

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Christmas at the Capitol

Capitol Christmas
event turns 40
Pages 8-9

The wonders of
winter stargazing
Pages 12-13

Thousands of visitors are expected to view the nearly 100 Christmas trees on display in Pierre during the Christmas season.



2021 was a successful year for Lake Region Electric

As I sit down and write this column, I can't believe another year has come and gone. I hope that 2021 has been good for all of you.

Our construction season here at Lake Region Electric is wrapping up and we are grateful for another successful year! With our aging infrastructure and much of our overhead primary wire reaching the 70 to 80 year mark, we have been working hard doing overhead to underground replacement. Over the past 10 years we have been replacing 40-50 miles annually. Our main area of concentration for conversion this year was in the Veblen area. Replacing these old overhead lines with underground provides reliability and expanded capacity for you, our member- owners. We have taken advantage of historically low interest rates for funding to rebuild our system.

Lake Region remains financially strong. We have had very little rate changes over the past eight years due to prudent financial planning by the staff and Board of Directors. We do our best to maintain rate stability and we will be doing our annual budget review in December.

We continue to be successful in other areas as well. This year we hired an additional man for the line crew. Tevin

Abeln joined us in the spring as an apprentice journeyman lineman.

We continue to be able to support the communities we live in and serve in many ways. As a part of our commitment to community and educating our youth, Lake Region awarded scholarships to area students Colin Frey of Langford and Rana Hegg of Webster. Langford High School graduate Hayden Reints helped the line crew as an informal intern as summer help before heading to school at Mitchell Technical Institute to study Powerline Maintenance and Construction this fall. We sponsored Britton High School student Maggie Kilker to participate in a youth leadership experience in the Black Hills. Lake Region also had several area students chosen for Touchstone Energy's Scholar of The Week program.

Furthering our commitment to community, we have been able to share our success with local non-profit organizations, donating more than \$20,000 in charitable contributions in conjunction with our lender CoBank's Sharing Success program.

The employees of Lake Region Electric are what help us to be so successful as a business and as a community. Many of our employees



donate their own time, in various capacities, to our communities by serving on City Council and area development boards, volunteering for youth sports such as baseball and basketball, volunteering at their churches, local museums and even fire departments, among countless other contributions of their time and money.

I think this year has been very successful in many areas. I want to thank you, our member-owners, for your continued support and investment in your cooperative!

We look forward to serving you this upcoming year. I hope that you all have a very Merry Christmas and joyful new Year!

God Bless,
Tim McIntyre

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Tom Patterson
Mike Bultema
Jon Sweeter
Amy Knutson
James Hock
Jay Hortness
Clark Hurrell
Justin Monson



**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

**LAKE REGION ELECTRIC
RIPPLES**

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

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

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

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Ready your home for a winter break during the holidays

If you're planning to be out of town for an extended period of time during the holidays, take heed of the following recommendations to save some energy and keep your home safe while you're away.

- Set your home's thermostat to 50 degrees. This temperature is a happy midpoint that avoids wasting energy to warm an empty house while still preventing damage to your pipes and plants. If sub-20-degree days are forecast during the time you are away, drip faucets.
- Turn off your electric water heater at the breaker or set it to the lowest temperature possible.
- To avoid a potential fire hazard, unplug the washer and dryer before you leave your home. Disconnect the hoses leading to the washer to prevent them from freezing.
- Unplug all of your small appliances. You'll reduce the risk of a house fire and save a bit on your electric bill.
- Don't broadcast your travel plans on social media. Instead, share photos from your trip after you return.
- If you set a timer for your outdoor or indoor lights, make sure to switch up the times over the days you'll be gone so it's not obvious to any onlookers that the house is empty when lights go on at 6 p.m. every day like clockwork. If possible, stagger several timers that control different lights to approximate the natural movement of someone through a house.
- Close blinds and curtains. Don't advertise your belongings to any would-be house burglars.
- Be strategic about putting out post-holiday recycling and trash. If there are a lot of boxes from new gadgets or other expensive electronics, wait until you get back to put them out so they're not sitting outside in full view for days. Or have a trusted neighbor set them by the curb on the appropriate day.
- Place a hold on all mail and newspaper deliveries, and ask a neighbor or a friend to pick up any packages from your porch.

