

Lake Region Electric

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

April 2021 Vol. 21 No. 12

Cooperative Connections

**Deep freeze
challenges
power grid**

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in SD**

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as extreme winter
weather brings up
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THANK A LINEWORKER!

This month, we're recognizing lineworkers for the amazing job they do to make sure we have electricity! Think about all the ways you use electricity every day. Do you use a phone, watch TV, play video games or turn on lights? You're able to do *all* of these things because of lineworkers.



Below is space to write a short thank you note to your local lineworkers. Write your note, then ask an adult to help you send it back to us so we can share it with our crews.



WE ♥ OUR
LINEWORKERS

Send your note to the mailing address below, or snap a photo with your phone and email it to us!

Lake Region Electric
PO Box 341, Webster, SD 57274
E-mail: lakeregion@lakeregion.coop

Easter Blessings

*The Lake Region
Electric Employees
and Board of
Directors wish
a very blessed
Easter to all
of our members.*

*We will be closed
Friday, April 2, 2021
to observe Good Friday*



Welcome New LREA Members

Becky Reeve

Joel Burdine

Sheldon Herr

Zachary Townsend &
Jolene Townsend

Jean Ziebell

Clear Lake Investments

Trent & Joni Bestland

LINEWORKERS BRING THE LIGHT.



Lineworker Appreciation Day

On April 12, remember to
#ThankALineworker.

Lake Region Electric Ripples

Cooperative Connections

(USPS 018-904)

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

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

What Our Linemen Are Made Of



Tim McIntyre

General Manager
 tmcintyre@lakeregion.coop

The image that comes to mind for many when they think of Lake Region Electric Association is most often a lineman. Our linemen are the most visible employees of the co-op. The lineworkers at Lake Region work tirelessly to ensure our members receive uninterrupted power all day, every day. There are six lineworkers, five linemen and one foreman, at Lake Region taking care of 1,734 miles of energized line, bringing power to roughly 2,600 members. The service area that our linemen may have to travel any given day is 2,180 square miles.

What does it take to be a lineman? Obviously, there is schooling and continual training, but what I want to talk about is what it really takes to make a lineman. It takes grit. Grit is defined as having courage and resolve; strength of character. I cannot think of any other word that truly describes each one of the lineworkers that I have the privilege of working with. Courage and resolve are exactly what it takes to climb the poles or get hoisted up in a bucket to grab hold of energized lines, carrying 7,200 volts of electricity in order to perform "hotline" without cutting your power. This is done nearly every day, and most people don't even realize it. There are times when they have to de-energize lines in order to safely complete repairs, but they work efficiently to minimize the amount of time each of our members is out of power. Most of us would not dream of getting up in that bucket to be hoisted 30 feet in the air when the wind is whipping 20 miles per hour, or more. Our linemen don't think twice about it! It's not all up in the air anymore. We have been converting much of our line to underground but that doesn't make their job safer and definitely not easier! Just a week before I sat down to write this column, a couple of guys had to go out in temps of 20 below to fix an underground fault. Most of us know what it's like to try digging in frozen ground, or wet ground in the spring with water filling the hole as fast as you can pump it out, but there are a select few who know the difficulty and frustration that linemen face. It can be exhausting trying to figure out where the problem is, how to get to it and how to repair it. And they work quickly so people aren't without power any longer than necessary. Strength of character is exactly what it takes to be a lineworker, and that is one of the things I appreciate most about each and every one of them.

The combined experience of our lineworkers at Lake Region is about 70 years, and if you ask them, there isn't anything else they would rather be doing than serving you, the members of Lake Region. Why would anyone want to do this job? Of course, the pay is good, and the benefits package is almost without comparison, but is that worth the risk of putting your life on the line? Not to these guys. That isn't why they do what they do. They do this job for you, our members. There isn't anything more gratifying to them than keeping the power on for you. You will not witness a bigger sense of accomplishment than when a crew returns, often exhausted, after restoring power to someone who has been in the dark for hours or days due to a storm. They often talk of seeing lights come on at a house or farm as they restore power. They see farmers and families waving and smiling from tractors, windows, and yards as they continue down the road to get the next one going. That is what drives them.

We appreciate our linemen every day. As many of you know, we set aside the second Monday in April to celebrate and recognize the men and women who work around the clock to keep the lights on. Remember to give them an extra wave and thumbs up that day!

Thank you and God Bless,

Timothy McIntyre

Home Improvements Don't Have to be Expensive

You don't have to replace your air conditioner with a high-efficiency system or make other major improvements to reduce energy consumption. There are low-cost efficiencies anyone can implement to help reduce energy bills.

- **Mind the thermostat.** You might be able to trim your energy bill by carefully managing the temperature in your home. Consider setting your thermostat to 78 degrees when you're running the air conditioner. If that's not cool enough, use fans to help circulate the air to help you feel cooler.
- **Go programmable.** If you don't always remember to adjust your thermostat manually, you could benefit from a programmable model. In the right situation and set correctly, programmable thermostats can save your household \$150 a year. Some models can be managed from your smartphone or other devices.
- **Stop air leaks.** Small gaps around windows, doors, wiring and plumbing penetrations can be major sources of energy loss. This problem can be alleviated with a little weatherstripping and caulk. A \$10 door draft stopper (also known as a "door snake") is a simple way to block gaps underneath exterior doors. Sealing air leaks around your home could shave up to one-fifth off your heating and cooling bills.
- **Manage your windows and window coverings.** Your windows may be letting heat out during the winter and letting heat in during the summer. Window coverings like medium or heavyweight curtains and thermal blinds can help. During the summer, keep window coverings closed to block the sun and keep it from heating conditioned indoor air. On cooler spring days, turn off your air conditioner, open the windows and enjoy the breeze - and lower electricity bills.
- **Look for energy wasters.** There are small steps you can take every day to reduce your energy use. Water heaters should be kept at the warm setting (120 degrees). Wash dishes and clothes on the most economical settings that will do the job, and always wash full loads. Use the microwave instead of the oven when possible. And unplug phone chargers, electronics and small appliances when not in use.

