

Lake Region Electric

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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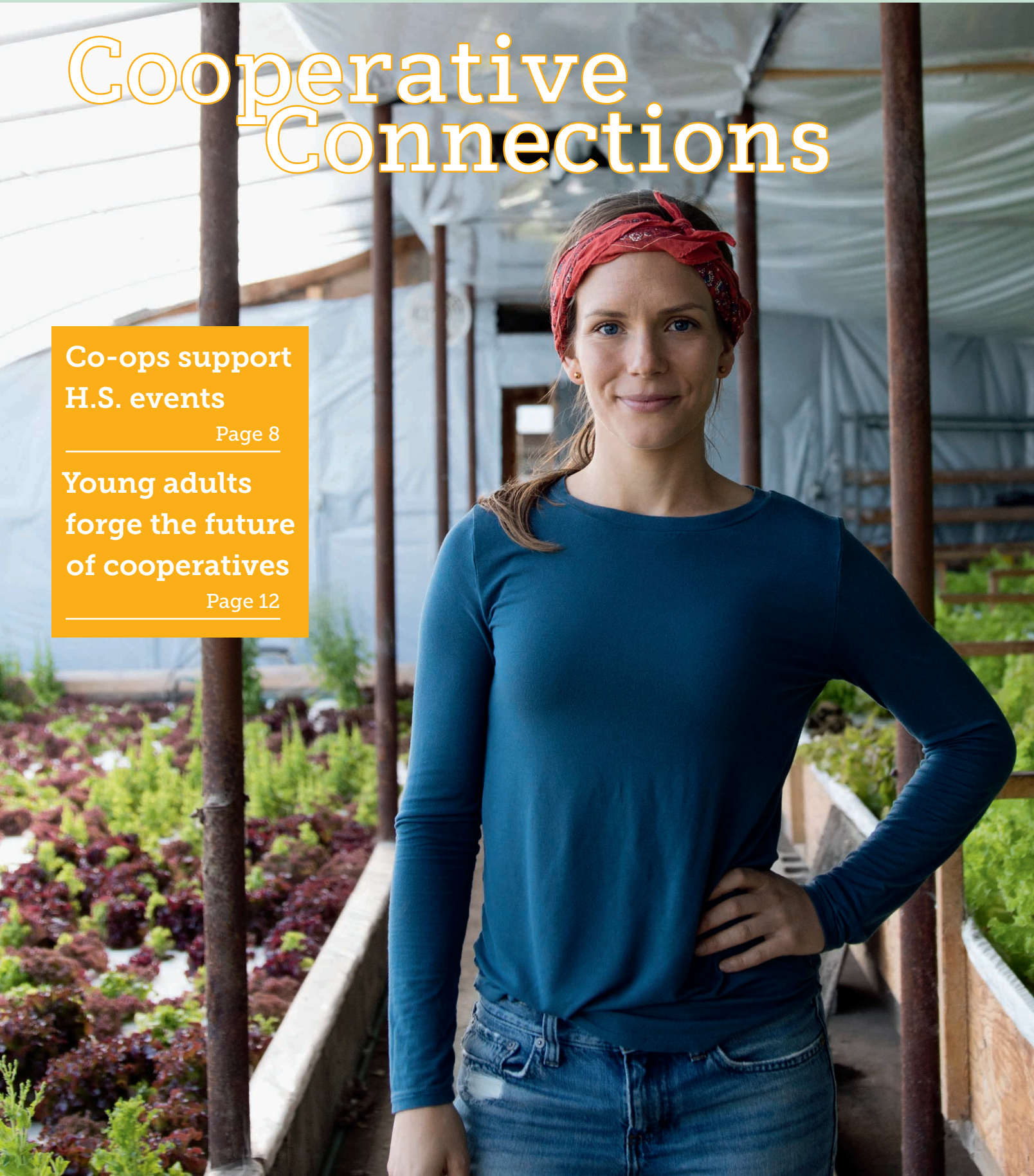
Cooperative Connections

**Co-ops support
H.S. events**

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**Young adults
forge the future
of cooperatives**

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Meeting During Unprecedented Times



Tim McIntyre

General Manager
tmcintyre@lakeregion.coop

Thank you for joining us as we celebrated the 79th Annual Meeting of Lake Region Electric Association, Inc. on Aug. 6 at Fort Sisseton State Park. The weather was beautiful and overall it was a great time for this outdoor event.

This year, our annual meeting was done completely different than any other time, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The drive-in style meeting helped us follow the CDC guidelines on social distancing in order to do our part to protect employees and members from potential exposure to this crazy virus.

Our bylaws require that we have an annual meeting and it is very important to us that we have a transparent election of officers and view of our finances for our members.

Lake Region Electric's mission statement is "to provide the highest quality of services and products to it's members while maintaining competitive rates." More than that, though, we are a cooperative family and enjoy the relationships that we have with you , our member owners.

Thank you for making our annual meeting such a special time.

Thank you and God Bless,

Timothy McIntyre



**Manager of Office Services
Donna Sattler handed out
Radio Station cards, ballots and
meal vouchers.**



**General Manager Tim McIntyre
addressed the members from
the top of a flat-bed trailer.**



**Welcome
New LREA
Members**

**William Kremer
Jeff Petersen
Cottonwood Livestock Inc
Ronald Fleischhacker
Andrew & Erin Wiswall
John & Cindy Hagen
Brad & Brian Randall
Randall Luggert**



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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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LREA Unclaimed Capital Credits

The following members were unable to receive their Capital Credit refund checks. If you know the current address or phone number of anyone listed here, please let them know or contact Lake Region Electric Association by calling 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869 or by sending an email to lakeregion@lakeregion.coop. Thank you for your help!

