

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Co-ops Power Next Generation

How Co-ops are
Engaging Youth
Pages 8-9

811: Call Before
You Dig
Pages 12-13

Photo by Amanda Haugen

2025 Annual Meeting



Dave Page
General Manager

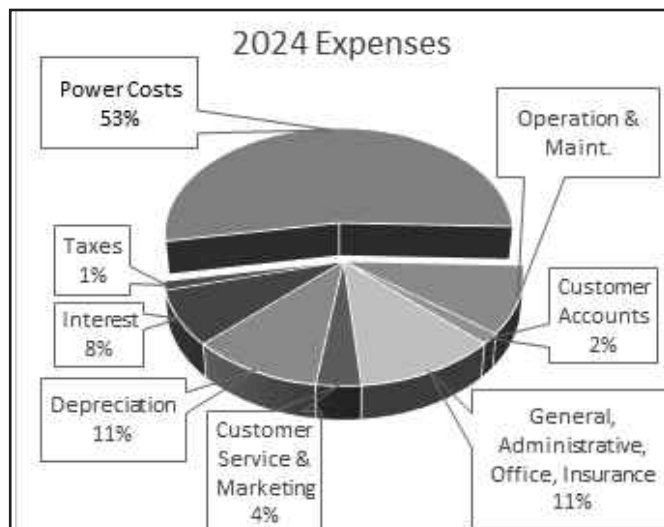
The Cooperative's annual meeting will be held March 27, 2025. The attending members will have an opportunity to review the past year's achievements and plans for the future. At the forefront of discussions will be the contents of the 2024 annual report, which encompass financial and statistical data, construction work plans, and information regarding a rate increase. The annual report details the Cooperative's revenue, expenditures, and overall financial health.

Construction work plans to be presented underscore our commitment to infrastructure development and system modernization. By investing in the expansion and upgrade of our facilities, we aim to improve service quality, enhance reliability,

and accommodate the evolving needs of our membership.

The recent rate increase will be discussed, acknowledging the need for sufficient revenue to cover rising wholesale power costs while maintaining essential services and infrastructure investments. We remain mindful of the impact on our members and, through thoughtful deliberation, implemented rate adjustments aimed at balancing affordability with the long-term reliability of service.

In conclusion, the Cooperative's annual meeting and the presentation of the 2024 annual report serve as a testament to our commitment to transparency, accountability, and member engagement. By providing a comprehensive overview of our financial performance, operational metrics, construction plans, and rate considerations, we reaffirm our dedication to serving the best interests of our members and communities.



Assets

Cost of Utility Plant	\$43,793,573
Provision for Depreciation	\$(11,966,101)
Net Value of Plant	\$31,827,472
Cash-General Funds/Spec.Funds	\$107,330
Investments in Economic Dev Projects	\$83,500
Other Investments	\$218,900
Material and Supplies	\$1,684,305
Investments in Associate Organizations	\$8,284,430
Accounts Receivable	\$1,374,440
Prepayments	\$670,045
Deferred Debits	\$333,205
Total Assets	\$44,583,627

2024 Financial Statement

Operating Revenues	\$11,858,621
Cost of Electric Service	
Power Costs	\$6,165,672
Operation & Maint.	\$1,136,946
Customer Accounts	\$185,013
General, Administrative, Office, Insurance	\$1,338,584
Customer Service & Marketing	\$423,062
Depreciation	\$1,236,078
Interest	\$926,595
Taxes	\$149,151
Total Expenses	\$11,561,103
Operating Margins	\$297,518

Interest Income	\$49,026
Other Margins (Non-Energy Sales & Service)	\$49,155
East River & Basin Capital Credits	\$485,903
Other Capital Credits & Dividends	\$90,802

Net Patronage and Margins **\$972,404**

Statistics	2024	2023
Miles of Line	1,467	1,464
Total Services	3,622	3,596
Consumers Per Mile	2.47	2.35
Equity Percentage	33.2%	33.5%

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WHETSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC

USPS 018-979)

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Office hours: Monday-Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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Design assistance by SDREA.

Equity

Patronage Capital Credits	\$12,574,556
Other Margins & Equity	\$2,202,454
Total Equity	\$14,777,010
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$44,583,627

Liabilities

Long Term Debt	\$28,434,975
Accounts Payable	\$719,926
Notes Payable	\$-
Consumer Deposits	\$168,485
Other Current & Accrued Liabilities	\$396,249
Reg. Liab. & Deferred Credits	\$86,982
Total Liabilities	\$29,806,617

History of Capital Credits Paid

Years	Amount Paid Out
1962-2005	\$4,427,896
2006	\$205,420
2007	\$237,570
2008	\$6,701
2009	\$103,208
2010	\$142,017
2011	\$136,809
2012	\$138,706
2013	\$146,039
2014	\$156,513
2015	\$163,306
2016	\$173,747
2017	\$184,397
2018	\$210,693
2019	\$218,319
2020	\$306,038
2021	\$333,907
2022	\$458,211
2023	\$479,450
2024	\$496,422

Total Capital Credits

Paid To Members:

\$ 8,725,369

Unclaimed Capital Credits

The unclaimed capital credit list represents credit checks that Whetstone Valley Electric mailed to members. These checks were returned by United States Postal service for various reasons. After 6 years of not being claimed a letter has been mailed. This Is a Notice of Forfeiture of Unclaimed cash pursuant to SDCL 47-16-54 through SDCL 47-16-57. You are hereby notified that the unclaimed cash you are entitled to shall be forfeited pursuant to the above statutes, unless said unclaimed cash is claimed and proper evidence of ownership is submitted to Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative.