A Note of Appreciation for the Service Co-ops Provide

By Mark Peacock, Dupree

Most of us wake up each day with an agenda and a schedule that ensures we do things in pretty much the same way from the moment we open our eyes to the moment we arrive at wherever it is we spend our day working.

But on those rare occasions when I walk through our warm home and turn on the bathroom light, which in our home has an overhead radiant heat lamp, and start the shower, which releases hot water from the water heater nestled in the basement, I sometimes take a brief pause in my routine.

I pause to feel the heat of the water wash over me...if only for a minute or so, to enjoy and appreciate what a wonderful experience having a hot shower in a well-warmed, well-lit bathroom in a very comfortable home represents. It means I live in a country and in a state and in a county that has invested in the infrastructure and made a commitment to allowing normal, everyday Americans the opportunity to enjoy such a treat in the middle of a South Dakota winter.

And I smile, because we may not get all we want in life, but we may, for a brief moment, feel all the warmth it takes to start off the day in a positive way. Thank you and your energy partners for making my day and the days of thousands of others begin just a little better, a little bit warmer, a little bit brighter, and a whole lot more optimistic.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



Stay Indoors During a Storm

Celeste Meyer, 6 years old

Celeste is the daughter of Brice and Sarah Meyer. She is a resident of Trent and a member of Sioux Valley Electric.

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



Slushes, Punches, Lattes

Fruit Slush

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 6-oz. can orange juice concentrate | 1/3 cup halved maraschino cherries with juice |
| 1 6-oz. can lemonade concentrate | 2 firm bananas, sliced |
| 3 or 4 juice cans water | 2 10-oz. boxes frozen strawberries, thawed |
| 2 20-oz. cans crushed pineapple with juice | |

Stir all ingredients together and freeze in 9 x 13 inch pan or ice cream bucket. Remove from freezer a few minutes before serving. To serve, put scoop of slush in glass and fill glass with 7-Up or Squirt.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

Banana Slush Punch

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 7-8 bananas | concentrate |
| 2 12-oz. cans of orange juice concentrate | 1 46-oz. can of pineapple juice |
| 1 12-oz. can of lemonade | |

Blend bananas with all ingredients above. Bring to boil 6 cups water and 3 cups sugar. Cool. Combine banana mixture with sugar water. Freeze. At the time of serving, mixture should be slushy. Add two 2-liter bottles of Sprite or Fresca to the banana/water mixture and serve.

Julie Hummel, Hawarden, IA

Seasonal Punch

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 12-oz. can frozen orange juice | 4 quarts water |
| 12-oz. can Frozen Lemonade | 3-3/4 cups sugar |
| 4 pkgs. Koolade, any flavor | 2 Liters 7-Up (or Diet 7-Up) |

Mix orange juice, lemonade, Koolade, water and sugar, store in fridge to keep cold. Also refrigerate the 2 liters of 7-Up. Prior to serving - pour in the 2 liter of 7-Up and gently stir to mix. You can use any color Koolade, maybe green for Easter, red for 4th of July, Labor Day and Christmas, and orange for Halloween. Refreshing punch goes well with meals or anytime of day.

Pam Conn, Sioux Falls

Spiced Cocoa Mix

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1/4 cup cocoa | 1/2 cup nondairy powdered creamer |
| 1 cup powdered sugar | 3/4 tsp. cinnamon |
| 2 cups nonfat dry milk powder | 1/2 tsp. nutmeg |

Sift powdered sugar and cocoa together. Add remaining ingredients. Mix well. For each serving, use 1/3 cup mix and 3/4 cup boiling water. Stir. May add a teaspoon of coffee crystals, a dollop of whipped cream, or a teaspoon of liquid flavored coffee creamer.

Elaine Rowett, Sturgis

Creamy Hot Chocolate

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1/2 cup dry baking cocoa | 7-1/2 cups water |
| 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk | 1-1/2 tsp vanilla |
| 1/8 tsp salt | |

Mix cocoa, milk, salt into a crock pot. Add water gradually, stirring into smooth. Cover and cook on high 2 hours, or low 4 hours. Stir in vanilla before serving.

Melissa Roerig, Sioux Falls

Chocolate Latte

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| 1/2 cup hot brewed coffee or 2 shots espresso | 2 teaspoons cocoa nibs |
| 1 Premier Protein 30g High Protein Chocolate Shake | |

In large 14-16-oz. mug, prepare espresso or coffee. Pour chocolate shake on top to combine. Top with cocoa nibs.

www.premierprotein.com

Please send your favorite casserole 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Lake Region Electric Association Bylaws

A full and true copy of the Bylaws of Lake Region Electric Association, Inc. is available to all members in a 20-page booklet. The document can be viewed in digital format by visiting the website: Lakeregion.coop and clicking on "Cooperative Mission and Guiding Principles" from the drop-down menu of the "myCooperative tab" near the top of the home page. Any member who wishes to receive a printed copy can stop by the LREA office at 1212 Main Street, Webster or call and request that one be mailed to you 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869.

Section 3. Qualifications

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director of the Cooperative who is a close relative father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, grandchildren, first cousins or stepchild) of an incumbent director or of an employee of the Cooperative, or is not a member in good standing of the Cooperative and receiving service at his/her primary residential abode or primary business, which must be located in the directorate district that the director is to represent; PROVIDED, that the designated representative of any non-human member, such as a corporation or its designee, shall notwithstanding that he/she does not receive services from the Cooperative at his/her primary residential abode, be eligible to become a director if (1) he/she is in substantial permanent occupancy, direction or use of the premises served by the Cooperative, and (2) is a permanent and year-round resident within the Cooperative's service area or residing not more than fifty (50) miles from the principal location of the non-human member that is being served by the Cooperative; BUT PROVIDED FURTHER, that no more than one such person as the designated representative may serve on the Board at the same time and in the event that he/she should resign or is unwilling to so act, that directorship shall become vacant. No person may become or remain a director of, or to hold any other position of trust in the Cooperative who does not have the legal capacity to enter into a binding contract, or is in any way employed by

or financially interested in a competing enterprise, or a business providing electric services to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electric appliances, fixtures or supplies to, among others, the members of the Cooperative. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director of, or to hold any other position of trust in, the Cooperative who is not at least eighteen (18) years of age. No ex-employee, either retired or terminated, will be eligible to become a director of the Cooperative for at least 5 years after their employment ends. If a nominee for director lacks eligibility under this paragraph or as may be provided elsewhere in these bylaws, the chairperson presiding at the meeting at which such nominee would otherwise be voted upon shall disqualify such nominee.