DID YOU KNOW?



On Christmas Eve 1923, President Calvin Coolidge began the country's celebration of Christmas by lighting the first National Christmas Tree decorated with electric lights.



Don't cut down trees by power lines

Milo Thompson

Milo reminds electric cooperative members that cutting down trees located near power lines can be hazardous. Milo is the child of Kurt and Rebecca Thompson of Hayti. They are members of H-D Electric.

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

HOLIDAY DESSERTS

CRANBERRY CAKE

Ingredients:
 3 Tbsp. butter
 1 cup sugar
 1 egg
 2 cups flour
 1 cup milk
 3 tsp. baking powder
 1/4 tsp. salt
 2-3 cups raw cranberries

Butter Sauce

1 cup sugar
 1/2 cup butter
 1/2 cup evaporated milk or cream
 1 Tbsp. flour
 1 tsp. vanilla

METHOD

Grease and flour a bundt pan or 9 x 13 inch pan. Cream butter, sugar and egg. Beat in flour, milk, baking powder and salt. Fold in cranberries. Spread batter in pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. Bundt pan may need one hour. Serve with butter sauce. For butter sauce, mix flour and sugar. Place all ingredients except vanilla in saucepan. Heat, beating well over high heat until hot and bubbly. Add vanilla. Serve warm over cranberry cake.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

BAKED RICE PUDDING

Ingredients:
 2 cups milk
 1 cup water
 1/4 cup sugar
 3 tbsps. rice
 1 tbsps. butter
 1/4 cup raisins
 Pinch of salt

Topping

Sugar
 Cinnamon
 Milk

METHOD

In a 2-qt. baking dish, add milk, water, sugar and rice. Stir together. Add a pinch of salt and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Take out of oven and add butter. Let sit while you eat main meal. Dish up in bowls, sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon and add milk.

Deanna Dean, Artesian

FANCY CHRISTMAS CAKES

Ingredients:

Cakes

1 pkg. (2-layer size) white cake mix
 1 tbsps. McCormick® Red Food Color
 1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
 1 tbsps. McCormick® Green Food Color
 1 pkg. (16 oz.) chocolate candy coating, such as CANDIQUIK®

Buttercream

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
 1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
 1 pkg. (16 oz.) confectioners' sugar, sifted
 2 tbsps. milk
 Pinch of salt

METHOD

Preheat oven and prepare batter as directed. Divide batter evenly into 2 bowls (about 1-1/2 cups of batter each). Stir red food color and vanilla into first bowl. Stir green color into second bowl. Pour red and green batter into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pans. Gently tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. (If you do not have 2 13 x 9-inch pans, bake one color cake first, then reuse the pan to bake the second.) Bake 6 minutes. Remove pans from oven and tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. Return pans to oven and bake 6-9 minutes longer. Cool in pans 10 minutes. Invert cakes onto wire rack. Cool completely. Refrigerate cakes until ready to assemble. For buttercream, beat butter in large bowl with electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add vanilla and mix. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar on low speed, scraping sides and bottom of bowl after each addition. Add milk and salt; beat on medium-high until light and fluffy, at least 3 minutes. If frosting is too thick, beat in additional milk.

www.mccormick.com

Please send your favorite soup 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, phone number and cooperative name.

SHORT GO SHIRT WINNERS



Lake Region Electric's Brett Kwasniewski (center) is pictured with Short Go qualifiers Tate and Tyan Johnson.

Johnson brothers finish strong at South Dakota High School Rodeo

Laura London

Lake Region Electric Association congratulates two brothers on their strong finish at the South Dakota High School Rodeo Association's finals this past summer.

Tate and Tyan Johnson are the sons of Lake Region Electric members Travis and Sara Johnson. Tate is a senior at Sisseton High School and has competed in high school rodeo for three years. According to his mother, "Tate has been team roping for 10 years (on a horse). He started swinging a rope and roping the dummy at the age of 2."

