a recipient of funds from this program, it means a lot to be among these fellow co-op employees who are all so eager and willing to demonstrate their kindness and sincerity by showing up every year to contribute

Estimated amount of Line Patrol funds

**\$580,000**  
donated to electric co-op employees

to a worthy cause like this," Lawien said. "It's that same cooperative spirit that bonds us all together. It's the can-do attitude they bring to their jobs every day in service to their members and their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities. They are salt-of-the-earth people who care deeply for one another and the people around them."

Lawien said more than 240 families have received assistance through the fund totaling roughly \$580,000. He is one of three directors of the program along with Jessie Tucker (West Central Electric) and Tim Neises (Central Electric).

Jerry Swartz was one of the first



Jerry Swartz, pictured above-left, was the first recipient of Line Patrol funds after he was injured in 2004.

recipients of Line Patrol funds after he was involved in a workplace accident. He expressed what the charitable organization has meant to him and his family.

"Back in 2004, I had an extreme accident at work. I spent six months in recovery and this foundation gave us a check for \$500 to help us out. It may not seem like much money, but at the time it meant everything to me and my family. It's amazing. God bless this fund and the people who donate to it and keep it running," Swartz said.

One of the original organizers of the Charity Ride is former Northern Electric General Manager Jim Moore. Each year, as is the custom, Moore leads the cavalcade of dozens of motorcycles

away from the gathering site and along the chosen route.

"The ride has just gotten bigger and better over the years," Moore said. "The money goes to help co-op employees in need. One person had a tornado damage their home, another lineman from Yankton was killed in Afghanistan and we set up a scholarship fund for his three children. I always tell my wife, Janice, this is the one thing I look forward to every year and truly love because we're helping employees and their families get back on their feet."

Laine Mitchell, communications director at Butte Electric, said helping to host the Charity Ride was an honor for the cooperative and something the organization was happy to support.

"Having many of our own employees benefit from the Line Patrol fund over the years, we are thrilled to co-host this year's event and help raise money for other cooperative families across South Dakota. The ride is just one of the many ways the foundation bonds our cooperatives together and has touched countless lives in the last 20 years," Mitchell said.

The weekend began with a social on Friday evening and concluded the following night with a buffet dinner and charity auction.

Sponsors for this year's ride were Irby, Altec, RESCO, Dakota Supply Group, Border States Electric, WESCO and The Okonite Company.



Hundreds of riders from across the state participate in the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride each year. The program exists to provide financial support for electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

# Autumn Spiering: Consumer Accounts Representative

We are celebrating Co-op month and what it means to be a member-owner. At Lake Region Electric, 25 percent of our employees are also member-owners of the cooperative. That is something they do not take lightly.

One of our member-owner employees is Autumn Spiering. The majority of the time you call into the office, Autumn answers. She has worked at Lake Region Electric since 2008 and wears many hats. The main focus of her work is on billing, so she is essentially your go-to gal for questions on your bill.

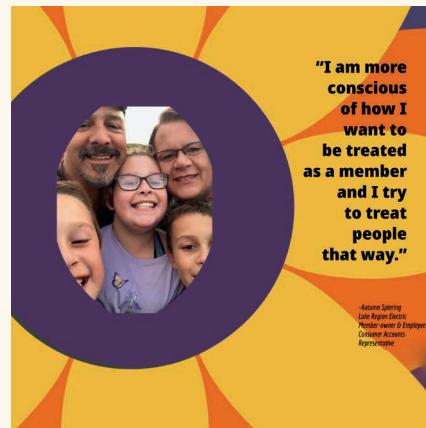
Autumn was a cooperative member long before she knew what a cooperative was: "I knew that cooperatives existed, I just didn't understand that we actually had ownership."

Born and raised south of Bristol, she heard stories about the REA and what it was like when electricity was brought to the farm.

"My parents have always had a lot of respect for Lake Region Electric. And it was sort of a big deal when LREA was coming out to the farm."

Autumn, her husband Jaymy and their three children, now live on a farm north of Webster. They keep quite busy working full-time jobs in Webster, running to school activities in Langford, raising some cattle and other farm activities. Having only spent a short amount of time away during her life, Autumn appreciates the peacefulness and beauty of the area. She enjoys many outdoor activities such as hunting, snowmobiling, and gardening. This time of year, Autumn, like many of us, spends time canning her garden harvest and sharing a few excess crops with her coworkers and neighbors.