If any person being considered for, or already holding, a directorship or other position of trust in the Cooperative lacks eligibility under this paragraph, the Board shall withhold such position, or cause such person to be removed therefrom, as the case may be. Nothing contained in this paragraph shall, or shall be construed to, affect in any manner whatsoever the validity of any action taken at any meeting of the Board, unless such action is taken with respect to a matter which is affected by the provisions of this paragraph and in which one or more of the directors have an interest adverse to that of the Cooperative.

Section 4. Nominations

Any fifteen (15) or more members acting together may make nominations

for Board of Directors by a petition filed not less than forty-five (45) days prior to the annual meeting. If no nominating petitions are filed, it shall be the duty of the Board of Directors to appoint, not less than thirty (30) days before the annual meeting at which directors are elected, a committee on nominations consisting of not less than four (4) nor more than eleven (11) members who shall be selected from districts in which the vacancy exists so as to insure equitable representation. No member of the Board of Directors may serve on the committee. The committee shall prepare and file a report, at least twenty (20) days before the annual meeting, of a list of nominations for directors in such districts where no nominating petitions have been filed.

The secretary shall mail, with the notice of meeting or separately but at least seven (7) days before the meeting, a statement of the number of directors to be elected and the names and addresses of candidates.

At the annual meeting, the chairman or his/her designee shall read the statement of the secretary as to number of directors to be elected and the names of nominees.

The chairman or his/her designee shall call for additional nominations from the floor and nominations shall cease after a reasonable time. No member may nominate more than one candidate. Any member intending to nominate a candidate from the floor shall notify the Cooperative prior to the opening of the meeting, to verify qualifications and willingness to serve.

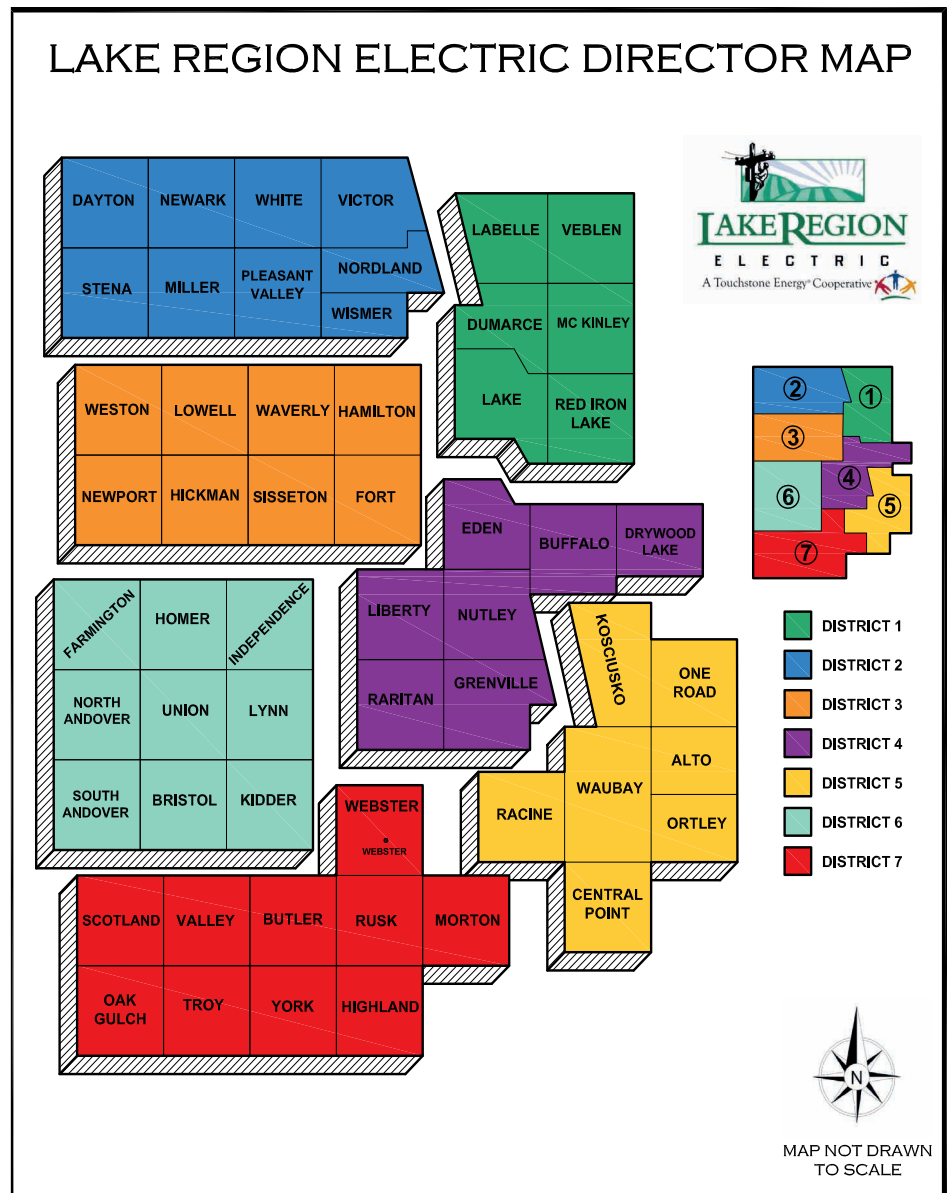
Director Election to Be Held at LREA Annual Meeting

Democratic Member Control is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles guiding Lake Region Electric Association, Inc. (LREA). Cooperatives, like LREA, are democratic organizations, controlled by our members who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. Lake Region Electric Association is governed by a democratically elected board of directors; these elected representatives are accountable to the membership. The board of directors of Lake Region Electric Association, Inc. consists of seven members. Board members are elected to three-year terms at the annual meeting.