Tyan has completed two years of high school rodeo and has been team roping for eight years. Both boys competed in Junior High Rodeo and began participating in the 4H Rodeo program at the age of 8. This past summer, Tate and Tyan Johnson qualified for the Short Go in Team Roping, Tate as the Header and Tyan as the Heeler. The Short Go consists of the 15 athletes who accumulated the most points in the first two rounds of the state finals plus qualifying points from the regional rodeos.

In recognition of their performance in the South Dakota High School Rodeo Association Finals, Lake Region Electric's

Manager of Member Services Brett Kwasniewski presented the Johnson brothers with shirts. Lake Region Electric and South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives are proud supporters of the annual rodeo and we are proud of these young men.

Tate and Tyan's father Travis said, "I appreciate the support the Electric Cooperatives have shown. They are supporting a great group of high school rodeo kids."

For the Johnson brothers, rodeo is more than competition. Tate stated, "I

like hanging out with the kids I have met in rodeo. I look forward to summers and getting together with those we have known for years."

His brother Tyan reflects similar sentiments, "I love the opportunity to meet kids from across the state. We compete against each other, but rodeo is the only sport where you cheer each other on."

Student athletes such as Tate and Tyan embody our state's future and our cooperative values. The dedication they have demonstrated to excelling in their sport has a very close tie to the commitment Lake Region Electric has to our members.



Tate and Tyan Johnson were Short Go qualifiers at the state high school rodeo in Pierre.

SEASON'S GREETINGS



LREA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**LREA OPERATIONS,
KEEPING YOUR
NEW YEAR
LIT!**

WE WILL BE CLOSED
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31ST FOR NEW YEAR'S



CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPITOL

Each year, musicians and other entertainers from across the state perform for the tens of thousands of visitors who travel to Pierre to see the “Christmas at the Capitol” displays and decorations. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Christmas at the Capitol: Celebrating 40 years of yuletide splendor and dazzling displays

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With all of its spectacular lights, familiar carols and colorful decorations, Christmas at the Capitol inspires thousands to become awash in the spirit of the season.

It’s an especially magical and meaningful event for Moriah Gross, founder and director of the Pierre Youth Orchestra. Over the past decade, Gross and her students have performed in the Capitol Rotunda and added to the yuletide ambiance that more than 20,000 visitors travel from far and near to experience.

Gross is one of many performers slated to appear in the Rotunda as Christmas at the Capitol takes place from Nov. 23 through Dec. 26. Visitors to this year’s celebration can expect to see brilliant hues of ruby, pink and pearl in recognition of the event’s 40th anniversary.

“Winter Wishes” is the theme for 2021 as nearly 100 decorated trees will line the halls and fill the

historic structure. Local businesses and government agencies, non-profit organizations and other community groups from across the state will once again put their decorating skills to the test and give the Capitol and its environs a South Dakota Christmas flair.

This year’s official lighting ceremony will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at 7:30 p.m. The popular Pie Day is set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., when complimentary slices of pie, cookies, coffee and ice cream will be offered along with live musical entertainment sure to spark the Christmas spirit.

Gross said she and her students look forward to the event each year, but one memory stands out for her among the rest. Two years ago, she accompanied a guest performer who sang the traditional carol Silent Night in the language of the Lakota Sioux.

“It was so spectacular and moving to be able to have that experience there inside the State Capitol and honoring the Lakota people and

culture, and also to have our students experience that as well,” said Gross, a member of Oahe Electric Cooperative outside of Pierre.

A native of Kansas and accomplished string instrumentalist, Gross relocated to Pierre 10 years ago and soon realized there was no educational string program for public school students. So, she started the Pierre Youth Orchestra, which has nearly 40 students who are set to perform at the Capitol on Sunday, Dec. 19, at 5 p.m.

THIS YEAR’S OFFICIAL LIGHTING CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE TUESDAY, NOV. 23, AT 7:30 P.M. THE POPULAR PIE DAY IS SET FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 4, FROM 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Gross said while she calls the Capitol “one of my favorite places to perform,” the experience is also beneficial for her music students in many ways.

“It’s just the opportunity to play for

DECKING THE CAPITOL HALLS



Nearly 100 trees are decorated by clubs, associations, non-profits and government agencies. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

an audience in this kind of setting. It's very intimate and not like playing on a stage in a large theater where the audience is sitting at a distance away from you," she said. "In the Rotunda, there are people all around, sometimes standing room only, and they're very close and intimate. It's an emotional time of year and you get to really connect with the audience. At the same time, they have to be disciplined and focused on what they're doing. It's a unique experience that a lot of students don't always get to have."