First Name	Last Name
Paul or Barbara	Ackerman
Mike or Becky	Bergquist
Melorene	Black Thunder
Lake County Sports C/O Robert	Boever
Joseph	Bosmoe
Bonnie	Buhl
Dakota Nation Broadcasting C/O Tom	Wilson
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John Kraft Estate C/O Marge	Kraft
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Donald	Monson
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Doug or Cindy	Nelson
Donald or Corrine	Nordling
James or Viola	Nordquist
Jody	Owen
John	Owen
James W. or Susan	Parker
Mike or Leona or Dennis Parrow	Parrow
Stefanie	Piel
Paul	Pitkin
Carl	Privatt
Paul or Marie	Rickert
Robert or Delores or Linda Stanfill	Rosand
Gaylon G. or Patsy	Scotting
Mark	Selzer, Jr
Jeff	Thayer
Edward	Vrchota
Marilyn	Wickre



**OUR OFFICE
WILL BE
CLOSED
LABOR DAY
SEPTEMBER
7, 2020**

Recreational Boating: Stay Safe on the Water

With more than 11 million recreational vessels registered in the U.S., millions of Americans are enjoying time on and in the water.

Each year, roughly 4,000 boating incidents occur, causing more than 2,500 injuries and about \$46 million in property damage. Stay safe by being prepared and using the appropriate equipment, whether enjoying a ride on a motorized boat, paddling a kayak or wakeboarding.

Life jackets are at the core of safe boating, whether using a motorized or non-motorized vessel. The U.S. Coast Guard reports 76 percent of boating deaths in 2017 were due to drowning, and 84 percent of the victims were not wearing a life jacket.

While regulations on life jacket use vary from state to state, the Wear It program of the National Safe Boating Council promotes boating safety by encouraging boaters to wear life jackets any time they are on a boat, motorized or non-motorized.

Good swimmers still need life jackets. When people fall off a boat, they may become disoriented, injured or unconscious. Life jackets can keep victims' heads above water so they can breathe and be rescued more easily. Every child should wear a life jacket at all times when boating.

Choose the right life jacket for the activities you will be doing. Double check to make sure the life jackets are U.S. Coast Guard approved and fit correctly:

- Make sure the jacket is a proper fit for your size and weight
- Make sure the jacket is properly fastened
- Hold your arms straight up over your head, ask a friend to grasp the tops of the arm openings and gently pull up; make sure there is no excess room above the openings and that the jacket does not ride up over your chin or face.

The National Safe Boating Council encourages following these boating safety tips to help minimize risks:

- Take a National Association of Boating Law Administrators safety course
- Be familiar with the boating state laws
- Know the "Rules of the Road"
- When operating a motorized boat, know about carbon monoxide; this odorless, colorless poisonous gas is emitted by all combustion engines and onboard motor generators.

Taggart, Schmidt win Glenn English scholarships

Anneliese Taggart of Vermillion recently landed a \$10,000 scholarship award presented by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Carter Schmidt of Colman also won a \$1,000 scholarship through the Glenn English Youth Tour Alumni Scholarship program.

Taggart and Schmidt were participants in the 2016 NRECA Washington Youth Tour. Taggart was sponsored by Clay-Union Electric Corp., while Schmidt was sponsored by Sioux Valley Energy.

Taggart was elected by her peers to join the Youth Leadership Council. She participated in a grassroots panel discussion at NRECA's Annual Meeting last year and also helped teach a

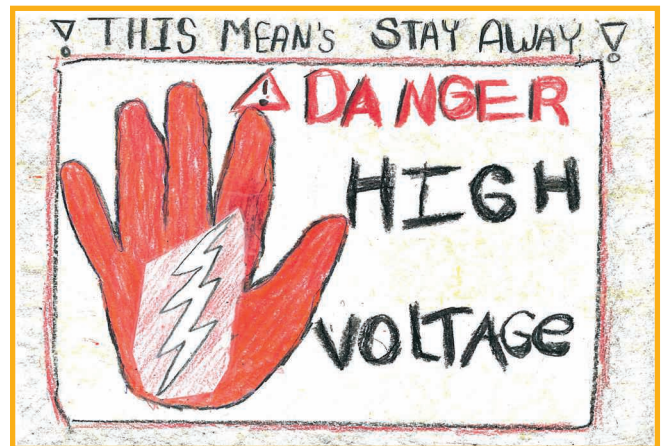
course called "Bridging the Gap" to encourage young adults to vote.

Now in its fifth year, the Glenn English National Cooperative Leadership Foundation has awarded nearly \$100,000 in scholarships to NRECA Youth Tour alumni.

The Glenn English scholarships are one of the few sources of private scholarships for college students. Applicants are required to have completed one year of college as a full-time student.

Glenn English, former CEO of NRECA, spent his career championing the co-op business model and fighting to improve the quality of life for all Americans. A native of Oklahoma, he served 10 terms in Congress.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Danger! High voltage! This means stay away!"

David Biggins, 10 years old

David Biggins is the son of Jessy and Katie Biggins. They reside in Gregory, S.D., and are members of Rosebud Electric Association.

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.