Two director seats will be up for election at the LREA annual meeting scheduled to be held June 3, 2021 in Langford. The seats up for election are District 1 and District 7. Individuals who wish to run for election to the board must file a petition signed by fifteen (15) fellow members 45 days prior to the annual meeting. Potential director candidates must be an active member of LREA and agree to attend all meetings. Nominations can be accepted from the floor during the annual meeting. Candidates will be published in the "Annual Meeting Notice to Members."

Serving on the board of directors is a commitment that requires representatives to attend local meetings on a monthly basis as well as state and national meetings. Board members attend trainings and pursue educational opportunities so that they are well informed on regulations and industry trends in order to best serve the members of Lake Region Electric Association.

Our service area is divided into seven districts, as shown on the Lake Region Electric Director Map, with each district being represented by an elected official. The two seats up for election in 2021 are District 1 and District 7. District one, represented in Green on the map, consists of Vebelen, Labelle, Dumarce, McKinley, Lake and Red Iron Lake townships.



District 7, highlighted in red, is made up of Webster, Scotland, Valley, Butler, Rusk, Morton, Oak Gulch, Troy, York, and Highland townships. District 1 is currently represented by Andrea Kilker. District 7 is currently represented by Amy Kuecker. Both incumbents are eligible for re-election.

Members living in these districts who are interested in serving on the Lake Region

Electric Association board of directors are encouraged to call 605-345-3379, or toll free 1-800-657-5869, or stop by our office at 1212 Main Street in Webster for more information or to request a petition. Those wishing to make a nomination from the floor must call the office in advance of the annual meeting to pre-check the candidate for eligibility.



A peek inside the Southwest Power Pool control room shows system operators working to make sure power supply always matches demand across 14 states on the grid. Photo provided by SPP.

AN ENERGY EMERGENCY

Why Did February Outages Happen and Could They Happen Again?

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The national power grid has been hailed as one of the greatest and most complex engineering feats ever achieved. Every second of every day it works to keep electricity flowing freely to homes, schools, farms, hospitals and businesses in every region of the country.

But while it stands as one of mankind's most marvelous inventions, sometimes it's simply no match for Mother Nature.

This electric superhighway was put to the test in mid-February when a bone-chilling air mass swept through large swaths of the country and caused a spike in the demand for power. As the temperatures dropped, millions of Americans attempted to stave off the frigid air by reaching for electric blankets, plugging in space heaters and nudging their thermostats up a few notches. With so many people clamoring to stay warm, the sudden spike in demand for power caused the gatekeepers of the grid to reach their option of last resort: ordering temporary disruptions in service to maintain the delicate balance between demand and supply that's required to keep the network from completely melting down.

The result was several waves of controlled and coordinated rolling blackouts often spanning one hour and isolated incidents of up to three hours for some consumers. The service interruptions impacted nearly one-third of the nation. Industry officials explain that this response to skyrocketing demand was necessary to keep the grid from sustaining extensive damage and causing a repeat of the historic event that occurred in the summer of 2003. The Northeast Blackout extended across the eastern seaboard, through parts of the Midwest and into southern Canada and left approximately 50 million in the dark.

"Controlled outages are necessary to prevent widespread damage to the grid, which could cause a cascade of outages that could potentially be far more devastating," explained Barbara Sugg, CEO of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP). "There's no doubt this would have been a much more significant event if our individual customers and businesses and industries had not all pulled together to reduce the load."

Air Traffic Controllers for the Grid

Sugg describes her organization as an "air traffic controller" for the grid. In fact, the SPP is what's known in the electric utility industry as a Regional Transmission Organization (RTO). It's one of the four quasi-government entities responsible for maintaining the critical balance between supply and demand along the nation's power grid. While RTOs don't create or generate power, they are charged under the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) with the task of making sure the power produced by other utilities flows smoothly across the grid and gets to the places where consumers need it, when they need it.

SPP is the power transmission overseer for 14 states - including South Dakota - and more than 17 million people in the midsection of the U.S. from North Dakota to the Texas Panhandle. Electric co-ops in South Dakota are also part of the Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), a federal agency that markets power produced from hydroelectric dams in the Upper Midwest. It operates the larger bulk transmission facilities in 15 central and western states in its geographical footprint.

Most of the time the high-voltage transmission process operates without a hitch, and electric generation can be moved across the grid when there is high demand in one area and excess generation in another. But when foul weather comes into the picture grid operators focus on activating their emergency response plans. Those plans typically include communicating with generators to coordinate arrangements for assuring that an ample supply of power will be available to meet projected demand when the inclement weather strikes.

Lanny Nickell, operations manager for SPP, points out that while arrangements were in place to face the February cold snap, the winter blast turned out to be an unprecedented event for the organization. As the temperatures dropped, SPP initiated the process of contacting power generators and transmitters to warn that the looming storm may cause the system to be severely strained. Six days later, SPP officials went

through a series of three Energy Emergency Alert levels and eventually declared a Level 3 emergency, which required “controlled interruptions of service,” or rolling blackouts. It was the first time in the SPP’s 80 years that a Level 3 emergency was declared.

“Despite our plans, the severe weather coupled with a limited fuel supply hampered our ability to balance our supply with the demand from end-use consumers,” Nickell said. “So, first we had to go out and ask for a voluntary reduction in energy use. Then, we held off as long as we could to make the call to interrupt service in a controlled fashion, but it was necessary to prevent overloading the system and causing an even bigger problem and much longer outages.”

Nickell explained that without an affordable and viable means of storing high-voltage electricity for future use, power is created in one location and consumed in another location in real time. The balance must be maintained even though both supply and consumption change on a second-by-second basis.