Over the past 14 years, Autumn has developed a greater appreciation for the linemen and electricians, and everything it takes to keep the power going, especially during times of bad weather. The Christmas Storm of 2016 brought work and home together with a feeling of responsibility to make sure everything was taken care of at home and to try to get to town to help serve the members and assist the work crews however.



"We lost power at our place for a couple of days, but we have a generator ready to go. Jaymy grew up having to milk cows, so they always had a generator, and we do that now on our own farm. It was different with my parents; we waited before turning on the generator."

Since working at Lake Region Electric, Autumn has grown to understand what it takes to get electricity to the rural areas, and what it takes to run a cooperative. She says, "I am more conscious of how I want to be treated as a member and I try to treat people that way."

# Vinson Dargatz: Electrician



"I was just thinking the other day how fortunate we are that electricity has come so far. I was wiring a cabin, installing dimmer switches and energy efficient lighting that can be controlled from someone's phone when they are at a completely different location. It got me thinking how this is a far cry from the old farmhouse where you walk in and there is a single bulb light fixture hanging in the middle of the room controlled by a single switch on the wall. We do our best to keep up with technology and to help our members.

We just make it work."

Of course, being a member affects decisions that Vinson makes at work, especially when it comes to expenditures and equipment.

"We need to take care of stuff so that it lasts longer because when the co-op has to spend money, that's essentially money out of my pocket as an owner. I want to keep my rates low, just as much as my neighbor."

There are some unintended perks to being an electrician for Lake Region as well. The electricians at Lake Region regularly go into member's homes and other buildings to make repairs or install new fixtures and equipment. As time goes on he has seen different things and he has made a subconscious list of likes, wants and definite nos. This "list" has been a great help when building his new home for his family.

**"We do our best to keep up with technology and to help our members. We just make it work."**

# Member Memories: Wesley Jensen remembers the first poles that were set by Lake Region Electric

Wesley Jensen has quite the tale to share about when electricity first came to the family farm.

It all starts back in the 1940s when he was a child growing up south of Bristol: "Us kids had a hard time going to school that day because we wanted to see where those poles were going up."

But their parents hustled them out the door and down the road they went. By recess time, though, they could see a pole sticking up above the barn. What a sight that was for a bunch of kids.

"Boy, we are going to have electricity when we get home," they thought. "Of course, it doesn't really go that fast, it took another day, and they came and put some more poles in, then they got to stringing the wire."

The most interesting part would be just as exciting to school children now as it was back then, EXPLOSIVES! It was wintertime and the ground was frozen, so setting poles proved to be a challenge. "This old guy, he asked for a bucket of water; he also had a crowbar. He'd pour water on the ground then pound the crowbar in, then pour a little more water and keep pounding it in. Us kids didn't know what he was going to do. Then he put a stick of dynamite in that round hole

in the frozen ground, then he used a rifle of some sort to detonate it. It went BOOM! The dirt flew, and the hole was just perfect! That REA pole fit right in there."

The trick must have worked because the same pole is still standing to this day, with a yard light hanging from it.

All dynamite aside, there were many reasons for the excitement. The Jensen farm was one of the first in the area to have power. Prior to that, they had a 6-volt electric charger on top of the barn that ran the light.

"The wind would blow hard, and that charger would just shake the whole barn. It was so nice when we didn't have to use that anymore, it got so quiet. And you just had to pull the switch to turn the light on. Back then, we didn't have wall switches, just the pull down from the light," he said.

Other perks that came with having electricity on your farm was refrigeration. They still have the original refrigerator, an International with the date stamped 1948, that's still chugging along in their shop. Carrots are stored there during the winter.

In this entire time, that refrigerator spent two years off the farm when it moved up the road, but quickly made its way back and works as good as new.

A few years later, Wesley became a little



more involved with the co-op when he and his friend, Eugene Ziegenhagen, helped out with the new office building. He and Eugene unloaded all of the brick from the railroad cars downtown and hauled them to the office at 1212 Main St.

"That was a lot of work for just two of us, but we stacked all of those bricks out here for someone to lay, he said."

Wesley only sees positive things about being a part of Lake Region Electric: "We have good service here, and we get a kick-back every year from the dividends from serving ourselves. We can always use that taken away from our bill! It's a good deal. I would hate to be without it!"