Goodies from the Garden

Mashed Potatoes with Kale

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 4 med. potatoes | 1/4 c. grated cheese (cheddar or Colby) |
| 2 Tbs. butter | |
| 1 Tbs. milk or cream | 1-1/2 c. chopped raw kale, mid-ribs removed |

Peel potatoes if desired, cut into chunks, boil until tender, about 15-20 minutes. Drain, mash and add remaining ingredients. Stir until well combined. Serve with sea salt and pepper. *Mary Jessen, Holabird, SD*

Cabbage Salad Bowl

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 cups shredded cabbage | 1/2 tsp. salt |
| 1 c. shredded carrots | 2 Tbs. sugar |
| 2 Tbs. tarragon vinegar | 1/2 c. light raisins |
| 1/4 c. mayonnaise | 1/4 c. orange juice |

Soak raisins in orange juice while preparing vegetables. Combine cabbage, carrots, sugar and salt in a bowl. Add mayonnaise along with raisins and juice. Toss lightly. Refrigerate until time to serve. Serves 8. *Verna Knapp, Waubay, SD*

Balsamic Vegetable Salad

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 3 lg. tomatoes, wedged | 1/4 c. balsamic vinegar |
| 3 med. cucumbers, peeled, halved and sliced | 3 Tbs. water |
| 1/2 c. olive oil | 1 envelope Italian dressing mix |

In a salad bowl combine tomatoes and cucumbers; in another small bowl whisk oil vinegar, water and dressing mix. Pour over vegetables and toss to coat. Yields: 6 servings. *Jane Barthel, Elkton, SD*

Rhubarb Upside Down Cake

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Yellow cake mix | 3-4 c. sugar |
| 4-6 c. rhubarb, chopped | 1 pint whipping cream |

Mix cake mix as directed. Put in a 9x13-inch pan. Mix rhubarb with sugar; pour over cake. Pour whipping cream over mixture and bake at 350 for 30-45 minutes. *Shirley Dreher, Clark, SD*

Zucchini Dish

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1/4 c. cooking oil | 1/2 med. green, red or yellow pepper cut in thin strips |
| 1 lb. unpeeled thinly sliced zucchini | |
| 1 lg. carrot, coarsely shredded | 1/4 tsp. dried basil, crushed |
| 1 lg. onion, chopped | Dash of pepper |
| 3/4 c. chopped celery | 1/2 c. taco sauce |
| 1/2 tsp. garlic salt | 2 tsps. prepared mustard |
| | 2 medium tomatoes, cut in wedges |

Heat cooking oil in a 10-inch skillet. Add sliced zucchini, shredded carrot, chopped onion, chopped celery, pepper strips, garlic salt, basil and pepper. Mix well, cook covered, over medium-high heat 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine taco sauce and mustard; stir into vegetables. Add tomato wedges, cook uncovered, 3-5 minutes or till heated through. Makes 4-6 servings. Optional: sprinkle with shredded cheese of your choice. *Rachel Brezczinski, Marshall, MN*

Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 24-28 cherry tomatoes | 1 medium cucumber, peeled and diced |
| 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened | 2 teaspoons minced dill |
| 2 tablespoons mayonnaise | fresh dill, for garnish |
| 3 green onion stalks, diced | |

Cut thin slice off top of each tomato. Scoop out pulp. Invert tomatoes on paper towel to drain. In medium bowl, combine cream cheese and mayonnaise until smooth. Stir in cucumber, green onion and dill. Spoon mixture into tomatoes. Top with fresh dill. Refrigerate until ready to serve. www.culinary.net.

Please send your favorite pasta 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

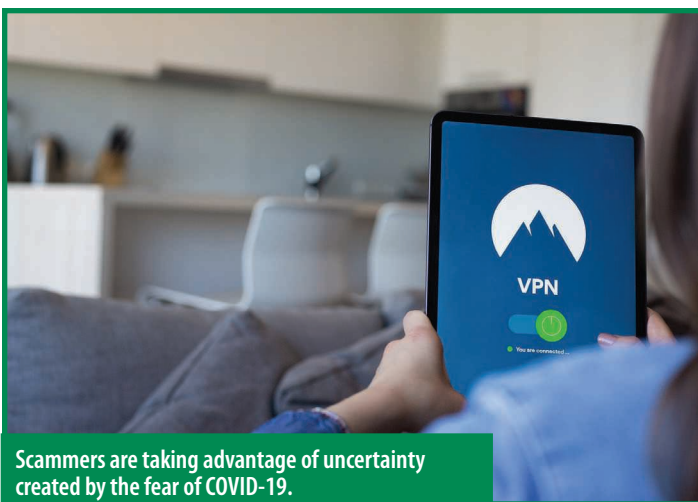


Cybersecurity tips don't work if they aren't implemented.

Four Ways to be Cyber Safe

We all know the internet can be dangerous and scary, and we've all seen the lists of ideas for better cybersecurity.

The problem is, cybersecurity tips aren't helpful unless we act on them. Sure, we should use long passwords and change them regularly—but will we really do that?



Scammers are taking advantage of uncertainty created by the fear of COVID-19.

This article includes four tips for making yourself safer from cyber scammers and hackers, but first, let's look at a few reasons that might encourage you to put those tips into action.

Be afraid. Be very afraid. Bad things really can happen on the internet. A smooth-talking con artist on the end of the phone

can charm or bully you into revealing your Social Security Number or credit card number, or malware can monitor your keyboard and capture your password to your favorite website.

Criminals use this information to access your credit cards and bank accounts, especially if you use the same password for multiple accounts. Children can also be victimized by cyberbullying. Think about what's on your computer or your smartphone that you don't want to lose or give away. Keeping those dangers top of mind can help motivate you to take small steps to prevent them.

Make your own rules. When you see a good cyber safety tip but don't think you'll really take the advice, figure out a way you might be able to put it into action. Maybe you're the kind of person who pays attention to a reminder note on your refrigerator. Maybe you know you won't keep track of different passwords on all your internet-connected devices, but you might be more likely to regularly update a strong password on the server in your home—that can be a good option if all your connections are coming through that one point of entry.