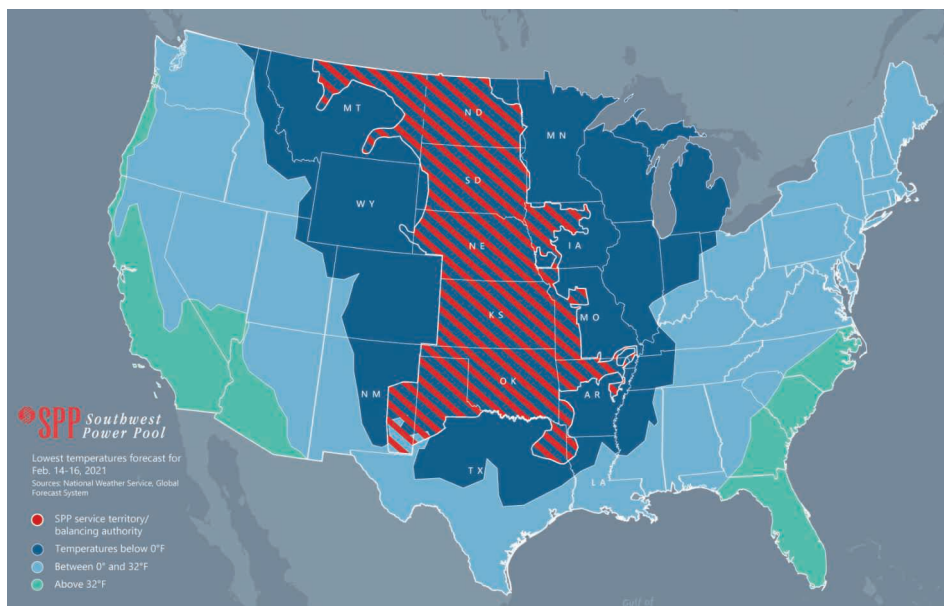
“Once we observe an imbalance, we have to react within seconds to reduce the demand,” Nickell said. “This is why it’s very difficult for us to announce well beforehand when these things will happen because they happen at the speed of light.”

A Smorgasbord of Fuel Sources

Interruptions in service are more than minor inconveniences for many co-op members, especially when severe weather conditions are in play. The February storm and the ensuing service outages triggered wide-ranging discussions about the push toward renewable resources to generate electricity.

Supporters of fossil fuels point out that decades-long efforts to curb coal and natural gas played a part in restricting the kinds of available resources that could have prevented widespread outages. Coal has long been a reliable source of “baseload power” requirements, or the amount of power necessary to provide an adequate supply to meet basic needs without interruption. It’s utilized largely because it can be more easily controlled compared to intermittent sources. Advocates emphasize that wind turbines were frozen in place and solar panels were buried in snow and limited by scarce sunlight during this event.

Renewable fuel source proponents echoed SPP officials in noting that the February storm was an historic occurrence. They contend that renewable power promotes a cleaner environment, decreases energy reliance on other countries, adds jobs to the economy and that innovations in the emerging industry



could be effective in responding to any future storms. Presently, roughly 25 percent of South Dakota’s overall energy supply comes from wind turbines. For electric co-ops, that figure is closer to 20 percent. Proponents of wind also point to issues with natural gas delivery and the inability of some fossil fuel plants to produce electricity through the storm. A combination of high demand, lower-than-normal wind resources and natural gas delivery problems all met at the same time to contribute to the energy emergency.

As for those members of RTOs who receive the call to actually implement controlled outages - particularly transmission and distribution cooperatives - there are very few options available when demand begins to significantly outpace supply on the grid.

Chris Studer is chief member and public relations officer for East River Electric, a co-op that provides transmission and substation services for distribution entities in South Dakota and Minnesota. He said the cooperative’s hands are essentially tied when SPP reaches the point of calling for rolling outages.

“The utilities involved in the SPP are required to carry a surplus of generation resources throughout the year over and above their historic peak demand so they are prepared for extreme circumstances. However, when wind resources and other generation are constrained, there is a limited amount of other generation available to serve the region’s recent record demand for electricity,” he said.

Distribution co-ops find they have even less control when RTOs and power marketing agencies restrict the flow of power, but they still find ways to mitigate the situation. Officials at West River Electric based in Wall, implemented

“Once we observe an imbalance, we have to react within seconds to reduce the demand. This is why it’s very difficult for us to announce well beforehand when these things will happen because they happen at the speed of light.”

- Lanny Nickell, SPP

the co-op’s load management program after receiving the request for reduced demand hoping it would be enough. But it was not, and some of the co-op’s members were subject to a 50-minute unplanned blackout. CEO Dick Johnson said he had never experienced a similar event in his 27 years in the industry. He added that he hopes the emergency situation prompts discussions centered around policy proposals that will prevent future emergencies.

“I think we should have a national conversation that includes large new baseload generation, whether that be hydroelectric, nuclear or carbon capture on coal plants. We must also have a conversation about building necessary electric and gas transmission infrastructure to allow us to get electricity and gas to the places where it is needed when times like this happen. If not, I am afraid it will happen again in the future, only more frequently.”



Rose Hill Church is a congregation that is growing and continuing to make improvements to its buildings and ministries.

Community Spotlight: Country Church Thrives and Expands

Laura London

Administrative Assistant llondon@lakeregion.coop

Driving through rural areas of the country, one thing you often see is abandoned churches. “Country Churches” are often falling to the wayside due to declining membership and the difficulties of finding leadership. While we have seen some decline in some rural churches in our area, Rose Hill Evangelical Free Church located near Langford, is not having that problem. They are growing to the point where they have needed to expand to provide for a larger congregation. The size of the congregation and attendance at Rose Hill has nearly doubled in the past six years. Early 2020, they would see around 120 people attend services on a Sunday. After the pandemic hit our area, those numbers declined considerably. Attendance, however, is getting back to regular numbers as members seek normalcy and fellowship with 90 congregants attending service in-person, the first weekend of February.

Rose Hill Evangelical Free Church started more than 110 years ago. In 1907, a group of believers began meeting in their homes.

In 1916, the first church building was built on the very same plot of land where the church sits today. The parsonage was built in 1972; prior to that the pastor’s home was a small country house a couple of miles away. A separate fellowship hall was built in the early 1980s. With the growing congregation and expanding services, the church decided they need to remodel.

They are currently about three years into the re-modeling project and continue to make improvements. Lake Region Electric has been proud to work on this project with the church. When the church decided they needed to remodel in order to effectively serve their congregation, they designated a building committee. One of the first steps was to figure out how to raise money. The building committee began a capital campaign and set two goals. They had a base goal and what they termed as a “miracle goal.” They decided to call it a miracle goal because a consultant they hired felt the goal was nearly impossible and it would be a miracle if they raised that much. Paula Jensen, from Langford, was the Capital Campaign Leader for this project, with determination and faith in her fellow church members, she set about obtaining that miracle goal. The committee asked its members to make



Church members make bandage rolls to be used by hospital patients in the Congo.

a three-year commitment. This was a success, as they have reached that goal!