ACKERMAN HAZEL L
ADAMS KATHERINE
AGENCY LAUNDROMAT
ALAMEDA JAMES
ALLEN MARY G
ALLISON JAMES C
ALSIP CHARLES L
AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT
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ANDERSON DEAN
ANDERSON JOSEPH R
ANDERSON TIMOTHY K
ASPER TRACY
BAGOLA JUSTIN SR
BAKER BARBARA
BALO CAROL
BARBER DONALD E
BARSE GAIL
BARSE-GERMAN CARLA
BEAULIEU KENNETH
BEETUM BRIAN
BEHR LAVERN A
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BOND TIMOTHY
BORMANN ESTATE
WILLIAM M
BOWEN LOIS
BOWERS ESTATE KENNETH
BRANESS CLAYTON
BRANT TOM
BRANT ESTATE EVANGELINE
BRAY DAN
BROOKS RONALD R
BROWER WILLIAM
BROWN EDWARD
BROWN KAY
BRUCKEN TOM J
BRUCKEN VIOLET
BRUNS CHARLOTTE
BRYANT FRANCINE
BULLOCK LILLIAN
BURGHARDT S L
BUSCH DAWN
CAMP LISA M
CARLIN HAZEL
CASTLE ROCK CONSTRUCTION
CERMAK JAMES
CHANCE LISA
CHRISTENSEN PAUL

CHRISTENSON JAY
CONWAY WILLIAM F
COPPOLA NANCY M
COTANNY GRANT
CRAIG JODENE
CRAWFORD FLORINDA
CRAWFORD JUDY
CROSBY RUSSELL
CURRY JODI
DAHLBERG ROBERT
DAKOTA GRAIN #5 ENTERPRISES
DECOTEAU ARNOLD L
DEMARRIAS ANDREA
DEMARRIAS LINCOLN
DITTES HARRIET
DONALDSON OLIVER
DORNBUSCH DONALD J
DUBOIS RICHARD
DUMARCE LENNIE
DUMARCE VERA
DUMP DARWIN A
EAGLE ANN M
EASTMAN DONALD

Continued on page 11

Distracted Driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system – anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.

Consequences

Using a cell phone while driving creates enormous potential for deaths and injuries on U.S. roads. In 2022, 3,308 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

Get Involved

We can all play a part in the fight to save lives by ending distracted driving.



Teens

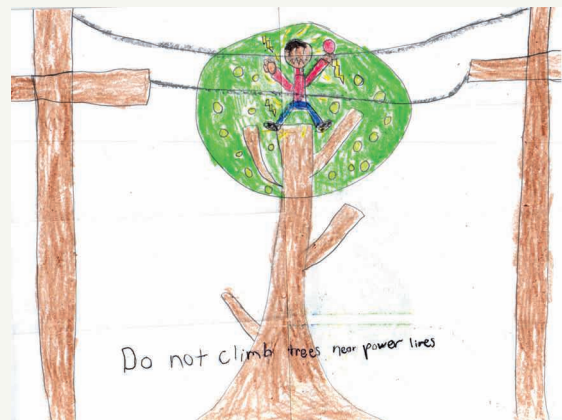
Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Parents

Parents first must lead by example – by never driving distracted – as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving. Remind your teen driver that in states with graduated driver licensing (GDL), a violation of distracted-driving laws could mean a delayed or suspended license.

Educators and Employers

Educators and employers can play a part, too. Spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.



"Do not climb trees near power lines."

Naomi Krcil, Age 7

Naomi cautions readers about the dangers of climbing trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil, members of Charles Mix 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.

Let's Have BRUNCH

EASY BREAKFAST MUFFIN

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tsps. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs (beaten)
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk

Method

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a 12 cup muffin tin with paper liners or spray each cup with cooking spray. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.

Add in eggs, oil and milk and mix only until combined, don't beat or over mix or they will be dry! Fold in 1/2 cup mix-ins if desired.

Scoop into prepared muffin tin and bake for 15 to 18 minutes or just until golden and a toothpick comes clean. Serve with butter and jam.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Member

UMM BRUNCH

Ingredients:

Scallops
English Muffin
Eggs

Method

Soak scallops in cold water in fridge for two hours, pat dry, sauté in butter and garlic until opaque (approx. 4 min). Put on toasted English muffin. Cook poached eggs in 10-inch skillet with 1 tbsp. vinegar (3-5 mins.) Remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Add to the scallops and top with Hollandaise Sauce.

Hollandaise Sauce:

Cut 1/2 stick butter into thirds. In double boiler, combine 1 piece of butter and 3 egg yolks, 1 tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tbsp. water. Place it over boiling water and cook while whisking rapidly. Add remaining butter one at a time, continue to cook. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Kari Reder
Northern Electric Member

SAUSAGE AND EGG TACOS

Ingredients:

4 oz. breakfast sausage, casings removed
1 tbsp. perfect pinch roasted garlic bell pepper seasoning
6 eggs
2 tbsps. milk
1 tbsp. butter
6 small flour tortillas, warmed
1/4 cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 med. ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced

Method

Heat medium skillet on medium-high heat. Add sausage and Seasoning; cook and stir until sausage is browned and crumbled. Remove sausage from pan; keep warm. Drain fat from pan.

Beat eggs and milk in medium bowl with wire whisk. Melt butter in same skillet on medium heat. Add egg mixture; cook and stir until eggs are firm.

For each taco, place one tortilla on plate. Top with eggs, sausage, cheese and avocado. Sprinkle with additional seasoning, if desired.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Prep Now for Summer Savings



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: How can I prepare my home for lower energy bills this summer?

A: Spring is in the air, and before you know it, summer will be here. There are many ways to get a jump-start on preventing summertime high bills and energy waste.

Add your cooling equipment to the spring-cleaning checklist. An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charge, airflow adjustment and condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system's efficiency and the lifespan of your equipment, reducing wasted energy and costs.

Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter can waste energy by causing your system to work harder. Make sure you have a stack of replacement filters ready to go so you are more likely to replace them as needed. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk. When I recently shopped for filters for my home,

the per-filter price was about half as much for a 12-pack as it was for a two-pack.

Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit, or head, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, be sure to turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

As we transition from cool to warm weather, keep an eye on your thermostat settings. The Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees when you are home and higher when you are away. You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the room you're in during the day or when you're sleeping. Using a fan can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, make sure you flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter, and you can maximize the comfort benefit of a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

Another consideration before summer hits is your home's impact on peak load—when demand for electricity is highest. This typically occurs in the morning when people are getting ready for work and school, and in the evening when they return home. Your electric cooperative must manage the energy use of all its consumers, which can be a challenge. Consider starting the dishwasher before you go to sleep or starting a load of laundry outside of your utility's peak times.

If you have a photovoltaic solar system, run your dishwasher or do laundry when your system produces the most electricity, which is typically during the sunny mid-day.

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling. Get the grill cleaned now so that you are ready to enjoy outdoor cooking.

Incorporate these tips into your summer prep to save energy and lower your bills.



From Dell Rapids to Nashville

Julie Eddy Remembers South Dakota Roots

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Amid the hustle and bustle of Nashville's legendary music scene, where neon lights shine over the iconic clubs of "Honky Tonk highway," a rising star from South Dakota is making her mark.

Known for songs including "On My Way to You" and "Two Truths & a Lie," Julie Eddy captivates the music scene with her distinctive voice, heartfelt songwriting and energizing performances.

But before the glamour of Music City came years of hard work, dedication and an unshakeable desire for doing what she loved.

Years ago, in the small eastern South Dakota town of Dell Rapids, 10-year old Julie Eddy discovered her love of music.

"My sister had come home after learning how to sing the national anthem at school, and she was singing it for me," Julie recalled. "And of course, as a big sister, I told her, 'You're doing it wrong, this is how you do it.' My mom came around the corner and asked which one of us was singing, and I told her it was me. She said, 'wait a second, that's actually pretty good!'"

With a little encouragement, Julie signed up to sing the national anthem at Dell Rapids high school basketball games.

"That was the first time I had ever sang in front of an audience," she said. "I just loved it – the adrenaline of it, the feeling of it."

It came as no surprise to Julie's mom, Teri, who says her daughter was never shy about performing, regularly enthralling the family living room with performances of Disney movie scenes.

Watching Julie's singing progress from basketball games, to church, to charities, then to weddings, Teri realized that Julie's performances weren't just a hobby anymore.

"That was when we really knew that she had kind of an amazing talent, and really the ability to get up in front of people and perform," Teri explained.

When Julie turned 21, she started singing in bars and restaurants across South Dakota a couple of weekends each month. In 2018, looking for more venues, she moved to Minneapolis.

"I was at every bar, every place that I knew that had music, like begging somebody to get me shows," Julie chuckled. "I was playing four, sometimes five nights a week on top of my day job."

Julie's lucky break came at a songwriting workshop when she entered a writing contest. As a winner, she was invited to Nashville to write with some of the industry's top writers.

In Music City, Julie knew she was home, and in 2021, she



moved to pursue her singing career full time.

"I know it sounds corny, but I feel like I wasn't really given a choice," Julie added. "It was just in me, and I fell in love with it."

Since then, Julie has recorded an album, numerous singles, and has become a regular performer in the Nashville music scene.

But diving headfirst into the music industry wasn't without difficulty, Julie found.

"Where I grew up, everyone helps everyone," she explained. "Dell Rapids almost felt familial and you could trust everyone. The world outside Dell Rapids is not like that and sometimes you learn that the hard way."

Julie continued, "In this industry, they say you're going to hear 'no' 100 times before you hear one 'yes,' and you're going to get the door slammed in your face and the rug pulled out from underneath you. I took it with a grain of salt, but it's absolutely true. Those stories you hear about somebody making it overnight or being discovered in a bar have at least 10 or 15 years of work behind them."

But beyond all of the perks of Nashville's music industry, Julie's motivation to sing is a little bit closer to home. It's thinking back to when she was a little girl, driving with her dad in his red Chevy Trailblazer across the plains of eastern South Dakota listening to her old favorites – Shania Twain, Trisha Yearwood and Sarah Evans, for example – as she sang every word, feeling inexplicably happy in those precious moments.

"People will send me videos of my song playing through their car radio, and it's like the most surreal feeling in the world," Julie said. "And I wonder, what if there's a little girl doing that to my song, the same way I fell in love with music?"

There's also some surreality for Teri at times; moments like watching hometown neighbors load onto a bus to watch Julie perform on tour, or when a new single releases and she learns every word, singing along to a voice she cherishes so deeply.

"Julie inspires me, because no matter what anyone says, she has followed her heart and that has led her to the success she has," Teri said. "She's always believed in herself, even at hard moments in her life, but you just knew she would figure it out. That's a pretty amazing thing to see in your kid."

FROM CELEBRATION TO INSPIRATION

Megawatt welcomes members to the football tailgate party hosted by West River Electric.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

How Electric Co-ops Are Powering the Next Generation

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

April marks Lineman Appreciation Month, the perfect time to spotlight the essential role that electric cooperative employees play in their communities. In line with their commitment to education and community involvement, electric cooperatives are celebrating lineworkers through youth engagement initiatives, and it all stems from one of the electric cooperatives' seven cooperative principles: concern for community. For years, programs such as Cooperatives in the Classroom have provided schoolchildren with innovative, hands-on learning opportunities, demonstrating the critical work electric cooperatives perform in their communities.

Whether it's engaging youth through a Neon Leon safety demonstration or taking students to explore Basin Electric's energy infrastructure during the SDREA Youth Excursion, electric cooperatives across the state are constantly finding new and exciting ways to engage the youth within their communities and inspire the next generation. Below are two new avenues for spurring youth engagement in cooperatives across the state:

Megawatt Mascot

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Megawatt, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative's newest lineman mascot. This summer, select electric cooperatives in western South Dakota are suiting up to introduce Megawatt – a friendly-faced lineman adorned with a hard hat, safety gloves and

bright red cape – to their members.

"The goal is to get younger kids to start thinking about linemen in a certain way – almost larger than life and the backbone of the electric cooperative," said Rushmore Electric Chief Marketing Officer Matt Brunner. "The hope is that it translates into them considering the lineman profession when they get older."