The time is now. Experts warn of a triple-threat these days. First, scammers are taking advantage of COVID-19 uncertainty, from offering phony cures and tests, to promises of financial assistance. Second, with more people working from home due to social distancing, there may be fewer office-based security measures in place. Third, the FBI warns that increased use of mobile banking offers more chances for cybercrime. And if you're the sort of person who thinks in terms of months,

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, which can be a great time to act on this year's theme, "Do your part #BeCyberSmart—If You Connect It, Protect It."

So, here are four cybersecurity tips to keep you safe:

Use strong passwords

And change them regularly—many sites and apps make that easy to do by clicking on the "forgot your password" link. The best passwords are at least eight characters and include different types of characters—try using a memorable verse from your favorite song and adding a few numbers and special characters, (\$! _ &) or even a space. If you are like most people, remembering all your passwords is a challenge. Choose a security option based on the value of what you're protecting. The options you

Chose a security option based on the value of what you're protecting.

use to secure your bank and retirement account passwords might be different than how you store your social media passwords. Password apps keep them in one place and may be a great option for some passwords, but you can be in big trouble if you forget the password that lets you into that app. Keeping passwords on paper or in a notebook might be more secure than using the same password for everything, depending on how secure and hidden that paper is from other people at the office or kids at home.

Install software updates

Your apps and operating systems will periodically send updates. Install them—they often include protections against



the latest security threats. But remember, those updates come from the apps and not from emails or social media notices. An email containing an update may be a scam—instead of clicking on the link, go to the app's website to see if there really are updates available.

Use two-factor authentication

That phrase is just a fancy word for a technique that adds a layer of security in addition to a password. Banks increasingly use this system—when you try to connect with them, the bank may text a code number to your phone that you type in to complete the sign-in process. Keep in mind that answering a security question is similar to having a password—both are something you know. Answering a security question won't provide the same level of additional security as that of a second factor. A second factor will be something you have, like your phone, to receive a passcode, or something you are, like a biometric fingerprint, in addition to something you know, like a security question.

Think before you click

Be wary of any offer or link that comes through the internet, whether by email or social media, or even a phone call instructing you to get online. Don't click on a link unless you know for certain what it is. Ideally, you should be expecting to receive the link. Even emails from friends should be suspect—hackers can impersonate someone you know to send a link or an attachment—both can result in you downloading malware that can take control of your computer in ways you may not even be able to detect. If you have any doubt, whether it's a link to a software update or an attachment to a funny cat video, give the sender a phone call to find out if they really sent it or if it's a scam.

To take advantage of the great promise of the internet, we must also recognize the peril. These are relatively simple steps you can take now to keep yourself reasonably safe.



Sioux Valley Energy donated food and helped raise more than \$3,000 for booster clubs in Brandon, Hartford and Pipestone, MN.

Local Co-op Events Provide Fun, Food and Festivities for Sports Fans

Ben Dunsmoor

Contributing Writer

In northwest South Dakota, clashes on the football field between rival schools are the main attractions on Friday nights. It is where community members can count on connecting with friends and neighbors. It is also a place where high school sports fans can count on seeing employees from Grand Electric Cooperative cooking up a pre-game meal.

“We see people of all ages at the tailgate parties,” Grand Electric Cooperative Marketing/Tech Specialist Rachel Eggebo said.

The Bison based cooperative began hosting block parties in the summer months nearly 20 years ago to reach out to the community. In 2009, Grand Electric transitioned to serving up brats, hot dogs, and chips before high school football games to reach families that were busy attending school activities. The co-op says it has been a great way to serve the community and show support for local schools.

“It gives us an opportunity to show our membership that we are there for them. Occasionally, it might be the only time we have to communicate with our busy members,” Eggebo said.

Grand Electric is taking a cautious approach to its tailgate parties this year due to concerns surrounding COVID-19. But, if the players are on the field, the co-op is committed to serving up free food at five different games this fall. Grand Electric will make some modifications to the tailgate parties by packaging the food and making it a “grab-and-go” style event for fans.

Grand Electric is not alone in its efforts to partner with local schools and reach out to the community with fun pre-game events. Butte Electric plans to host a tailgate party before the Belle Fourche and Spearfish game this fall. West River Electric holds a tailgating event before the Wall and New Underwood football game and sponsors a basketball tournament in Union Center every November.



Arm wrestling contestants square off during a tailgate party and family fun day hosted by Grand Electric.

Sioux Valley Energy in Colman is also on the tailgating bandwagon. Sioux Valley started hosting events before football games to help its local schools raise money.

“As school funding becomes tighter, booster clubs - and other school organizations run by parents - serve an important purpose,” Sioux Valley Director of Communications and Government Relations Carrie Vugteveen said. “Sioux Valley Energy feels that supporting these efforts helps the co-op live out its guiding principle of ‘commitment to community.’”

Sioux Valley hosted three tailgate parties in 2019 to raise money for booster clubs in Brandon, Hartford, and Pipestone, MN. Sioux Valley bought all the food and asked for a free-will



Lyon-Lincoln Electric Co-op in Tyler, MN, helped to host a tailgate party where the main attraction was the co-op's Tesla electric vehicle.

donation from fans during the meal. The three events raised more than \$3,000 combined for the booster clubs.

FEM Electric Association in Ipswich also partners with local schools to raise money during athletic events. FEM Electric donates 60 cases of bottled water to each school district within its service territory every year. The schools can sell the water in their concession stands and keep all the profits. Each water bottle has an electrical safety message printed on the label which translates into a big win for both the school and the co-op.

The schools can sell the water in their concession stands and keep all the profits.