According to Pastor Mike Honl, “A ton of people from the church have been working together on the remodel project; they have done an awesome job!” The renovations are being made, not only to accommodate the larger number of attendees, but it is also designed to encourage and facilitate fellowship and education. Walking in the doors of the church, you enter into

an expanded foyer. This is a spacious, welcoming area where a good portion of fellowship and “meeting” happens among tables, sofas, chairs and just room to stand around and chat. People follow the flow of the worship space and the foyer allows a nice flow into the sanctuary, expanded fellowship hall, and classrooms. The interior design committee has worked hard to create an inviting atmosphere. The colorful “KIDS” sign in the stairwell lights the way to the classrooms in the basement where around 50 school-age children attend Sunday School and Youth Group activities. Honl comments that the attendance of youth activities has really grown with the young adult membership.

The congregation of Rose Hill Church consists of members from about a 30-mile radius and has been led by Pastor Mike Honl for nine years. Nine years is quite a long tenure for a rural pastor; on average, most rural pastors are at a single location for about three years. Rose Hill Church didn’t even hire a full-time pastor until sometime in the 1940s! Pastor Mike grew up in the Twin Cities and met his wife, Becca, while attending college at NDSU. He attended seminary in Chicago before arriving at Rose Hill. While at seminary, he had a mentor with local ties; Lee Eclow grew up in the Rose Hill Church. Moving to such a rural area was quite a culture shock at first, but they assimilated quickly, and it did not take them long to know that this is home. Becca works at GROW South Dakota. They have three children; ages 7, 5 and 3 and of course, their extended church family.

While COVID-19 caused some disruption of regular Sunday services, Rose Hill Church was still able to meet the needs of its members. Church deacons regularly reached out to members to make sure they were getting along. Initially, they held some outdoor services and members attended from their vehicles but with advanced technology, offering service on-line became a very popular option. It seems that most everyone is ready to return to normal and resume regular fellowship.

Rose Hill Church does several types of outreach, within their church family, local communities and even the Congo



Bev Jensen and Joy Jensen are passionate about their global White Cross project.

of Africa. Serving the church family and local community is top priority. The church does a lot in conjunction with the local food pantry and area youth. Deacons and members do outreach with members who are unable to attend services. A popular program is to make blankets and meals for families welcoming new babies. About six women from the church help out with projects for a global outreach ministry called White Cross. White Cross supports vital needs around the world to promote health and wellness, education and abolish global slavery. Those seem like pretty lofty goals for a small group of women from a rural church in South Dakota but they work hard to provide supplies to the Tandala Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Any given day you may find ladies in the church making supplies to send to the hospitals. Early in February, Joy Jensen and Bev Jensen were there making bandage rolls from bedsheets that were donated from a hotel in Aberdeen. These bandage rolls are a staple for the hospital. They are made simply from tearing bed sheets into 4” strips then made into rolls. Along with hospital supplies, the ladies make kits for girls, children’s clothing and layette sets which encourage mothers to come to the hospital to give birth in a more sanitary

environment than they would normally. The ladies are very passionate about their projects and appreciate donations of fabric and sewing material that they can use for the blankets and quilts for their church families and for clothing for their mission projects. As with many members of Rose Hill Church, Joy and Bev, who are neighbors married to brothers, have been dedicated members for many years. Joy, who has been attending services there for 57 years, has witnessed some very dramatic changes.

Changes due to growth are a great thing, especially in an age when the country church seems to be a thing of the past. Pastor Mike said the biggest challenge to the changes is assimilation. Introducing new technology and implementing change is working, but it takes the entire church community to support each other through the changes. One way the church promotes community togetherness and fellowship is through meals and potlucks. “Jesus met with people around meals. That still works best today.” The vision of a country church shouldn’t be a lonely, once beautiful building in the middle of nowhere; it should be a welcoming and warm picture, like Rose Hill Church near Fort Sisseton State Park in Northeast South Dakota.



This electric vehicle owned by Sioux Valley Energy is used as a fleet vehicle for the cooperative but also serves to educate members about EV technology and performance.

Electric Vehicles in SD

Electric Co-ops Working to Build Fast Charging Stations

Billy Gibson

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General Motors turned a lot of heads earlier this year when the auto industry titan announced its intention to phase out all gas and diesel engines by 2035. GM made sure its message was loud and clear by running ads during the Super Bowl.

Not to be outdone, Ford CEO Jim Farley soon followed suit by announcing the company's plans to invest \$29 billion in the development of autonomous vehicles (AVs) and electric vehicles (EVs) by 2025. And against a backdrop of companies like Tesla and Workhorse seeing triple-digit stock gains, President Joe Biden rolled out plans to turn the entire 650,000-vehicle federal government fleet to all electric.

With a solid upward trend in support of E-mobility and electric vehicles sweeping the globe, electric cooperatives throughout the region are doing their part to provide the power those vehicles will need to carry their passengers from Point A to Point B.

According to Ben Pierson, manager of beneficial electrification at Sioux Valley

Energy, the state's electric cooperatives are facing a chicken-and-egg proposition in deciding whether - and how much - to invest in an industry that's still in its early stages. Pierson has been involved in rallying support for the formation of a DC fast charging network that will make it easy for EV drivers to navigate across and throughout the state. The stations will be placed 75-100 miles apart but will have to be constructed before the demand is fully materialized. He has received interest from groups representing tourism, economic development, transportation and state government.

Pierson has been working with municipal and investor-owned utilities to build out the infrastructure, with an emphasis on making sure there are enough charging stations along I-90 to get travelers from one side of the state to the other with confidence. Stations will also be installed along the I-29 corridor in Brookings and Watertown in Phase 1, with plans to include a station in Vermillion as part of Phase 2. Pierson points out that "range anxiety" is a major obstacle for consumers and early adopters who are considering the purchase of an EV. Presently, EVs

make up less than 1 percent of the total U.S. vehicle fleet while 10 percent of the vehicles sold in Europe last December were pure electric.