Megawatt has already made his debut at several member appreciation events, bringing high-energy fun to parades and tailgates as a true champion of the cooperative spirit. So far, Brunner said the mascot has left a big impression.

"The kids and adults have loved it, and the interactions have been great," Brunner said. "If nothing else, it's unique. People are constantly asking, 'Who is that?' The costume does a great job of starting the conversation: what is a lineman, and what do they do?"

Beyond lineworkers, cooperatives offer a diverse range of career paths.

From engineers to accountants, the cooperative world is full of exciting roles that include opportunities in communications, where professionals share the cooperative's achievements and member services, where employees work directly with the community to meet their needs.

Brunner said he expects the idea to continue gaining momentum over the coming months with new avenues of appreciation for linemen and a better understanding of the day in the life of a lineman, as well as other exciting careers in the electric cooperative industry.

STEM Gains Steam

Jennifer Gross, education and outreach coordinator at East River Electric Power Cooperative, has inspired classrooms for years with a variety of engaging demonstrations, covering everything from science to safety. Last year, Gross introduced a new activity to spark curiosity while incorporating STEM – an approach to education that integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics into learning. The result led to a crafting activity where kids use simple materials to fashion their own wind turbine.

"We are always trying to come up with new ideas for students," Gross said. "Incorporating STEM into this project seemed like a natural fit because both teachers and students are very receptive to it."

The idea is straightforward. Students construct a small-scale turbine from wooden dowels, fins, and a motor capable of generating power. Once completed, they connect their tiny turbine to a multimeter, which measures the energy generated. Instead of relying on natural wind, students use a fan to simulate a windy day. By altering their model turbines, students can find the optimal design for the best output of energy. And just like that, students can step into the role of engineers.



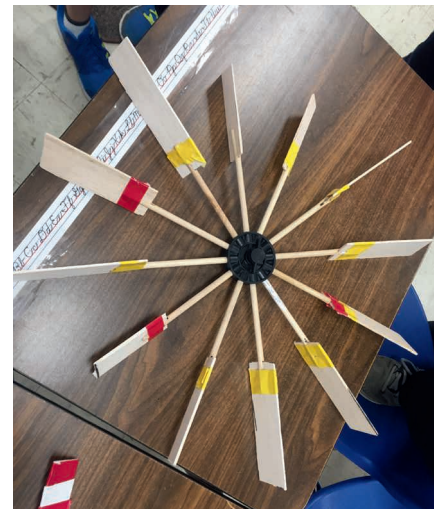
Megawatt is joined by U.S. Air Force personnel enjoying the Annual Base Picnic.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

Gross said the students and the project have a lot in common. Once the building begins, the students' minds begin to whirl – just like a turbine. The activity prompts question after question: Why does the wind blow? How does a wind turbine work? How does the shape and weight of the blade influence the experiment?

"The students enjoy being engineers for this project," Gross said. "They enjoy having the freedom to choose their materials and design. There's no right or wrong way to do it, and they enjoy that. I mention to the students that careers in wind energy are in high demand and some are 4-year degrees and others are fewer years, but the push for renewable energy sources is growing and our state produces plenty of wind."

Whether it's through a hands-on activity or an engaging mascot, cooperatives aim to not only educate but inspire, ensuring that today's students can become tomorrow's linemen, engineers, communicators or member service representatives. By

sparking curiosity and introducing young people to the world of cooperatives early on, they're opening the door to careers that keep communities powered and connected.



This is just one example of how students create wind turbines using materials such as balsa wood, foam, card stock, cardboard and paper cups.

Photo by Jennifer Gross

Max Schuelke Named Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week

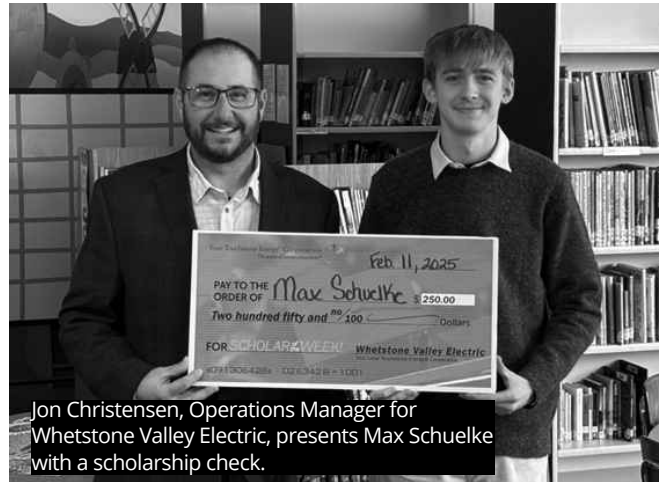
We are pleased to announce Max Schuelke has been named Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week for the week of, March 2 – March 8, 2025.

Max is the son of Russ & Robin Schuelke of rural Revillo, SD and currently a senior at Milbank High School.

Max is in Debate and Theatre and has won many awards in those activities. He is also a Sunday school teacher.

Heidi Wellnitz, a counselor at Milbank High School, nominated Max for the award and gave a well-deserved recommendation.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and Dakota News Now have joined together to recognize the achievements of high school seniors throughout the region. “Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week” has been celebrating the achievements of high school seniors since 2002. Recipients are highly motivated high school



Jon Christensen, Operations Manager for Whetstone Valley Electric, presents Max Schuelke with a scholarship check.

seniors who excel in the classroom and community. This program was founded on the four pillars of Touchstone Energy: Integrity, Accountability, Innovation and a Commitment to Community.

For more information on the program please call Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative at 605-432-5331.

Operations Overview



Jon Christensen
Operations Manager

I would like to take this time to review with the membership what we worked on in 2024 and what is coming up in 2025 and into the future. I will start with some stats from 2024.

- Installed or replaced 25 miles of line.
- Installed 56 new electric services.
- Revamped 25 existing services.
- Replaced 35 poles.
- Completed 1469 Locates.
- Restored 115 outages — down from 194 in 2023.