"We wanted to contribute something to help out the various school programs and at the same time get our safety message out to kids and everyone," Carol Schaffner with FEM Electric Association said.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative in Tyler, MN, hosted a "Tailgating with Tesla" party before the Minneota and Canby football game last fall. The co-op partnered with a local youth group to host

the event. The co-op bought all the food and the youth group kept all the proceeds from the tailgate party to help pay for a mission trip. It was an opportunity to raise money for a good cause and for Lyon-Lincoln Electric to showcase its Tesla and talk about the benefits of electric vehicles.

"These events are a win-win for the cooperative and the community," Lyon-Lincoln Electric Manager of Marketing and External Relations Brian Jeremiason said. "The co-op is able to deliver a message to a targeted audience and visit about other topics that community members may have. The community benefits by having a face-to-face opportunity to visit with their co-op."

Electric co-op participation in school events is widespread across South Dakota. Northern Electric Cooperative in Bath, Dakota Energy in Huron, Charles Mix Electric in Lake Andes, and Central Electric in Mitchell all participate in local homecoming parades. Lacreek Electric in Martin sponsors a t-shirt toss during basketball and football games. Dakota Energy also hosts "co-op night" during local basketball games. And, Central Electric hosts free popcorn nights at high school basketball and football games to promote electrical safety and give back to the school and community.

So, whether it is a tailgate party, a fundraiser, or a t-shirt toss, it is likely that electric co-ops will be supporting their

local schools and communities this fall and winter.

"High school sports are wonderful opportunities to reach out to our communities," Jeremiason said. "Young and old all attend and we can communicate with families as a unit which can be difficult sometimes with the busy lives most families are living."

FEM Electric Association donates bottled water with unique labels to raise funds for schools in the co-op's service area.



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, the State High School Rodeo finals and grain bin safety. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



IT Department keeps co-op running

Laura London

Administrative Assistant

The third Thursday in September is designated as the day to honor the unsung heroes of the modern business world, our Information Technology (IT) Professionals. The IT department is an essential part of Lake Region Electric Association. Technology is constantly evolving to help improve data integrity, accuracy and bring efficiency in many areas of our lives; at the top of the list is the electric industry.

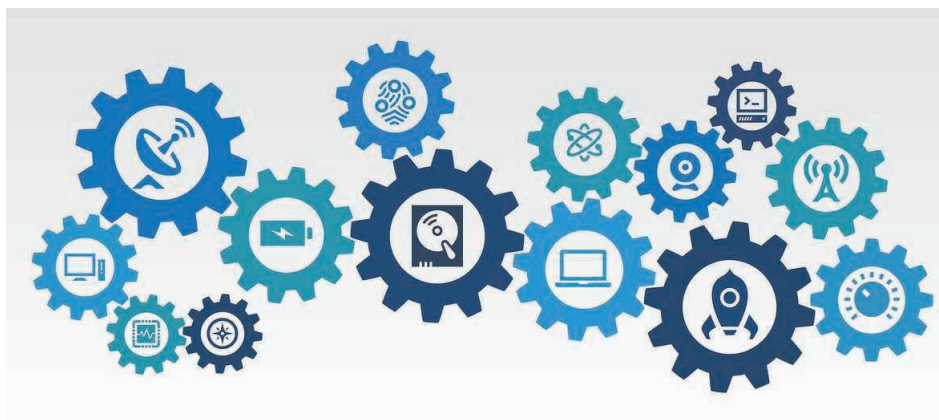
I recently asked Tim Gaikowski, Manager of IT Services at Lake Region, what the main responsibility of his department is. His answer was, “Everything.” This response appears simple on the surface, but is actually quite complex. The IT Department is responsible for the integrity of all the data for all departments and systems at Lake Region. The co-op uses an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) to track usage, voltage, outage and disconnect data. The AMI system was implemented at Lake Region about seven years ago. This system improves efficiency and reliability of our infrastructure greatly. AMI gives accurate meter readings in 15-minute increments and helps track real-time outages and power line system issues. Advanced Metering, along with the Meter Data Management system, allows for accurate data and gives the member the ability to look at their own usage in the SmartHub member portal. Members of Lake Region Electric can access the Outage map by visiting www.lakeregion.com and clicking on the Live Outage Map tab towards the top of the page. The integrity of data is critical for billing, tracking outages and work plans. Billing errors are still possible but are greatly reduced with AMI. This is much more efficient and accurate than in years past.

Cyber Security is a never-ending battle and many measures are taken to protect Lake Region and member information. With constant collecting of data, events and other logs from all of Lake Region Electric’s digital assets, Gaikowski can monitor the corporate network for any signs of unwanted or illegal traffic and take action to resolve the issue if needed.

The IT Department is also responsible for system mapping. According to Gaikowski, “Our map is the backbone of our Engineering and Operations.” There is a lot that goes into accurate mapping of such a large service area. Every piece of equipment, including poles, transformers, lines, meters, and other pieces need to be entered into the map and the inventory software for things to work properly. Equipment locations are not only important for identification, outage and repair purposes, they help contractors perform pole testing. The contractors are given an iPad to use while they are testing poles. They then go to the area where they are scheduled to do testing and enter the test data

in real-time which indicates to Lake Region which poles need to be replaced. This process is called “Staking and Mapping.”

Gaikowski said, “Think of Staking & Mapping like a blueprint for building a house and an inventory of everything in that house, just in powerline lingo. Staking sheets tell the lineman what and where to place their equipment, from poles, anchors, transformers, junction boxes, meters, grounds, splices, etc., and it will tell them what exactly they need for the job. These staking sheets are integrated into the map so we can always look back



to see exactly what equipment is at any particular location on the system.” The co-op doesn’t just depend on the digital maps, according to Utility Specialist Nathan Baumgarn: “A lot of our staking sheets go back to around 1947, when the powerlines were originally installed.”