A recent study by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago indicated that EVs are driven about half the distance - an average of 5,300 miles a year - compared to conventional internal combustion engine vehicles. One conclusion taken from the study is that EV owners see those vehicles as complements to their transportation needs instead of a replacement for their conventional cars.

"When industry giants like Ford and GM are making a commitment to electric vehicles, that's a huge indicator that EVs are more than just a passing fad and are something we should invest in," Pierson said. "But like any industry transformation, it can be a frightening proposition for people to experience a paradigm shift like this. With our members in mind, we're committed to staying out ahead of the wave and doing what we can to make sure the power delivery infrastructure is in place when the other pieces and parts of the total picture emerge."

DC Fast Charging Infrastructure Plan



Utilities are in the process of conducting siting plans and ordering equipment needed to install the network of charging stations. In the state Legislature, lawmakers favored a \$50 annual fee on electric vehicles which don't contribute the gas tax revenue that goes toward construction and maintenance of road and highway infrastructure. Presently, there are roughly 400 EVs on South Dakota roadways.

"We're just tremendously excited to be a part of this project," Pierson said. "Our goal is to help our members in any way we can and we want to be there on the ground floor as the industry continues to expand."

Collaborating with Pierson is Robert Raker, manager of public relations at West River Electric. They are working with utilities throughout South Dakota

and Minnesota to build out the DC fast charging infrastructure. The plan is to initially focus on major highways and interstates and then branch out from there.

The way Raker sees it, getting involved in constructing a charging station network is a sound investment in the economic growth and development of cooperative communities. He said cooperatives are leading the way by purchasing EVs of their own as demonstration models for their members and also as part of the cooperative's fleet. West River Electric's Nissan Leaf is used for business purposes throughout the day and is quite the attraction at community events on the weekends. He noted that co-ops have a long history of innovation and progress.

"Many co-ops are formulating plans to

migrate their light-duty service vehicles to EV," Raker said. "Co-ops have always been at the tip of the innovation spear. We were the first to bring power to rural South Dakota and we made sure people had access to power in order to run their farms, homes and appliances...things that would make their lives easier while allowing their communities to prosper."

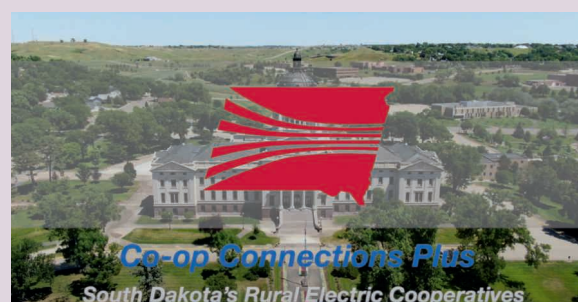
Part of West River's overall EV strategy, Raker said, is to address the issue of whether the escalating number of EVs will increase stress on the electric power grid.

"EVs make the perfect load for co-ops," he said. "They can be charged during off-peak hours so they are not detrimental to the grid. Like it or not, EVs are coming. We can't change the wind so we'll have to adjust our sails."

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for "Co-op Connections Plus" and you'll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



Bright Futures Virtual Career Fair Showcases Rural, Agri-Business Job Opportunities

Shayla Ebsen

Grow a rewarding and challenging career right here at home. That was the overarching theme of the Bright Futures virtual career fair that was hosted on Feb. 24 by the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. South Dakota and western Minnesota high school and post-secondary students, educational advisers, teachers, and parents from across the region attended the free virtual career event that highlighted rural-based careers and explored industries like finance, precision ag and agricultural trades.

"Our cooperative family is committed to enhancing the communities we serve," said Jennifer Gross, education and outreach coordinator at East River Electric Power Cooperative, one of the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that hosted the event.

Attendees were able to connect with each other, respond to survey questions, post their own comments and photos, and participate in real-time Q&A sessions with presenters.

"We hosted this unique event to inspire our youth with local stories emphasizing job opportunities, career development, personal fulfillment and financial advancement. There are hidden career gems throughout South Dakota and Minnesota. This event shined a light on all the ways our rural areas offer a bright future!"



The five-hour virtual event featured a blend of keynote speakers and breakout sessions. Attendees were able to connect with each other, respond to survey questions, post their own comments and photos, and participate in real-time Q&A sessions with presenters.