Wesley Jensen, pictured above, remembers when the first pole was set on his family farm south of Bristol. The original pole is still in use today. Also in use is Jensen's 1948 International refrigerator that is still fully functional and is used in the winter to store vegetables.



# CO-OPS OFFER HEALTHY CHOICES

The Sioux Falls Food Co-op has persevered for 50 years by adhering to the co-op model. *Photo by Sioux Falls Food Co-op*

## Food co-ops meet the need for nutritious, healthy choices

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Back in the 1930s, rural community leaders all across the country began traveling from farm to farm knocking on doors and asking for \$5 as seed money to build out a network of electric distribution systems.

It was not an insignificant sum to solicit from many farmers and ranchers contending with substandard soil conditions, the vagaries of weather patterns and fairly primitive mechanization compared to today's operations.

But in exchange for that investment, those same community leaders turned the promise of rural power into a reality and presently there are more than 750 locally-owned electric cooperatives serving roughly 40 million Americans.

Bess Pallares keeps that electric co-op success story close to mind as she embarks on establishing a grocery store in Brookings County using the

cooperative business model as her template.

Pallares is president of the Dakota Community Market board of directors, whose members have been working since 2019 to bring a food cooperative to the Brookings area. She reports that the endeavor hasn't been a cake walk, but she continues to be inspired by the way like-minded electric co-op leaders back in the '30s managed to gain popular support for locally-owned, independent entities created to provide a valuable service.

The board's market analysis indicates that a "low food access zone" exists within Brookings County when it comes to full-service retail grocery stores with just two providers in a 50-mile radius.

"On average, there are typically 2.84 grocery stores per 10,000 population. We have .68 in this area," she said. "People keep saying they're sick of having to drive miles and miles to get to a full-service grocery store that stocks



Bess Pallares

what they want and need for their families."

To generate start-up capital, the board is offering memberships at \$150, a little more than a week's worth of groceries for many families. Meanwhile, Pallares and her board members are scouring the landscape for additional financing sources and federal grant opportunities with plans to have a retail store up and running as soon as possible.

She has had discussions with East River Electric in Madison about accessing available funds through the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund (REED). The REED program



Caselli's Garden is among a growing list of fresh food suppliers for Dakota Community Market. *Photo by Caselli's Garden*

is designed to provide financing to help build the economic base of rural communities within East River Electric's regional service area. Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.

### **Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.**

Pallares said she sometimes feels exactly like those early electric cooperative pioneers, attempting to pave the way for providing a reliable source of quality, low-cost food in the Brookings area. She has become active in the Billie Sutton Leadership Institute Rural POWER program to help tap into the regional business community with the goal of developing an optimum financial strategy and making connections with future suppliers and other partners.

"The Institute opens up a giant network across the state where you can meet a lot of people doing the same kinds of things you're doing, and they've

got great ideas and big goals and a fearless entrepreneurial spirit. One of our board members has gone through the class and I'm doing it now. It's been transformational," she said.

The Dakota Community Market is not the only fearless group striving to launch a locally-owned and locally-controlled food cooperative. The Coteau Community Co-op is also trying to establish a food co-op to serve the Watertown area. Both have plenty of successful models and supporters to help guide and inspire their efforts.

The National Food Co-op Startup Network and the National Co-op Grocers based in Minneapolis are both available to provide resources and expertise. Additionally, there are a few successful stores already operating in South Dakota, including Natural Abundance in Aberdeen, Breadroot Natural Food Co-op based in Rapid City and the Sioux Falls Food Co-op.

Patrick Sayler is general manager of the Sioux Falls Food Co-op on West 18th Street, an operation that has been going strong for the past 50 years through several relocations, growing competition and even a fire. Sayler sees food co-ops across the region as sharing the same common goals and working together to accomplish those goals.

"We tend to put a different twist on things, but in the end we all want the families we serve to have a better way of

accessing the food they eat to maintain good health and a healthy lifestyle," said Sayler, who used to frequent the store as a teen and replaced long-time manager Molly Langley in 2016. "It's always encouraging to see different leaders working hard to do what we've been able to do. It takes a lot of effort and it takes tireless visionaries to stay focused and committed to achieving what you want to accomplish together."