We installed 25 miles of line consisting of planned projects and new service installations. Electric services were up this year at 56. We revamped 25 services, either to bigger sizes or replacement due to age. Pole replacements were at 35 total and are driven by our annual pole testing, ones that get damaged or we need to change due to weather, clearances, or even beavers. We changed one this last year that a beaver decided to damage. 1469 one call locates were also completed this last year. Outages were down in 2024 at 115 compared to 194 in 2023.

Looking Ahead to 2025 and beyond.

East River Electric's load control program needs a revamp due to older unsupported technology. This requires us to change all of our load controllers out to newer technology. Whetstone Valley Electric has opted to hire a contractor to complete the majority of this work over the next three years starting in 2025. We plan to change out 700 controllers per year for three years. We chose to do

it this way due to scheduling, workload and to spread costs over time. We will be in contact with our members to inform them of the scheduling of this project. We will also need help from the membership to make this project go as smoothly as possible due to most load controllers being inside. More to come on this project as it gets closer.

Below I will go into some detail about our planned powerline replacement projects coming up in 2025.

The first project was on the list to be done in 2024. We did get some of it completed but not all of it due to some other projects that came up that were unknown when planning for 2024. This project is in the Hartford/Linden Beach area and is still slated to be done in this four-year work plan which goes through 2026. This project is needed for capacity and to replace the older overhead lines with underground.

Another project in the works is replacing single phase overhead line with three-phase underground line. This is needed for balancing loads back to the substation and load growth. The project is located between the south end of Lake Traverse and Interstate 29 along 122nd Street or Eastman Road in the northeast part of our service territory.

The next two projects are in the LaBolt and Albee areas. The first one is northeast of LaBolt and is to replace approximately 1 ½ miles of old copper original wire with new underground wire. We are trying to replace all of this old copper in this current four-year work plan. The second one is north and east of Albee. This project is to replace two miles of single-phase overhead line with three-phase

Continued on page 11

underground. This is for balancing loads and extending better capacity to this area.

The last project is one that came unexpectedly in 2024. Ottertail Power has requested we bury some lines for one of their new projects. Ottertail pays the cost of this project. We got started on it in 2024 and will finish spring of 2025. There is one small spot on the south side of Milbank and the rest of the project was out by the granite quarries. This project is to bury single phase line which we opted to add two more phases to. This will create three phases in the area. This area would have needed upgrading in future years anyway, so this project was a win-win for members of Whetstone Valley Electric.

In closing, please know that we are constantly striving to

provide for our members according to our Mission and Purpose.

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to provide the highest level of service, quality and value

to our members and patrons in all that we do.

OUR PURPOSE

Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative exists to enhance the quality of life in our service area by safely and reliably providing competitively priced electricity, products and services to our members and the community.

As always please feel free to stop in the office or give us a call if you have any questions or concerns.