She said many students will return after they've graduated from the program and sit in on the performance and have their photos taken with the current crop of students at the Capitol.

Observing Christmas at the Capitol from behind the scenes, Gross noted the many individuals and volunteers who help make the event a success each year.

"I can't say enough about all the committees, greeters, volunteers, organizers and others around the

Approximate number
of annual visitors

20,000

to the Christmas at
the Capitol event.

community who make this possible for people coming in from all over the country and the world. You have the sights and sounds and scents of the pine trees, and it all adds up to a wonderful holiday experience," she said. "There are so many people who all work together to make this something special."

The annual holiday event started back in 1981 with a dozen decorated trees and has grown in popularity through the past 40 years. Visitors can look for some of the more popular recurring displays such as a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments from the China Painters Organization and an old wooden nativity scene that the local Knights of Columbus group sets up on the second floor of the Capitol each year.

Those interested in serving as a volunteer for the event can contact rick.augusztin@state.sd.us.



The State Capitol grounds are also decorated to evoke the spirit of Christmas. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

Combating rising heating costs

This winter is predicted to be colder than last year based on forecasts by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). While we often hope for the forecasters to be wrong, there is one thing we know for certain, whether the weather is worse than last year or not, the cost to stay warm will be higher for most Americans.

According to the Winter Fuels Outlook released annually by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), “Retail prices for energy are at or near multiyear highs in the United States.” This means that even if the weather is more mild than last year, most households will be spending more to heat their homes. People using electricity as their main heat source will see the lowest increase of all. Members of Lake Region who use electric heat will see little change in their rates this heating season, so the more electricity you use, the higher your bill will be. As a cooperative, our rates are set annually based on our costs, then voted on by the Board of Directors.



Laura London
Administrative Assistant

Fortunately, kilowatt-hour rates remained stable for our members this past year, averaging around 10 cents per kWh for home and commercial use, with heat rates costing about half that.

Every year, as heating season begins, calls come into the office inquiring about different ways to heat homes and shops using electricity. This year, we are experiencing more calls. Part of the reason for the higher interest in electric-based heat sources is due to the rising costs of fuels. The EIA expects “nearly half of U.S. households that heat primarily with natural gas will spend 30 percent more than they spent last winter, households that heat primarily with propane will spend 54 percent more, and households that heat primarily with heating oil will spend 43 percent more.” With the exception of co-op members, the EIA estimates households that heat primarily with electricity will spend 6-15 percent more to heat their homes. These projected increases are based on temperature forecasts and will fluctuate based on actual temperatures as we make our way through winter.

LREA offers options to help keep costs down during winter. One of the main offerings is through “heat meters.” From Oct. 1 through April 30, energy used for heating is eligible for the current electric heat rate of 5.56 cents per kWh, or about half the regular charge. In order for members to receive the heat rate, sub-metering must be installed to record actual consumption by heating equipment. Equipment such as

electric furnaces, baseboard and cove heat, and electric heat pumps are eligible for the discounted heat rate, as long as they are hard wired to the sub-meter. Space heaters, or portable heaters that plug into a traditional outlet are not eligible for the discounted heat rate.

LREA offers rebates for members installing Electric Heat Pumps. To qualify for the rebates, members must provide proof of purchase and installation of a new heat pump with a HSPF rating of 8.5 or greater. This rating can be determined by the seller of the heat pump. Members are not required to participate in the load control program in order to qualify for the discounted rate in the heating season but they will need to participate in load control during the cooling months. Heat

Percent change in fuel bills from last winter (forecast)			
	Base case forecast	If 10% warmer than forecast	If 10% colder than forecast
Heating Oil	43%	30%	59%
Natural Gas	30%	22%	50%
Propane*	54%	29%	94%
Electricity	6%	4%	15%

will not be controlled but air conditioning will be when our power supplier reaches its peak during the cooling season.