In meeting its commitment to improve the quality of life in the community, the co-op has a program called Big Change, where shoppers are invited to round up their expenditures to the next whole dollar amount. The difference is added to a fund that goes to support local charities such as the Teddy Bear Den, Mobile Pantry of Sioux Falls, Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, SD Voices for Peace and many more. The co-op even has a space available for public meetings and workshops.

The store recently celebrated an expansion and re-opening, and Sayler said he's optimistic about the future while keeping an eye on industry trends.

"We're growing. There's a lot of competition, but we've got a great location, great employees and a great product," he said. "The co-op model is alive and well. We have members who support us and are committed to our mission of providing a source of healthy, affordable good choices."



Black Hills State University is one of four higher ed institutions to adopt the Build Your Base with Beef program. Photo by BHSU Athletics

## Beef is what's for lunch in many local school district cafeterias

**Billy Gibson**

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Beef. It may be what's for dinner, but now it's what's for lunch in many school cafeterias across the state.

In January of 2019, the Wall School District launched a program called "Beef to School" in an effort to add locally-raised beef to the weekly lunch menu and provide protein-rich meals to meet the nutritional needs of the students. At the time, it was billed as the first program of its kind in South Dakota.

The pandemic threatened to scuttle the initiative before it had the chance to gain momentum, but school district leaders, parents and supporters stuck to their mission and today the program has spread to nearly 20 local school districts.

Wall Meat Processing located just north of town is at the center of the action, identifying and working with local ranchers to deliver beef products for hungry students.

Inflation and rising market prices have also presented challenges, but Food Services Director Lynn Dunker stresses that community support has been key to success.

"The price of groceries and the price of everything just keeps going up," Dunker said, "but we've had individuals donate monetary funds out of their own pockets, and Wall Meat Processing is doing what they can to help us and to get other processors involved. We have a very supportive community and they've really been backing this program because they know how important it is that children get good nutrition."

In fact, it was local rancher and concerned citizen Josh Geigle who brought the Beef to School idea to the district leaders after learning about a similar program in Nebraska.

Dunker said the program is part of a popular farm-to-school model that emphasizes locally-grown fresh foods that are generally healthier for young students and their cognitive, behavioral

and physical development.

Besides benefiting from quality nutrition, students also have the opportunity to learn more about where their food comes from and the importance of ranching and farming to the overall success of the community.

"Some maybe don't even realize where beef comes from in the first place," said Wall School District Superintendent Dan Baldwin. "And now when they found out it's their dad, their uncle, a family member, it's actually someone from their ranch, I think that's a really neat thing."

### BUILD YOUR BASE WITH BEEF

Another protein promoting program reaching both high school and college students is called Build Your Base with Beef and is specifically directed at athletes who rely on good nutrition to perform at their maximum level.

The South Dakota Beef Industry Council, Sanford Health and the Sanford Sports Science Institute have teamed up to develop a comprehensive tool kit for student-athletes that includes ready-to-use educational materials that help students and their



## AFTER WORK BEEF POT ROAST

### Ingredients:

- 1 beef Bottom Round Rump Roast (3 to 3-1/2 lbs.)
- 1 envelope (0.7 z.) Italian dressing mix
- 2 large onions, each cut into 8 wedges
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 red bell peppers, cut into 1-1/2 inch pieces
- 1/2 cup beef broth
- 2 zucchini, cut into 1/4-inch thick slices
- 2-1/2 tbsp. cornstarch dissolved in 2 tbsp. water

### Directions

Press dressing mix evenly onto all surfaces of beef roast. Place onions and garlic in 4-1/2 to 5-1/2-quart slow cooker; top with roast. Add bell peppers and broth. Cover and cook on high 5 hours or low 8 hours. Add zucchini. Continue cooking, covered, 30 minutes or until pot roast is fork-tender. Remove roast and vegetables. Strain cooking liquid; skim fat. Combine 2 cups cooking liquid and cornstarch mixture in medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly; cook and stir 1 minute or until thickened. Carve roast into slices; season with salt and pepper, as desired. Serve with vegetables and gravy.

families adopt more healthy lifestyle choices, practices and habits.

Build Your Base has been endorsed by the National Scholastic Athletics Foundation (NSAF) and recently expanded its reach by appearing at the 2022 Nike Indoor Nationals in New York City last spring. Jack Links serves as the official snack sponsor of the program.