The IT Department is also responsible for “locates.” Utility Specialist Scott Smith handles the locates for Lake Region: “After a customer calls 811, the call center sends all utilities that are in the excavation site an email and then we have 48 hours to locate underground cables in the area to help assure that people can safely dig without damaging underground facilities.”

Scott also helps manage the mapping system. He feels the efficiency of the mapping system is key for employees. “Employees now work off of their iPad versus carrying paper maps around and can view information with the touch of a finger instead of calling in to dispatch.” He said the convenience of outage maps for members is so much more efficient. “Our mapping system ties to all outage maps that members can view in real-time online and the maps can be updated immediately versus weeks or months, thus giving everyone accurate, up-to-date mapping.”

While technology continues to evolve, the IT Department is always introducing new technologies to improve accuracy and efficiency and give Lake Regions’ employees and members the accurate and up-to-date information they need.

The LREA IT guys are it!

IT team works hard and plays hard too when not on the job

Laura London

Administrative Assistant

Tim Gaikowski, Manager of IT Services at Lake Region Electric Association, is constantly being pulled in many directions. Other than managing the data, meters, Cyber Security, and all of Lake Region's technology solutions, he supports all other departments at the co-op. Having a computer problem? Call Tim. Having a printer problem? Call Tim. Having trouble with your work phone? Call Tim... Tim Gaikowski is the co-op's in-house tech king and he is appreciated beyond words. Tim is a great leader at Lake Region and "working with such an awesome Technology Team" makes his day a lot easier and rewarding.

Gaikowski's family is from the Lake Region Electric area. He has a very strong work ethic and is quite busy all of the time. However, that doesn't overshadow his love for his family and faith. When not at Lake Region Electric, Tim can be found spending time with his family and animals, working at his technology business, doing charitable work with The Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Church and The Museum of Wildlife, Science and



Manager of IT Services Tim Gaikowski stays busy tending to LREA's technology needs.

a board member of his church and helping out with small town activities or programs.

Utility Specialist Nathan "Nate" Baumgarn is from Webster. Nate says the most rewarding part of his job is "meeting with our members and getting to know them better." Nate has brought his positive attitude and smile to Lake Region Electric for eight years. When asked what brought him to LREA, he responded with earnest, "I grew up here, and a lot of my family is still here, so when I was offered the job it wasn't a very tough decision to move back."

Nate and his wife Meagan have been married for almost five years. Meagan is a Nuclear Medicine Tech with Sanford. They enjoy spending time with one another and their two dogs. An avid outdoorsman, Nate's hobbies include "basically anything outdoors," but mostly hunting. "I really enjoy the challenge of bowhunting, and just shooting bow for fun at my house. I spend a fair amount of time throughout the spring and summer working on food plots for deer season." Nate can also be found spending time at the lake with family. Nate is quite the craftsman and during the winter months he enjoys woodworking.



Utility Specialist Scott Smith spends a lot of time running to follow kids' sporting activities.

Industry or with his kids' activities. He is active in many areas of the Lake Region community.

Utility Specialist Scott Smith has worked for Lake Region for five years. Among other responsibilities, Smith assists with the LREA metering system when needed, which includes installing meters at new locations, changing them out due to damage or change in service and troubleshooting in general.

Scott grew up around Willow Lake. He has five children and is a proud grandpa. When he isn't at work, you can usually find him enjoying the outdoors whether it's hunting, biking or camping. Scott spends a lot of time running to follow kids' sporting activities, and in the past, has coached grade school basketball. Scott has a strong sense of faith and community. He enjoys serving as



Utility Specialist Nate Baumgarn is shown with his wife, Meagan.



South Dakota's Rural Electric Cooperatives are adapting to the expectations of the next generation of co-op members.

NEXT GENERATION

Young adults figure prominently in the future of the rural electric cooperative movement

Billy Gibson

Contributing Writer

It's getting harder and harder to find people who can provide a first-person account of what it was like when electrical power came to their communities.

The nation's rural electric program sprang to life more than 80 years ago when an executive order by President Franklin Roosevelt created the Rural Electric Administration (REA). The REA issued low-cost loans that gave local communities the ability to build out power delivery systems to serve their own farms, homes and businesses.

But relatively few of the members served by those cooperatives today actually witnessed the transformation that took place when thousands of small towns and hamlets across the country began

enjoying the benefits made possible by electrical power.

Though many characteristics of electric co-ops have stayed the same – democratic control, focus on quality service, accessibility, commitment to community – other elements have certainly changed over the decades. For instance, some cooperative service areas that were once rural have become suburban as population centers have expanded into spaces that were once sparsely populated farms and fields.

Cooperatives are also taking advantage of modern technology to broaden their menu of services available to members, such as online account management systems, energy audits, pre-pay programs, automated meter reading, renewable power and more.

Yet another change is the generational shift taking place as older board directors, managers, employees and consumers are being replaced with younger folks who have different ideas, different approaches, different plans and different expectations.

In South Dakota, co-op leaders say the changing dynamics present an opportunity to bring innovative ideas and new concepts to the table – all centered around the ongoing mission to deliver power that is safe, reliable, affordable and accessible.

Evan Buckmiller is manager of Kingsbury Electric Cooperative (KEC) based in DeSmet. He is part of a group of younger general managers who have taken the reins at various electric co-ops in the state. He said that over the past decade KEC has seen a 100 percent turnover in personnel and that every current employee



Co-ops will continue their commitment to both personal and digital service.

is under the age of 35. The result is a prevailing mindset that's not averse to searching for new ways to "work smarter."

"Our employees are constantly exploring new avenues to operate more efficiently and effectively," Buckmiller said. "They understand that the money people pay for power doesn't grow on trees. Our members expect value, and it's our job to make sure we're using the latest technology to minimize operating costs while improving service and convenience."