Heat Pumps are one of the most efficient forms of electric heat. There are different types of heat pumps for home and commercial use. Air-source heat pumps pull heat indoors from outdoor air in the winter and take it from indoor air in the summer. Air-source heat pumps require little maintenance, and it is relatively easy to convert from a propane or oil system. Ground-source heat pumps use natural energy stored in the earth beneath us. They use the same unit for heating, cooling and water heating and have the highest efficiency rating. Ground-source units have a higher initial cost, but their increased operating efficiency means a shorter payback period and equal huge savings for owners. Mini-split heat pumps are ductless and are ideal for older homes and home renovation. They are smaller than an air-source heat pump and are easy to install because there is no duct work. This type of unit is extremely energy efficient and one outdoor compressor unit can run multiple units inside.

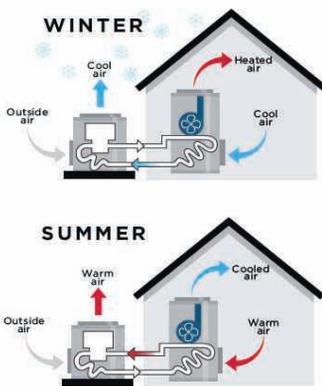
There are many reasons for the projected rise in heating costs this winter. LREA continues to strive to provide you reliable power at an affordable rate. We encourage our members to conserve energy when possible, to keep your bills down and our rates stable.

Choosing The Right Heat Pump

air-source HEAT PUMP

Energy-efficient, cost-effective, and reliable year-round

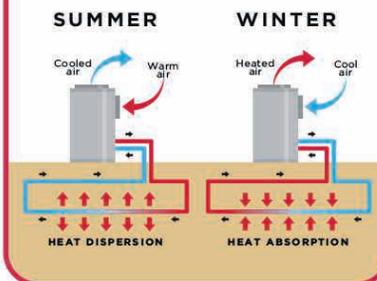
- Pulls heat indoors from the outdoor air in the winter and from indoor air in the summer
- When properly installed, requires **little maintenance** and delivers 1.5-3.5 times the energy it uses
- **Easy to convert** from propane or oil system
- More **efficient** than gas
- **Dehumidify better** than standard central air conditioners, resulting in **less energy usage** and more cooling in summer months



ground-source HEAT PUMP

New home construction

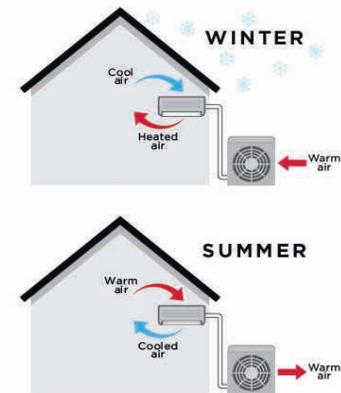
- **One system** for heating, cooling, and water heating
- Uses the abundant, **natural energy** the earth stores beneath us
- **Highest efficiency**, documenting heating efficiencies of up to **500%**, meaning homeowners get \$5 of heating for every dollar they spend
- Excess heat energy can be routed to the water heater, **saving** homeowners **two-thirds** of their water heating costs year-round
- Higher installation costs than standard forced-air furnace and central air conditioner, but **shorter payback periods** because of increased operating efficiency



mini-split/ductless HEAT PUMP

Ideal for home renovation

- Like an air-source heat pump, but **smaller**
- **Ductless**, so works on houses that don't have duct work
- **Cost effective and easy to install**
- Only runs when and as hard as it needs to, thus is **extremely energy efficient**
- Scalable so one outdoor compressor can **run multiple units** inside
- Ideal for those who want **air conditioning** in homes that don't currently have it



For more information about ways to increase electric efficiency in your home, contact Lake Region Electric Association

Energy Assistance

There are resources available for households struggling to pay their heating bills. It is important to plan ahead, rather than wait until you have fallen behind on your electric bill to ask for help. The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) helps eligible South Dakotans pay for heating costs. This program, available through the state of South Dakota, is designed to assist eligible households during the cold months. Payments are made directly to the supplier on behalf of the eligible households. Members of Lake Region Electric Association who use electric heat that apply for, and are determined to be eligible for, energy assistance will have their approved benefit amount applied to any unpaid heating charges from regular meter read dates from October 1 through May 15. Energy assistance may not cover all heating expenses and individuals are responsible for any bills that are not covered by LIEAP.