Chris Nilsen, a pole vault record-holder, Olympic silver medalist and former University of South Dakota student, has endorsed the program along with other prominent Olympic athletes such as hammer thrower Deanna Price and shot putter Payton Otterdahl.

"Build Your Base prepped me so well, and without this nutritional approach I wouldn't be in such great shape. Eating well is such a big part of competing well, and they absolutely do their part," Nilsen said.

Along with four colleges and universities, more than 25 South Dakota high schools have adopted Build Your Base and integrated it into their athletic departments and lesson plans.

Athletes learn how to determine the proper amounts of beef protein to consume for optimal effect in the maintaining, building and repairing of muscle.

## Co-op leaders visit Southwest Power Pool facilities in Arkansas

A contingent of more than 35 electric cooperative leaders from throughout South Dakota and western Minnesota recently visited the facilities of the Southwest Power Pool based in Little Rock, Ark.

The Southwest Power Pool (SPP) is the Regional Transmission Organization (RTO) responsible for managing the electric grid and wholesale power market throughout a 13-state region that spans from the Canadian border to northern Texas.

While RTOs seldom attract much public attention, the polar vortex that swept across the country in the winter of 2021 placed grid operators closer to the spotlight. The roles and responsibilities of RTOs have also come to the fore with concerns over extreme weather events, changing market forces, aging infrastructure, grid congestion, the emergence of renewable power sources and other issues.

The tour was organized by Codington-Clark Electric General Manager Dave Eide. He said he initiated the event because he believed electric cooperatives that transmit and distribute power within the SPP's footprint would benefit from engaging in face-to-face interactions with those responsible for moving electricity across the grid.

"This was a very eye-opening visit, as we were able to see first-hand how the Southwest Power Pool operates," Eide said. "Coordination is key, and having personal interaction with the professionals at SPP helps in preparation for the next storm event."

Eide explained that in the real-time generation, transmission and delivery of electricity, supply and demand must balance out to provide 24-hour continuous service that is safe, efficient and affordable for consumers. When situations develop that threaten to throw the system out of equilibrium, RTOs work in collaboration with utilities throughout the service area to keep the network stable.

The process includes communicating with those entities under the RTO's umbrella to take decisive measures to modulate either the supply or the demand.



**September 29-October 1**  
**Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival**  
*Photo Credit: Chad Coppess*

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

**SEPT. 29-OCT. 1**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival**  
Custer, SD  
605-255-4515

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 1**  
**Oktoberfest**  
Citywide, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 2**  
**SiouxperCon**  
1201 N West Ave.  
Sioux Falls, SD

**OCT. 1**  
**Prairie Village Hobo Marlin Pumpkin Train**  
45205 SD Highway 34  
Madison, SD  
605-256-3644

**OCT. 1-2**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Festival**  
Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 7**  
**The Pumpkin Patch**  
Rapid Valley United Methodist Church, Rapid City, SD  
605-393-1526

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Great Scarecrow Festival**  
Campbell Park  
Huron, SD  
605-353-8530

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Black Hills Powwow**  
444 Mt. Rushmore Road  
Rapid City, SD  
605 341-0925

**OCT. 7-8**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vender Show**  
Philip, SD  
605-441-1060

**OCT. 8**  
**Fall Festival**  
Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD  
605-255-4329

**OCT. 8-9**  
**Crazy Horse Marathon & Races**  
Crazy Horse Memorial  
12151 Avenue Of The Chiefs  
605-390-6137

**OCT. 15**  
**Fall Festival**  
18473 US Hwy 83, Onida, SD

**OCT. 22**  
**Ladies Day**  
The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD  
605-390-2939

**OCT. 28-30**  
**ZooBoo**  
Great Plains Zoo  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-367-7003

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Yankton's Harvest Halloween**  
Downtown, Yankton, SD  
harvesthalloween.com

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge**  
100 4th Street SW, Huron, SD  
605-352-0000

**NOV. 5-20**  
**Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show**  
9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily  
Ethan, SD  
605-770-2411

**NOV. 11-13**  
**Christmas at the Barn**  
Front Porch 605, Groton, SD  
605-216-4202

**NOV. 12**  
**Black Hills Meat Festival**  
Black Hills Harley Davidson  
2820 Harley Dr., Rapid City, SD  
605-390-7917

**NOV. 18-20**  
**Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival**  
Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

**DEC. 2-3**  
**Christmas in the Hills**  
Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD  
605-745-4140

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