He said one advantage of having a younger work force is a greater acceptance of change, more flexibility and being open to new approaches to addressing issues.

"We've made wise investments in new equipment that we never would have considered in the past," Buckmiller said. "Our employees don't mind trying something new. They don't mind going through the training process. Having grown up in the internet age, they adapt well to learning things like new computer-based applications and software."

Some of those changes include a new barcoding program to track inventory, using iPads for preparing timesheets and taking service orders online.

Jay Spaans, manager of Douglas Electric in Armour, echoed Buckmiller's observations regarding younger employees. Two of his seven staff members are expected to retire in the not-too-distant future. They represent a combined 96 years of service.

"That's a lot of institutional knowledge



Kingsbury Electric Co-op Manager Evan Buckmiller leads a staff of young employees who understand the co-op's mission.

walking out the door, and as a manager you wonder if the next generation will be as dedicated to the co-op as them," Spaans said. "I'm sure that whoever we hire will have grown up with technology and will have new ideas. I see that as a benefit."

When it comes to engaging younger consumers, co-ops across the state maintain social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and others. West River Electric based in Wall, is representative of many South Dakota co-ops that use an array of digital tools to track the organization's member engagement.

Public Relations Manager Robert Raker said diversity and the strategic use of various social media channels is the key to making sure the lines of communication remain open across the age spectrum.

"We use Facebook and our printed newsletter to appeal to our older members," he said. "We use Instagram and Tik Tok to reach our younger members, and we're beginning to deploy LinkedIn to interact with our technology and business accounts."

There's even a specific approach to communicating internally, Raker said.

"We're using Snapchat to communicate with some of our crews in the field because

One advantage of having a younger work force is a greater acceptance of change, more flexibility and being open to new approaches.

we've found that our young linemen prefer to use Snapchat rather than a conventional email account."

Chad Felderman, CEO/General Manager at Dakota Energy in Huron, said it's important for co-ops to balance their approach so that the interests of all age groups are taken into account.

Part of that strategy of fostering connectedness across generations is to get out of the office and meet members at events that attract a cross-section of people.

"In order to interact with all age groups, we have been present at sporting events, parades and event booths. It's more difficult due to the pandemic, but this is our goal," Felderman said. "This has allowed us to engage with members of all ages and creates an overall increase in knowledge of who we are and what services we provide. Utilizing Facebook, the website and text messaging has been a great way to inform members and makes us more visible in our communities."

Matt Klein, General Manager at Union County Electric in Elk Point, said he has noticed the older generation has been receptive to change, albeit at a more measured pace.

"In general, our older members want to come to the office and pay by check and get a receipt, while our younger members are more comfortable paying online, having us withdraw directly from their bank account, or setting up recurring charges to their credit card," Klein said. "Now that we offer these other payment options, we are seeing more of the older generation using them. So they are clearly becoming more comfortable with this, but are a bit slower to adopt the change."



Younger members expect their cooperative to provide information through social media platforms.

Lake Region Electric Non-Traditional Annual Meeting was a Big Success!

Roughly 150 members and guests attend meeting at Fort Sisseton

By Laura London

Administrative Assistant

This past May, a decision was made by the LREA Board of Directors to postpone the annual meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic and CDC recommendations of social distancing. This was not an easy decision for the board to make, however it was deemed necessary in order to do our part to keep the members and employees



Bob Gale of East River Electric set up the sound system for the meeting.

adequate plans and preparations for the annual meeting.”

After much discussion and weighing of options, it was decided that Lake Region Electric Association’s 79th Annual meeting would be held “drive-in” style this year.

Staff and employees at Lake Region began making plans for the meeting. Lake Region General Manager Tim McIntyre began brain-storming locations and determined that Fort Sisseton State Park would be an ideal location. Ali Tonsfeldt and Dalaine Pleinis were excited to host our meeting in the south parking area. They also extended their hours of having the displays and buildings open so that members could take a look around the Fort. Brielle Zillis, granddaughter of Harlan & Rose Hilleson of Veblen, was thrilled that the gift shop was opened so they could purchase some old-fashioned candy! Fort Sisseton State Park was the perfect location and the weather could not have been better!

Bob Gale, Audio Visual Coordinator from East River Electric, travels to annual meetings for cooperatives in the East River Electric territory to provide sound and video support. Bob was excited to help facilitate the radio transmission of Lake Region’s annual meeting this year. He stated that he has only done a similar set-up for one other co-op and that went pretty smoothly. Bob’s set-up consists of an amplifier, a couple of wireless micro-

phones, a laptop computer and now a “low power FM transmitter” that broadcasts a radio signal to the radius of about one city block. Once the equipment is set up, Bob finds the best signal from a selection of unused radio stations that have been previously approved for this transmission. It didn’t take Bob long to set up the equipment and find the best station for transmitting “a good clean signal” for our members attending the meeting. Lake Region employees then circled the appropriate station on printed cards that were

Member-owner Keith Guy won the Food Pantry Donation drawing for a \$50 Gift Card.



of Lake Region safe and healthy.

According to the Lake Region Electric Association Bylaws, “The annual meeting of the members shall be held at such time and place within a county served by the Cooperative, as selected by the Board of Directors and which shall be designated in the notice of the meeting, for the purpose of electing directors, passing upon reports for the previous fiscal year and transacting such other business as may come before the meeting. It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to make

handed to members as they drove into the meeting.