Energy assistance funds are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis. You can apply for Energy Assistance by Calling 1.800.233.8503 to request an application be mailed to you. Completing an application on line at www.state.sd.us/eforms/secure/eforms/E2416V1-LIEAPApplication.pdf or by visiting your local Department of Social Services office to obtain an application. There are some applications available to be picked up at the Lake Region Electric Association office in Webster.

LREA Members qualifying for LIEAP

Assistance funds received by Lake Region from LIEAP, on behalf of their members, are applied to those individual accounts depending on how the account is set up.

- Members that have a dedicated heat meter are reimbursed, on a monthly basis, for the monthly base charge, kWh charges and sales tax.
- Members that do not have a dedicated heat meter have the primary residence fees reimbursed on a monthly basis as well. Base charge, kWh charge, and sales tax are reimbursed.
- Members that are on the Prepaid program, have their accounts estimated on a monthly basis and we apply for the potential reimbursement based on the previous year usage for the same timeframe.

If a Prepaid member has too many funds applied to the account for the amount of heat used, that member must repay the State of South Dakota those funds. This is monitored very closely so our members don't find themselves in that position.

It is the responsibility of the member to monitor their electric consumption and heat usage. If you are in need of resources, Lake Region can offer guidance but we do not have a program to assist with bills. Please call our office if you have questions : 605-345-3379 or 1-800-657-5869.

SEARCHING FOR THE STARS

Badlands Observatory photographer Teresa Hofer captured this image of The Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters.

Badlands Observatory welcomes stargazers, researchers and others interested in pursuing the field of astronomy

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

For centuries, astronomers have sought to find a scientific explanation for the Star of Bethlehem, which is described in the Gospel of Matthew as the celestial sign that led the Magi into the presence of the Christ child.

Some have speculated that the object high in the night sky could have been a supernova, a comet or possibly a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus.

Accomplished astronomer Ron Dyvig has views of his own. As a researcher who adheres to scientific methods, he's a bit hesitant to plow into topics where science and faith may collide.

But when pressed to offer an educated opinion on the Christmas Star, he replies, "There are several elements that make it challenging to address from a scientific standpoint and there are a

half-dozen theories beyond what's there in the Biblical accounts. But I think it could have been a nova or the planet Venus. Venus can be remarkably bright after sunset when it appears to descend in the west for several weeks. That may have been what the Magi saw and would be something they could follow. But a lot of people have strong religious beliefs about it, and if you believe it was a miracle, then science can't really explain it adequately."

Dyvig is founder of the Badlands Observatory, which he opened for his own private viewing and independent research in 2000. Two years ago, he began renovating the facility located in the small community of Quinn just north of I-90, with the goal of one day welcoming members of the public interested in astronomy.

While the renovation project is not fully complete and a grand opening is set for next spring, Badlands

Observatory is now welcoming visitors by reservation only.

"Since we got settled into this facility, there has just been so much public interest in it that we decided to go public. It's as simple as that," Dyvig said. "Right now we're taking it slow with small groups. During the winter months our activities will be curtailed a bit, then we'll expect a busy spring."

A native of Deadwood, the 79-year old Dyvig took a keen interest in astronomy at an early age when he was



Teresa Hofer and Ron Dyvig are long-time collaborators who have opened the Badlands Observatory to public access.

introduced to the discipline by his local Boy Scout troop leader. He created his first observatory as a youngster when he made a concrete pad and a cylinder to hold his telescope in place in the middle of a rancher's field. During his high school and college years, he spent late nights scanning the skies, marveling at the vastness of the universe and hoping to discover new heavenly bodies.

As a college student, Dyvig learned and taught the art of telescope-making and became president of the Black Hills Astronomical Society. He later designed and fabricated the optics for the Hidden Valley Observatory in Rapid City.

Dyvig spent time honing his craft as a research assistant at the University of Arizona where he worked under several mentors and utilized the advanced facilities at Kitt Peak National Observatory. He was chosen to help design and test image intensifier camera systems for Steward Observatory.