Unclaimed Capitol Credits

Continued from page 3

EDWARDS	RUSSELL	P	HEATH	RICHARD		KITTELSON	DOUGLAS	NELSON	REX	SCHOENROCK	JEFFERY
EKERN	RICHARD		HEEBER	MARDELL	R	KLEIN	DOUGLAS	NEWMAN	CHARLES	SCHOENWETTER	CRAIG
ENDRES	PAT	J	HEEBER	RALPH		KLEVEN	RALPH	NICOLAR	FREDERICK JR	SCHURTER	LAWRENCE
ENQUIST	LUVERNE		HEINJE	DAVID		KLINE	RALPH	NORTHWESTERN	BELL TEL CO	SCHWAGERL	HARRIS
FAIRALL	CRAIG	M	HENJUM	MELVIN		KONOLD	GERTRUDE	OLSON	BARRY	SEABOY	CHARLENE
FARKAS	FRANK	S	HEPPNER	HARVEY		KONZ	RAYMOND	OLSON	MARION	SETTJE	DON
FEATHER	LARRY		HERBERT	CHARLES	M	LABELLE	ROSEANNE	OLSON	WALLACE	SHEPHERD	HELEN B
FELDMAN	KENNETH		HERMAN	MARY	M	LAMIS	DONALD E	ONE ROAD	DUWAYNE	SHEPHERD	SMILEY
FINLEY	LESLIE		HERMAN	OWEN	E	LARSEN	A D	OPSAHL	WAYNE	SHINDELBOWER	MARK
FISHER	MONTE		HESSLER	NATHAN		LEAHY	CHARLES	OWEN	JUANITA	SIERRA	CLARISSA
FITZPATRICK	MICHAEL	A	HILL	BRENDA		LEDDY	JEANNA	PARKER	VERELYN	SLUTZ	CHRIS
FLANNERY	RANDY		HILL	NANCY		LEITH	JOHN L	PAYNE	ELDON S	SMALL	CURTIS
FONDER	PAMELA		HILL	ROCHELLE	L	LEITH	YVONNE	PEPKE	OLGA	SMITH	VERNE
FOSS	BERTHA		HILLBERG	EARL		LEITHEISER	LILLIAN	PEWAMO	GORDON	SNOOK	JAMES M
FOSTER	IRENE	E	HILLS	YVONNE		LEWTON	WOODROW	PFEIFER	JANICE J	SOUTH DAKOTA FIREWORKS INC	
FRAHM	MARIAN		HIS GUN	BRENDA		LINDBERG	DAVID	PHELPS	MYRON	SPARKS	ROBERT
FRANDSEN	HARVEY		HOFHENKE	BRENDA		LINNEMAN	BERNARD	PIES	RICK	ST JOHN	NORWOOD
FRENIER	ANDRE		HOLGERSON	FARMS		LOCKE	AUDREY	PORTER	MYLO	STARS	RUTH T
FRIESSEN	LEONARD		HOLT	DEBRA	D	LOEBS- BUCHIN	KRISTI	PRATT	DONOVAN	SULLIVAN	LARRY
FRYER	DONALD		HOPKINS	MARJORIE		LUNDSTROM	LAWRENCE	PRATT	WILBUR	THOMAS HAUG	ANNABELLE
GATERS	WILLIAM	D	HORMANN	TODD		MADIGAN	CHRISTINE	PROVOST	JAMES	THOMPSON	ANNA
GERMAN	BERT		HOWARTH	A W		MADISON	JOHN W	QUADE	JONATHAN	THOMPSON	PAUL
GERMAN	BRUCE	JR	JAQUET	KENNETH		MAE RANCH-KENNETH		QUADE	KAREN	THORKEKSON	VLASTA
GERTSMA	KATHERINE	S	JACKSON	AARON		FELDMAN		QUALE	CURTIS	THYMIAN	ROY
GETTEL-BECKMAN	TANYA		JAQUET	KENNETH		MAGNUSON	JOHN R	QUALE	WAYNE	TJETJEN	DANNY
GIERE	DAVID		JENSEN	KENNETH		MAILLET	PHIL	REAMER	DONALD G	TJADEN	VIOLET
GILLETTE	JACK		JOHNSON	HOWARD	D	MANDLER	WILLARD	REDENIUS	LELAND	TOMANIO	DONALD
GIOSSI	ALLEN		JOHNSON	MARK S		MARKO	LARRY	REDFIELD	MERWYN	TREVINO	ROBERTA
GLASS	LUCINDA		JOHNSON	MICHAEL	D	MARTINSON	C G	REMUND	KEVIN	TUFF	ANDREW GJR
GLASS	MARCELLA		JOHNSON	PHILOMENE	E	MCGINNIS	DOROTHY	RENVILLE	BARBARA	TWO STARS ESTATE	NANCY
GOBLE	E D		JOHNSON	STEVE		MCKINNEY	ROSITA	RENVILLE	JEREMIAH M	VALKENAAR	W G
GRAY BEAR	MONA		JOHNSON	TONY		MEIER	CYNTHIA	RENVILLE	PAM	VAN HOORN	JOHN
GREAT PLAINS CABLE TV, INC.			JONES	FLOYD		MESSAGE FOR AMERICA	EVANG	RENVILLE	RODNEY	VOSBERG	JERRY
GREY	CHARLOTTE		JONES	MAX D		METTLER	GEORGE	RENVILLE	SHEILA M	WALKINGHAWK	LYLE
GROSZ	JOHN		KARGES	DUANE		MICKELSON	STEVE E	RENVILLE	V J	WATKINS	DAN T
GUCK	CHRIS		KASTEN	LLOYD		MIDWEST TIRE SERVICE		RIDER	SCOTT	WATKINS	NANCY C
GUGGISBERG	DAN		KAUFMAN	GEORGE		MILBRANDT		RIECK	TIM	WEBER	FRANCIS
HALL	CHAD		KEEBLE	ERNEST		CHRISTOPHER		RIKIMOTO	DONALD L	WESTERN WIRELESS CORP	
HALL	EDITH		KEEBLE	PAUL		MILLER	MATT	RISE	JOHN	WHALEY	JIM
HALL	ROBERT		KEENEY	JAMES		MILLER	WES	RUHR	CECILIA E	WHITE	CAROL
HANSEN	WILLIS		KELLAR	SHELDON		MITCHELL	DENNIS	S F CAUDILL (V MEYER)		WHITE	KIM
HANSON	VIOLA		KELLY	MIKE		MONEN	LYLE	SANDERS	THOMAS	WHITE	VIBERT
HART	PATRICK J		KEOKE	DARLENE		MONTREAL	LOIS	SATTTLER	MARLOW	WIEBER WELL DRILLING	
HARTER	A L		KEONIG	TONY		MOON	RONALD	SAWREY	HOWARD	WILLIAMS	FRANK
HARTTER	VERNON W		KING	BETTY		MORRISON	J J	SAZAMA	EDWARD	WILLIAMS	NOAH
HAUBRIS	WILLIAM		KING	CHARLES		MOUSSEAU	NETTIE	SCHEEF	THEO P	WITTROCK	WALTON
HAYES	LEONARD		KING	LYLE C		MURLEY	RAY	SCHERR	CONST CO	WOOD	WILLIAM D
			KING	NELSON		MUTASICO	EDITH	SCHMEICHEL	BRENDA	WORD	GUY
			KIRK	WILBUR W		NASH	DOUGLAS B	SCHMIDT	MARK	WRIGHT	WILBERT
			KIRKENDALL	GARY		NEDOROSCIK	PAUL	SCHMIDT	STEVEN J	WRONSKI	VIOLA
						NEILAN	GEORGE	SCHMULBACH	JAMES	YAGER	RAYMOND F



DIGGING SAFELY

**Call 811 Before You Dig
Every Dig. Every Time.**

Jocelyn Johnson

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Every year, underground utility lines are damaged by homeowners and contractors who dig without calling 811. This single call is a crucial step in any project. Striking a water, gas or power line can cause serious injuries, costly repairs and service outages for an entire neighborhood. Whether you're beginning construction on a major project or are simply planting a tree, calling 811 before you dig is a free and simple solution to what could potentially be considerable damage.

What is 811?

The South Dakota One-Call System, or 811, is a mandatory statewide

one-call notification system that was established by South Dakota Statute in 1993. 811 is now recognized as the national "Call Before You Dig" number in the U.S., designed to safeguard people and protect underground utilities. It's a free service that coordinates with your utility providers to help locate and mark underground lines.






Codi Gregg, executive director for South Dakota 811, said, "The main purpose of the program is to avoid digging into any utility and potentially causing a loss of life, loss of property, or any infrastructure buried in the ground."

"We are fully funded by the utilities who want to protect the services they provide," Gregg continued. "It is



GET TO KNOW THE COLOR CODE

Below are The American Public Works Association (APWA)
Uniform Color Codes for temporary marking of underground utilities.