The gates opened at 3:00 p.m. and members started to arrive right away. Lake Region employees greeted members in an assembly line fashion as they drove in. First, employees Autumn Spiering and Vinson Dargatz scanned members’ cards to register them. Members then moved forward to Manager of Office Services Donna Sattler, who handed members their Radio Station cards, ballots and meal vouchers. Donna and Manager of



Roughly 150 members attended the cooperative's non-traditional Annual Meeting at Fort Sisseton.

IT Services Tim Gaikowski then collected food pantry donations and handed out tickets for a gift card drawing. Before being sent on to the parking crew, Accountant Justin McClurg handed out the most important part of the event; member bags, treat bags and ice water.

The business meeting was called to order by Board President Kermit Pearson at 4:07 p.m. Pearson explained to members that voting would take place by horn honk. The National Anthem was played, and Tim McIntyre gave the invocation. An announcement of special guests in attendance, including Representative Steve McCleerey, was made. Board Secretary Thomas Steiner made a Declaration of Quorum before continuing with business at hand, including a motion to approve the minutes from LREA's 2019 Annual Meeting. Pearson then gave the President's report covering the financials and happenings of the last year.

Attorney Dan Smeins called for the Election of Directors. This year Lake Region had two Director seats up for election: District 2 and District 4. Both Incumbent Directors had submitted petitions prior to the deadline set for the Annual Meeting, originally scheduled to take place in Langford on June 4. No other petitions were submitted. District 2 Representative Mark Wismer is from rural Britton. He began serving the members of Lake Region Electric Association as a director on the LREA Board in 2017. District 4 Representative Thomas Steiner farms near Eden. He has served on the Lake Region Electric Association Board of Directors since 2003; he currently serves as the board secretary. There were no nominations from the floor. Wismer and Steiner will continue to serve Lake Region Electric as board members. Their expertise and experience are of great value to our membership and their continued service is appreciated.

Tim McIntyre then gave the Manager's report. He expressed appreciation for the employees of Lake Region as well as to the board members. McIntyre also expressed how grateful he is for our member-owners and their support for Lake Region Electric Association over the years. He then continued with his report of what has been going on in the Lake Region territory and for cooperatives in general. Following his report, McIntyre recognized the students awarded scholarships. The Basin Electric Power/Lake Region Electric Scholarship was awarded to Brian Mork of Pierpont, SD, son of Jerry and Rita Mork. Brian is planning to major in architecture at the

brought two of their granddaughters with them to the meeting. The girls were thrilled that Grandpa won. They were also really pleased with the treat bags that members received as they pulled into the meeting, especially the beef jerky!

No meal served, what in the world? With the pandemic and the meeting taking place outdoors and social distancing in mind, in lieu of serving a hot meal this year, members attending the meeting received a \$25 meal voucher. Lake Region Electric decided this was the perfect time and opportunity to not only offer our members something, it could be a great



Accountant Justin McClurg handed out cold water to the members.

University of Nebraska. The recipient of the Duane Snaza Memorial Scholarship was Brooke Vogl, Webster, daughter of Dan & Rose Vogl. Brooke is planning to major in aerospace engineering at North Dakota State University.

The meeting was adjourned following the drawing for a \$50 Gift Card. The Gift Card Drawing was for Food Pantry Donations. Members attending the meeting donated 196 canned and boxed non-perishable items for local food pantries. Lake Region Electric member-owner Keith Guy held the winning ticket! Keith and his wife

opportunity to support local businesses and stimulate our local economy. These vouchers can be used at participating local restaurants printed on the card.

The annual meeting was a success with compliments from many members in attendance. The employees of Lake Region Electric felt that everything went smoothly. There was a lot of planning and a few small hiccups, but in the end we had a great time and a great meeting in a beautiful location with about 150 guests in attendance.

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

South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives will not have a booth this year at the state fair due to COVID-19 safety concerns.

August 26-30

Corn Palace Festival, Mitchell, SD, www.cornpalace.com
605-995-8430

August 27

PRCA Xtreme Broncs Finals
7-9:30 p.m., Central States Fair, Rapid City, SD
www.centralstatesfair.com

August 27-30 CANCELED

Annual Steam Threshing Jamboree featuring John Deere, Madison, SD
605-256-3644

August 28-29

Pioneer Museum Excess Sale
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Pioneer Museum, Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4616

August 29-30

Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival, Municipal Airport, Hwy 79, Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4140

September 3-5

South Dakota State Fair: Perfect Vision of Fun, 1060 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD
800-529-0900
www.sdstatefair.com

September 6

Studebaker and Packard Car and Truck Show, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Custer, SD
605-718-7431



August 29-30

Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival

September 7

Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show, 1 p.m., 47326 183rd Ave., Clear Lake, SD, 605-881-8405

September 12

Central Valley Struttin' Gobblers NWTF Banquet, Dakota Plains Event Center, Hartford, SD, 5:30 p.m.
605-941-4297

September 12-13

Fall Harvest Festival, Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792, www.twinriversoldiron.org

September 13

20th Annual Antique Tractor and Car Parade, 1 p.m., Farmer, SD, 605-239-4498

September 19

Health Connect's Human Race, Elmwood Park, Sioux Falls, SD, 8 a.m. 888-761-5437

September 19

Health Connect Fair, Sanford Pentagon, Sioux Falls, SD, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., free lunch, door prizes and flu shots
888-761-5437

September 25-27

Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Massey Harris Tractors, Meadow, SD, 605-788-2229

September 26 CANCELED

10th Annual ROCS Fall Festival, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Springfield, SD, 605-464-7379

September 26

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD

October 3 CANCELED

Hobo Marlin's Pumpkin Train 11 a.m., Madison, SD
605-256-3644

October 7-8 CANCELED

Energize! Explore Innovative Rural Communities Conference, Milbank, SD, <https://extension.sdstate.edu>

October 31-November 1

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

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.