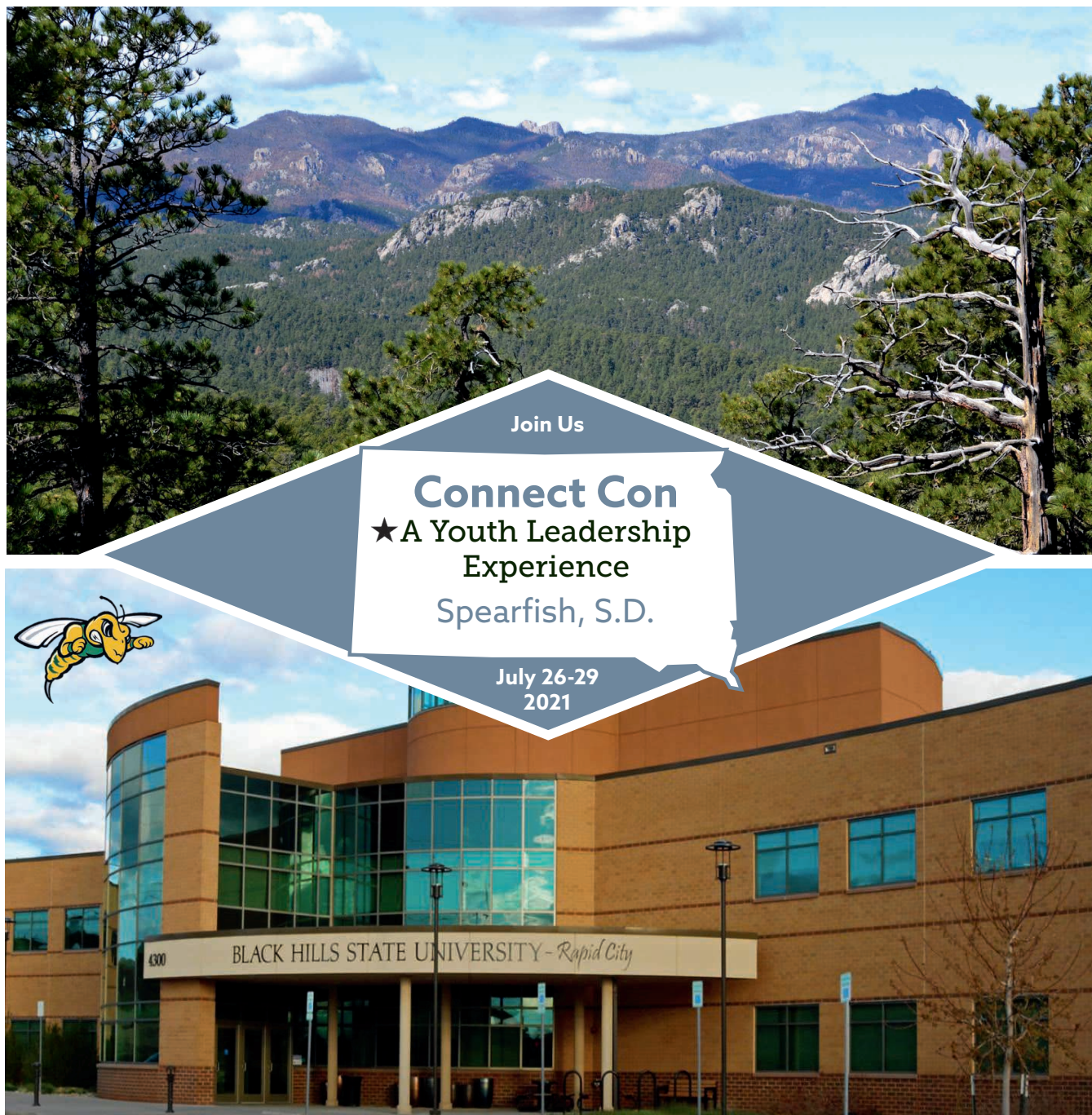
South Dakota Representative Dusty Johnson opened the event with a timely discussion about politics, agriculture and our region's future. Johnson also discussed how decisions made in Washington, D.C., have a big impact on what happens in our region and why it's important for citizens to remain engaged. A few of the many companies featured during the career fair included Farm Credit Services of America, C&B Operations, Raven Industries, Midwest Vet Services, Salem Vet Clinic and Pipestone System. A panel discussion led by East River Electric Business Development Director Mike Jaspers explored opportunities that are on the horizon for the next generation of farmers, ranchers and rural social media influencers. South Dakota Ag and Rural Leadership Foundation CEO Don Norton provided the event's closing remarks.

"The nature of work in rural America is changing. Growing industries such as precision agriculture, livestock development, food processing, manufacturing, energy, communications and more require



different skills, as well as an entrepreneurial spirit," said Gross. "This is truly a great time to be starting your career in our region and our goal was to highlight those awesome opportunities for our next generation of leaders."

Recorded videos from the event will be available free for viewing at yourcoop-power.com/futures. Additionally, the webpage will include information on internships and job opportunities at many of the employers that were featured in the event.



Join Us

Connect Con
★ A Youth Leadership
Experience
Spearfish, S.D.

July 26-29
2021

Summer Fun

Attention high school students! If your parent or guardian is an active member-owner of Lake Region Electric, you have a chance to take an all-expenses-paid trip to the beautiful Black Hills this summer for a youth leadership event. If chosen, you will travel with other students from electric cooperatives throughout the state and take part in South Dakota's Connect Con: A Youth Leadership Experience.

How to Qualify

- Students may apply if their parent or guardian is an active member-owner of Lake Region Electric Association.
- Students must be in high school.
- Students must apply for the trip at www.lakeregion.coop.

Participants will stay on campus at Black Hills State University in Spearfish, S.D., on July 26-29, and have the opportunity to sightsee, meet new friends and gain valuable leadership skills while taking part in our youth leadership activities. They will also be able to tour a local electric co-op and learn about "The Story Behind the Switch" and see how electricity is directed into their homes.

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

March 19-20

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD 605-332-6000

March 23-24 CANCELED

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD 605-394-4115

March 25

A Lakota View of the Dead Hills, Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, Deadwood, SD 605-722-4800

March 27

Hill City Community Easter Egg Hunt, Hill City Area Chamber of Commerce, Hill City, SD 605-574-2368

March 27

Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt, City Park, Groton, SD 605-846-7607

March 27

SD State High School All-State Band Concert, Mitchell Fine Arts Center, Mitchell, SD

April 1-3

ACL Regional #6 Cornhole Tournament, Corn Palace, Mitchell, SD 605-996-5567

April 3

Spring Fling Fun & Glow Egg Hunt, Rush Mountain Adventure Park, Keystone, SD 605-255-4384



April 8

The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest, Sioux Falls Arena/Virtual, Sioux Falls, SD 605-339-1203

April 9-10

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Main Street, Deadwood, SD 605-578-1876

April 9-18

Four Weddings & An Elvis, Mitchell Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD 605-996-9137

April 17

Winefest Renaissance, Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD 605-225-8714

April 20

All-State Chorus & Orchestra Concert, Denny Sanford PREMIER Center, Sioux Falls, SD

April 22-May 2

Beauty and the Beast, Sioux Empire Community Theatre, Sioux Falls, SD 605-367-6000

April 23-24

Junkin' Market Days, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD 605-941-4958

April 30-May 2

Radium Girls, Pierre Players Community Theatre, Pierre, SD 605-224-7826

May 8

Davis Flea Market & Artisan Fair, Main Street, Davis, SD 605-940-0069

May 15

Red Dirt Music Festival featuring Casey Donahew, Ian Munsick and Randy Burghardt Deadwood Mountain Grand, Deadwood, SD 605-559-0386

May 21-23

Annual Sound of Silence Tesla Rally, Downtown, Custer, SD 605-673-2244

May 21-23

State Parks Open House and Free Fishing Weekend, All State Parks and Recreation Areas, SD 605-773-3391

May 22

Frühlingsfest & Spring Market, Main Street, Rapid City, SD 605-716-7979

June 5-6

18th Annual Wessington Springs Foothills Rodeo, Wessington Springs Rodeo Grounds, Wessington Springs, SD 605-770-5720

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.