 Proposed Excavation	 Electric
 Water	 Communication / CATV
 Reclaimed Water, Irrigation, Slurry	 Temporary Survey Marking
 Gas, Oil, Steam	 Sewer / Storm Drain

South Dakota state law that you contact 811 two business days before you dig.”

South Dakota has underground utility lines for electricity, gas, water, sewage and telecommunications. Inadvertently hitting one of these lines could cause power outages, property damage, water contamination, gas leaks, legal liabilities and injury.

Gregg explained that when an excavator makes the 811 call before they dig, utilities receive the locate and have 48 hours to mark all lines in the designated area with color-coded flags or paint.

“If you happen to dig into a utility or find one that was not located while excavating, you have to report that to 811. If you happen to dig into a gas line or anything toxic, you must call 911 first, then 811.”

How It Works

Contractors, homeowners, ranchers and farmers can easily make a request for underground utility lines to be marked by

following these steps before every project.

1. Call 811 or submit an online request at least 48 hours prior to your project.
 - Information can be found online at www.sdonecall.com.
2. Wait for utility markings.
 - Utility companies will send professionals to mark buried lines using color-coded paint or flags.
3. Get locates on secondary or privately-owned lines if needed.
4. Check markings.
 - Confirm all utility companies listed on your ticket have responded to the request after the two-business days have passed.
5. Dig safely.

Real-Life Examples of Hitting Underground Utility Lines

Contractor Hits Unmarked Secondary Line

Tom Lundberg, member services manager from H-D Electric Cooperative in Clear Lake, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made to a secondary line:

“Normal situations start out like this – South Dakota 811 calls are made from an excavator or member (persons doing the work), and flags and paint go on the ground marking the underground services. This is a normal occurrence. However, some digs are more complicated, and there may be what we call secondary wires, pipes, sewer lines, etc. located in the dig area as well. The words primary and secondary are confusing to some people and they assume that all is well after the 811 call is made. Primary lines are owned and operated by the utility. Secondary lines are member-owned lines that are not marked by any utility. They must be marked by the member-owner of the property.

Unfortunately, we have had many of these lines hit during a dig, which makes it an emergency service call. One example is when we had a 600-amp service for a member that was damaged by a contractor. The call came in to us, and we responded to the site. We realized it could have been a very dangerous situation if the contractor would have entered the dig. Luckily, they guarded the hole until we arrived. The underground wires were extremely damaged, and the contact did not take out the transformer fuse or any kind of overcurrent protection. When I arrived, there was water in the hole, and I could hear the muddy water boiling. At that time, I assumed it was still energized. The first thing I did was turn the power off and assess the extent of the damage. The mud and water were so hot that I had to wait for a while for it to cool off. Repairs were made and everything was put back together. I double checked my work, then turned the power back on. This happened because secondary locates were not completed – resulting

in a three-hour delay for the business and a costly repair.

We have had many of these calls over the years, and we want to communicate that anyone digging for a project must ensure all the dig area is marked for primary and secondary functions (wire, pipe, gas, telephone, sewer).

Long story short, the impact of not marking all the dig area can cost you time, loss of production, money and even worse – injury or death.”

Out-of-State Contractor Hits Underground Power Line

Mike Stadler, manager of electric operations from Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made by company digging gravel:

“We had a dig-in a couple of years ago at a gravel pit. The county contracted a crushing company out of state to mine more gravel from an existing pit they had rights to. The crushing company started by digging test holes with a bulldozer. They would take the bulldozer and dig a hole about eight feet deep, just one dozer width wide, to see how good the gravel was before they committed to mining the whole area. We had underground cable around the pit. When they were exploring new areas to mine, they dug right through our cable and didn’t know it (keep in mind the test holes are 8 feet deep, and our cable is four feet deep). They dug the hole, went in and looked at the gravel, decided it wasn’t worth it, and covered the hole back up. Meanwhile, we had an outage.

When our crew began searching for the cause of the outage, they discovered the fresh dirt which was moved and had to dig it back up to fix it. When I asked the contractor why he didn’t call a locate, he stated the county superintendent said he didn’t have to because there was nothing there. They were very reluctant to pay the bill and thought the county should be liable. When I explained to them it was the law that all contractors are required to call 811, and it didn’t matter what the county told them, they paid the bill. We have since educated the county on 811 laws.”



A Greenhouse Tunnel at Cedar Creek Garden. Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek Garden.

POWERING LOCAL FOOD

Reliable Energy Keeps Greenhouses Growing

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

For agricultural producers in tumultuous climates like South Dakota's, a little bit of electricity goes a long way.

Across rural areas of the state, some producers are using greenhouses as a way to extend their growing season, protect their crops from wind and hail, and provide their communities with fresh produce throughout the year.

Cedar Creek Gardens, co-owned by Cherry-Todd Electric members Bud Manke and Peggy Martin, is one such producer utilizing season-extending greenhouse structures. At the site in Mellette County, Martin is able to grow a

variety of vegetables throughout much of the year by utilizing greenhouse tunnels.

"We're in growing zone 4, but our tunnels add another zone of warmth," Martin explained. "With the thermal mass of the ground, plus with vegetables like cabbage being very cold resistant, we've sometimes harvested after December 1."

Cedar Creek Gardens wasn't always the green prairie oasis it is today, with its dozen greenhouses and more than 1,000 free-range chickens. The operation started off small – just enough to feed the family, but as they discovered their passion for gardening, its scale kept creeping up.

"The demand was there, so the operation just kept getting bigger and

bigger," Martin said.

Local greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens play an integral role in communities across South Dakota, ensuring food security for rural communities by providing locally-sourced produce for grocery stores, hospitals and restaurants.

"Local food and direct-to-consumer sales have seen a significant surge in popularity here in South Dakota," Martin added. "There's a clear trend of consumers wanting to know where their food comes from."

But without the extensive systems of grow lights, heating, irrigation – and the electricity that powers all of that – Martin says her operation wouldn't be sustainable.

Cedar Creek Gardens relies on electricity for several key aspects of the operation: irrigation to ensure crops get consistent water, grow lights to create optimal growing environment for transplants in the spring, and cooling

systems and storage facilities for the harvest.