While through the decades he kept day jobs to support his avocation, his evenings were spent star gazing and pursuing new discoveries. His passion and dedication to astronomy paid off when he discovered - and aptly dubbed - Asteroid 26715 South Dakota just a year after opening the Badlands Observatory. It's just one of the 25



Photographer Bob Rossiter and Ron Dyvig are shown with the 26-inch Newtonian Reflector telescope at Badlands Observatory.

discoveries credited to Dyvig during the course of his astronomy work.

Building the observatory was no small task. First, he found and converted an old medical building in Quinn to house the facility. Then he personally designed and fabricated all of the optics, including grinding and polishing the mirror for the 26-inch f/4.8 Newtonian Reflector telescope. West River Electric

Cooperative worked with Dyvig and the town of Quinn to install hoods over surrounding street lights to reduce "light pollution" and enhance the ability to scan the night sky.

Dyvig describes himself as fortunate to find a partner in Teresa Hofer, a career accountant who shares his passion for all things celestial.

There's always something to be done

at the observatory, Hofer said. Ongoing duties include maintaining and upgrading the optical and drive systems, control systems for the telescope and dome, facility management, designing and implementing new educational programs for visitors, website updates and keeping up-to-date on developments in the field of astronomy.

"There's plenty to do, especially since we decided to make the facility public after we figured people might like to see what we do," she said. "We had to make sure everything was comfortable for the public and do a lot of renovating and painting and upgrading."

Hofer said she is starting to promote the observatory as a destination for astronomy enthusiasts who might be interested in touring the facility and peering through one of seven telescopes on the observation deck. Dyvig is in the process of also building a radio telescope to add to his collection.

Those interested in experiencing the Badlands Observatory can call 605-381-1521 to set up a viewing time or visit www.badlandsobservatory.com.



The Orion Nebula has long captured the imaginations of star watchers as it has been associated with the Greek myth of a huntsman placed among the stars by Zeus.

BUILDING RURAL LEADERS

Minnesota Ag Rural Leadership Class IX members develop problem-solving skills during a “Building Strong Teams” session.

Working today to develop tomorrow’s rural community leaders in South Dakota and Minnesota

Billy Gibson

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Success in any endeavor calls for solid leadership. Don Norton of the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (SDARL) is eager to build better leaders who envision a more prosperous future for individuals, families and businesses across the state.

Norton believes leadership skills don’t just materialize out of thin air. Those skills and abilities have to be taught. That’s the goal of SDARL, an 18-month program that takes participants through an intensive course of conferences, class time and state, national and international seminars all designed to prepare the students to return to their communities and make positive contributions.

“You don’t see SDARL graduates sitting on the sidelines,” Norton

said. “They’re stepping up to serve on commodity and corporate boards, in community organizations, in government and in their families, leading and taking action and inspiring others to do the same.”

SDARL Class VII graduate Mike Traxinger of Claremont is doing anything but sitting on the sidelines. Traxinger is a fifth-generation farmer and rancher who also serves as general counsel and director of governmental affairs for Agtegra Cooperative. He recently joined the board of directors at Northern Electric Cooperative based in Bath, is past president of the American Agricultural Law Association, co-chair of the Agricultural Law Committee of the State Bar of South Dakota and a member of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, Farmers Union and South Dakota Simmental Association.

“The SDRAL program really helped hone my leadership skills and gave me more insight into ways that I could make a difference that I hadn’t thought of before,” said Traxinger, who also serves as president of the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives. “Leadership is vital to the continued success of rural America, farming and ranching operations, and our communities. And programs like SDARL are very effective in developing strong leaders who have a passion for service and a heart for helping others succeed in a way that’s beneficial for everyone.”

The SDARL Foundation was created in 1998 under the first Executive Director Dr. Dan Gee, who stepped into the role after retiring from the Animal Science Department at South Dakota State University. The first class started in 2000 with participants representing a range of backgrounds including ranching, farming, banking, media, government and private business.

Dr. Gee was the leader of SDARL



Leadership students take a field tour of a logging operation in northern Minnesota.

in 2008 when Olga Brouwer went through the curriculum. Brouwer was so impressed with Dr. Gee and the program that she later went on to become leader of the Minnesota Agriculture Rural Leadership (MARL) and has held that position for the past 10 years. She points out that both the MARL and SDARL programs were formed on the same day 21 years ago and have graduated a combined 600 students during that time.

