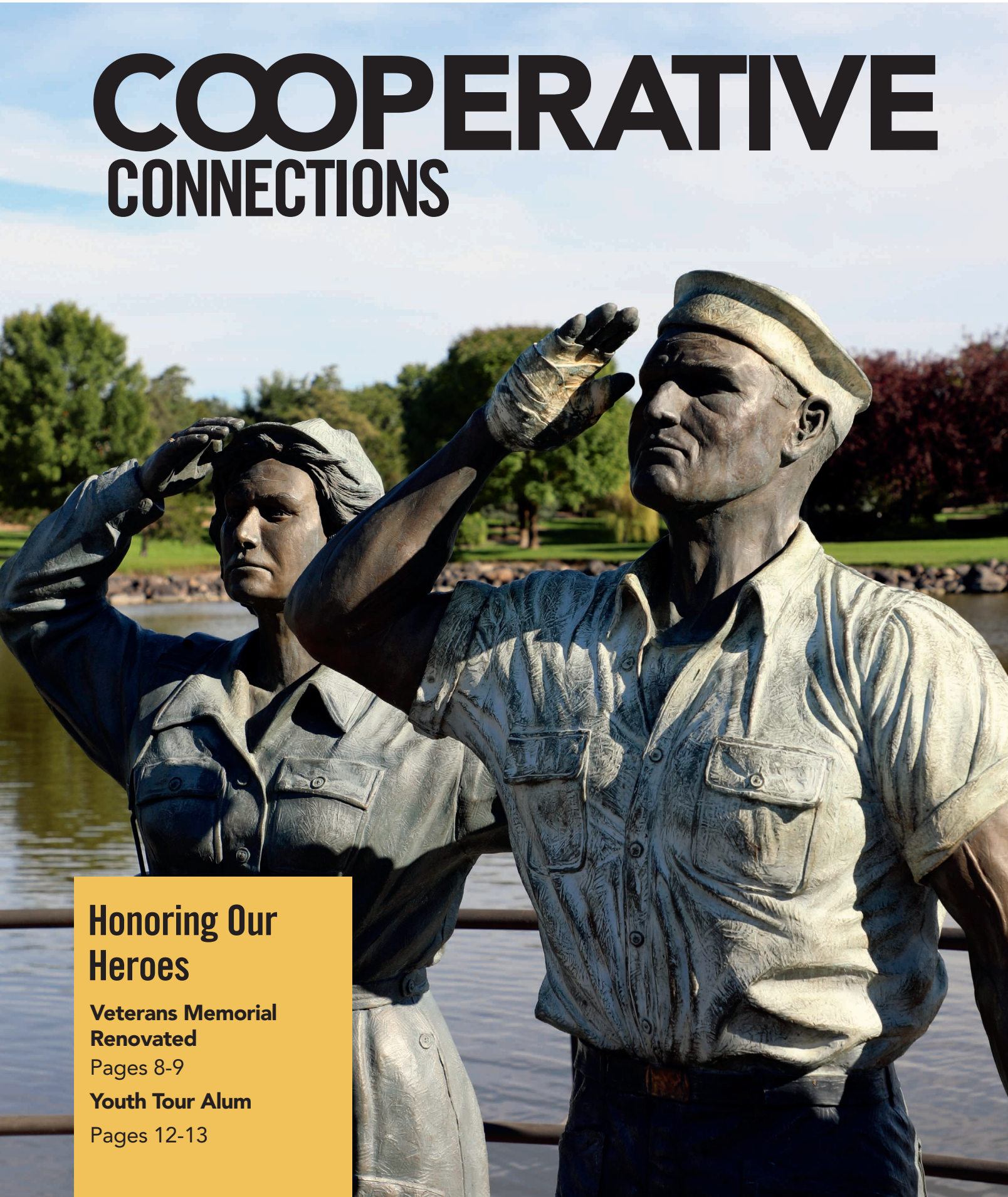
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

WHETSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC
NOVEMBER 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 7