“Reliable electricity from our rural electric cooperative is absolutely essential for Cedar Creek Gardens,” Martin said.

With electricity being so critical in every operation at the greenhouse, so too is the reliability. Any outage – summer or winter – risks an entire season of work.

“Cherry-Todd Electric is very aware of the amount of produce that we have, and they don’t think of us as ‘the middle of nowhere,’” Martin explained. “Cherry-Todd Electric is really good about calling us and saying they’re going to be working and let us know when the power will be off so we know to get stuff in the cooler and not open and close the doors.”

Cherry-Todd Electric’s manager, Tim Grablander, recognizes his members’ need for reliable and continuous energy, noting the co-op’s stringent practices including line patrolling, hazard recognition and line maintenance procedures to avert potential future problems.

“Cherry-Todd Electric’s mission is to not only assure that our power is available to each member, but that we are delivering power at the highest level of reliability as is physically possible,” Grablander said. “Our members depend on a consistent and reliable source of energy when and where it is needed. We also recognize the critical nature of power reliability for our healthcare providers, business owners, and our members with assistive medical needs. Reliability is our mission.”

But not every outage comes with the luxury of an advanced notice. When severe weather strikes, unexpected outages require quick thinking.

“When we had a blizzard and we lost electricity, we put the cows in with the plants to produce enough body heat so the plants didn’t freeze,” Martin recalled. “If we lose power on our electric heaters, we could lose all of our plants and not have anything to put into production. Power outages are also a significant risk to our cold storage facilities in the summer, any disruption can cause

the produce to spoil, which is a financial loss.”

Luckily, those outages are rare; Cherry-Todd Electric and its generation and transmission cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, emphasize reliable energy generation while other areas of the United States face strain on their electric grid, resorting to costly measures like rolling brown-outs.

“At Basin Electric, our all-of-the-above energy strategy ensures members have reliable, affordable power when they need it most by prioritizing dispatchable resources like coal and natural gas, alongside wind and solar,” said Chris Baumgartner, senior vice president of Member and External Relations for Basin Electric Power Cooperative. “We continue to invest in new generation while maintaining and optimizing our existing resources to meet demand, even during extreme weather conditions. These investments provide the baseload power and stability that businesses like Cedar Creek Gardens depend on – helping to sustain local economies and keep food on tables across the region.”

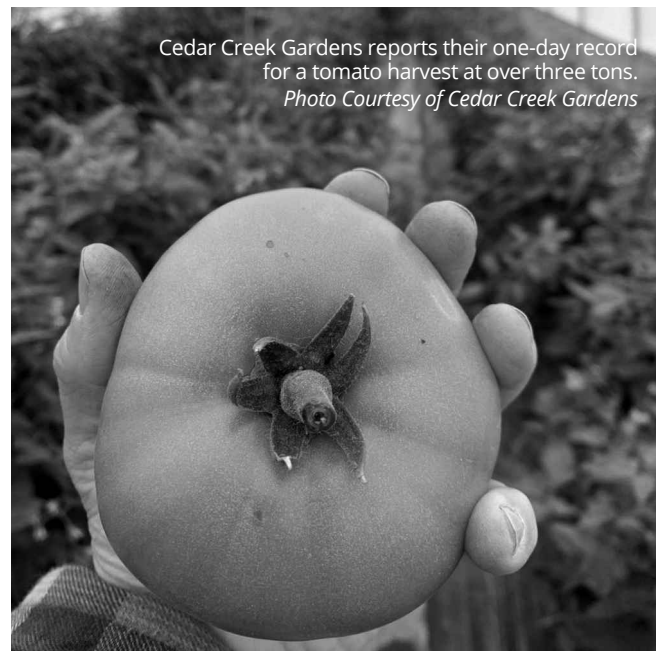
For greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens, energy rates directly impact the wholesale cost of her products that businesses and communities rely on. Utilizing efficient LED lighting, temperature sensors, timers and energy-efficient cooling methods help Cedar Creek Gardens further reduce their operational costs, passing the savings onto hungry diners.

By continuing to supply low-cost, reliable energy to producers like Cedar Creek Gardens, co-ops aren’t just powering rural America, but helping ensure food availability for communities across the region.

“People don’t realize we can grow for so long and so early,” Martin said. “We have tomatoes by the Fourth of July and people are shocked because they’re used to getting their tomatoes in August. The greenhouses allow us to do that.”



Peggy Martin, co-owner of Cedar Creek Garden.
Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens



Cedar Creek Gardens reports their one-day record for a tomato harvest at over three tons.
Photo Courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens



APRIL 11-12
Forks, Corks & Kegs
Food, Wine & Beer Festival
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

APRIL 3
Bachelors of Broadway:
Gentlemen of the Theatre
 7 p.m.
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S Main St.
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
 Mighty Corson Art Players
 Corson, SD
www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-4 p.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4195

APRIL 6
Hay County Jamboree
 2 p.m. Matinee
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD
www.junkinmarketdays.com

APRIL 24-26
HuntSAFE Course
 Davison County Fairgrounds
 & Mitchell Trap Club
 Mitchell, SD
 605-770-5555
gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education

APRIL 27
Country Roads
 2 p.m. Matinee
 Gayville Music Hall
 Gayville, SD
 605-760-5799

MAY 2-3
SD Spring Square Dance Festival
 Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.
 Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Faith Lutheran Church
 601 N. Cliff Ave.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 Call for events & times
 605-360-2524

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
 Sat. Consignment Auction
 Sun. Season Opening
 Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

MAY 3
West River Pheasants
Forever Banquet
 5 p.m. Central Time
 Draper Auditorium
 Draper, SD
 605-516-0143

MAY 3-4
Flea Market
 Rustic Designs & More
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

MAY 3-11
Craft & Antique Show
 Rustic Designs & More
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

MAY 31
Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show
 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Brown County Fairgrounds
 Aberdeen, SD

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