“I learned so much from Dr. Gee,” said Brouwer, who once operated a dairy farm in Elkton. “He was super-educational and also provided a lot of insight into the political process, how to reach out. If you go and talk to legislators and staffers you find out there are reasons why things might not be working out so well. But in order to change things, you have to be at the table and be active, especially for cooperatives.”

While both programs have similar structures and operate in similar fashion, Brouwer said MARL is affiliated with the University of Minnesota Extension and places a bit more stress on the academic side in the learning material.

Kylie and Jake Rieke are both graduates of the MARL program and leaders in their community. Along with raising corn and bean crops, Jake is chairman and a founding organizer of the R-S Fiber Cooperative while Kylie serves on the board of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association based in Danube, Minn.

Jake participated in MARL from 2018 to 2020 and was impressed with what he gained from the program. His group traveled to Cambodia and Taiwan to examine their agricultural practices.

“It was a great experience. For us, it blew open an entire network of connected individuals to draw off their expertise and bounce ideas off of,” he said. “Everybody in the group brings a unique background in different fields, so there are people you can call to ask questions or answer questions someone may have for you. It gives you a fast lane for networking and for getting your projects moving to accomplish whatever goals you have in front of you.”

Neither SDARL nor MARL receive direct funds from state or federal governments to support their programming. Participants pay

The number of years
SDARL and MARL

21

have been developing
community leaders.

a percentage of the cost of going through the program but most funding comes from individuals, businesses and partnering organizations whose goal is to improve and develop rural communities.

One of those organizations standing in full support of both programs and the concept of rural leadership development is East River Electric Power Cooperative, which provides transmission, substation and distribution services for electric cooperatives in both states.

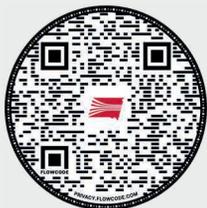
Those interested in investing in rural leadership through these programs can visit www.sdagleadership.com and www.marlprogram.org.



Christmas Day
December 25, 2021

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

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



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

NOVEMBER 26

Parade of Lights
Dakota Avenue, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

NOVEMBER 26-28
Beautiful – The Carole King Musical

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/> for more info and tickets

NOVEMBER 26-28

DECEMBER 4-6, 10-23, 26-31
Christmas Nights of Lights
Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

NOVEMBER 27
Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade

Downtown, Rapid City, SD, 605-381-4204

DECEMBER 2
Christmas on the Prairie
526 North Broadway Avenue, Miller, SD, 605-853-3098

DECEMBER 2
Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights
Downtown, Yankton, SD, 605-668-5231

DECEMBER 3

Handel's Messiah
First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

DECEMBER 3-4
Christmas in The Hills – "Visions of Sugar Plums"
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, 605-890-0519

DECEMBER 3-5
Annual Christmas Tree Lighting & Cowboy Christmas
Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-223-7690

DECEMBER 4
Rapid City Garden Club's Wreath & Centerpiece Sale
Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

DECEMBER 5
Magical Medora Christmas
Homestake Opera House, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.homestakeoperahouse.org/> for more info and tickets

DECEMBER 10
for KING & COUNTRY – A Drummer Boy Christmas Tour
Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://smarturl.it/DBSiouxFallsSD>

DECEMBER 11

Breakfast with Santa
Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown, SD, tickets go on sale after Thanksgiving, 605-882-6269

DECEMBER 11

Frontier Christmas
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

DECEMBER 11-12

Christmas with the Symphony: 'Tis the Season
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

DECEMBER 11-12, 18-19

Christmas Tours of the Historic Adams House
22 Van Buren Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-722-4800

DECEMBER 15-18

Lakota Nation Invitational 45th Anniversary
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

DECEMBER 16-19
25th Annual Christmas at the Cathedral

Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://ccfesd.org/events/christmas-at-the-cathedral/>

DECEMBER 18

Vendor and Craft Market
Watertown Mall, Watertown, SD, 605-882-1734

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve with The Davis Sisters
601 Columbus Street, Rapid City, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

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