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



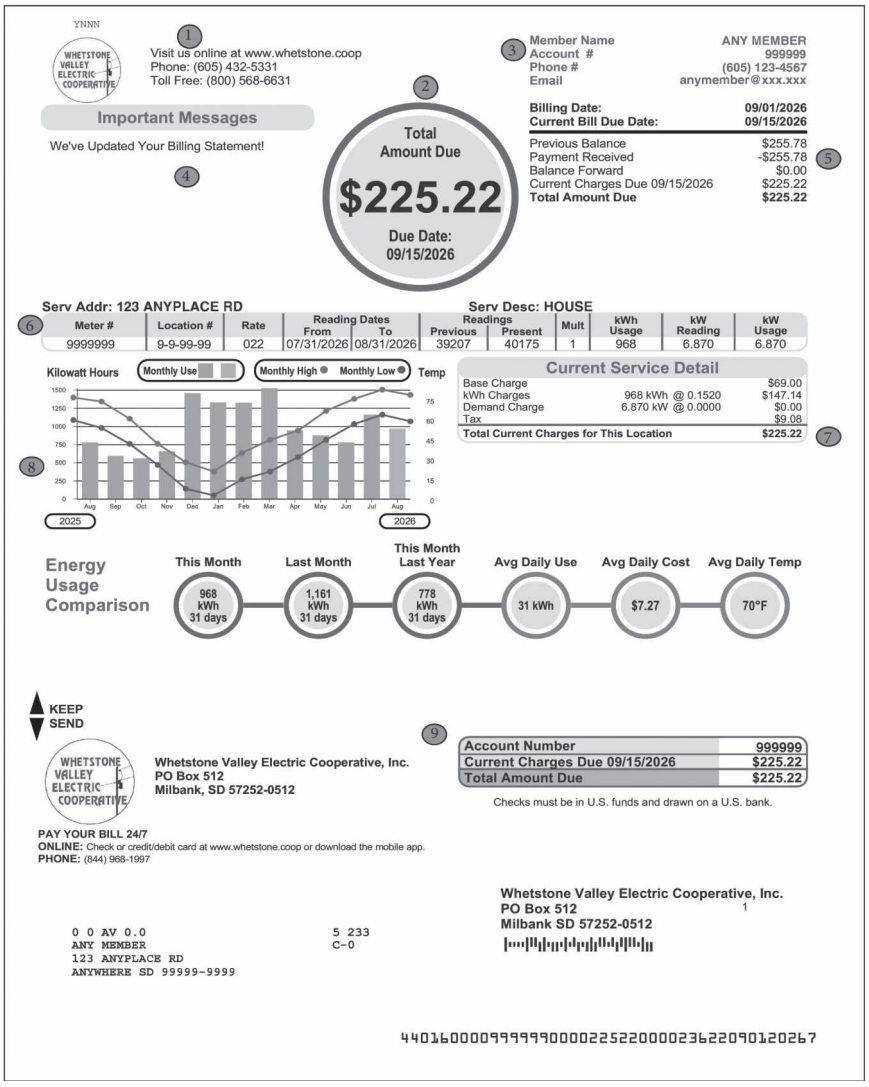
## Honoring Our Heroes

**Veterans Memorial Renovated**
Pages 8-9

**Youth Tour Alum**
Pages 12-13

# Understanding Your New Whetstone Valley Electric Bill

1. **Contact Us** – Ways to contact us about your bill or account are clearly noted on your bill. You can always reach us at (605) 432-5331 or (800) 568-6631 or online at www.whetstone.coop.
2. **Total Amount Due** – The most important information regarding your bill is placed inside a circle in the top center of your bill. Accounts with past due notices will be flagged with a red circle and red text indicating when a payment must be received to avoid disconnection.
3. **Account Information** – The name and account number for who the account belongs as well as the phone and email address we have on file. If either is incorrect, please update the information on SmartHub or contact our office.
4. **Important Messages** – Please look here for messages from your Cooperative.
5. **Account Activity** – Any changes to your account since your last billing statement, including late charges, current charges, payments received, and the total amount due. Individual payments will no longer be listed separately; instead, this section will show the combined total of all payments made since your last billing statement.
6. **Meter Readings** – This will show the service address and description, along with meter information showing the actual energy and demand usage for the billing period. We measure energy usage in kilowatt hours (kWh) and demand usage in kilowatts (kW).
7. **Billing Details** – A detailed listing of the charges on your current bill.
8. **Usage Graph** – A 13-month bar graph showing kWh use each month as well as a line graph showing the monthly high & low temperatures. Energy comparisons that compare usage and days for the current month, previous month and one year ago as well as average daily usage, cost and temperature.
9. **Remittance Stub** – If you are paying by check, please return this stub with your payment to ensure the payment is properly credited to your account. The account number, current charges due and total amount due are also displayed.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WHETSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC

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# Preparing for Tomorrow & Thankful for Today



**Dave Page**
General Manager

There's something about November that feels like a turning of the page. One week we're enjoying beautiful fall days, and the next it seems winter has arrived overnight. At our house, that means my wife and I have already put down some grass seed, rolled up the water hoses, put the flower gardens to bed, and got the snowblower ready before the first big snow arrives.

It's not so different at the co-op. At Whetstone Valley Electric, this is also a season of preparation.

Our crews are wrapping up projects and making improvements to strengthen our electric system so that when the cold winds blow, the lights and heat stay on. Reliability remains one of our highest priorities, and I'm proud of the work our employees do every day to provide the dependable service our members count on.

Our service team is also finishing several underground projects, including burying electrical lines and inspecting heating systems for customers as we prepare for the winter months.

As we look ahead, we are also preparing for higher wholesale power costs. Our power provider has indicated that its rates are expected to increase by approximately 6% in 2027. While we cannot control the cost of the power we purchase, we can continue working to manage the impact through careful planning, efficient operations, and responsible use of electricity.

We are currently developing Whetstone Valley Electric's 2027 budget and working diligently to control our local costs wherever possible. As we receive additional information and finalize the budget, we will keep you informed about what these changes may mean for our rates. If adjustments become necessary, we are committed to communicating them clearly and transparently with our members.

As Thanksgiving approaches, I'm reminded of how much we have to be thankful for. I'm especially thankful for our employees. As members, we are fortunate to have dedicated and knowledgeable people who show up in every kind of weather to keep the power on, maintain the system and our inventory, assist members, and answer questions about energy efficiency, electric bills, and heating and cooling systems.

And I'm thankful for you, our members. Your continued trust and support are what make Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative possible. After all, this is your cooperative, and we are proud to serve you.

Stay safe, stay warm, and from our family to yours, have a Happy Thanksgiving.



UTILITY SCAMS

Stay alert for fraudulent utility calls. Scammers can spoof caller ID to make a phone call appear to come from your electric utility – even when it doesn't. They may threaten disconnection, demand immediate payment or ask for personal information. Don't rely on caller ID alone to verify a caller's identity. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up and contact your utility using the phone number printed on your bill or listed on the official website.

*Source: FTC*

# KEEP SAFETY AT THE HEART OF YOUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The holiday season, stretching from late November through mid-January, is widely considered the most joyous time of the year. Families gather, festive parties fill our calendars, and a spirit of generosity warms our homes. However, alongside the cheer comes a significant spike in travel, home decorating, and large-scale cooking. Consequently, preventable accidents and injuries dramatically increase during these months. To ensure your family and friends remain safe and injury-free throughout the festivities, keeping safety top of mind is crucial. Below is a comprehensive guide of tried-and-true advice to help you navigate the season securely.

## Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared and Alert

For millions of people, the holidays mean hitting the road to visit loved ones. Unfortunately, car travel during this busy period carries the highest fatality rate of any major transportation form. Hundreds tragically lose their lives in crashes on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day alone. Alarmingly, alcohol impairment contributes to approximately one-third of these fatal incidents.

**To stay safe on the roads, follow these essential guidelines:**

- Winterize your vehicle: Prepare for harsh weather and keep a well-stocked emergency kit in your trunk.
- Rest up: Get plenty of sleep before departing to avoid the severe dangers of drowsy driving.
- Plan ahead: Leave early and anticipate heavy traffic to eliminate the dangerous temptation to speed.
- Buckle up: Ensure every passenger is properly restrained, regardless of the trip's length.
- Eliminate distractions: Put your cell phone away; it remains the primary driving distraction today.
- Designate a driver: Always use a completely sober driver. Alcohol and medications cause severe impairment.

## Decorate with Caution and Care

Decking the halls instantly puts families in a holiday mood, but hospital emergency departments treat thousands of decorating-related injuries annually. Remember these safety tips:

- Keep poisonous seasonal plants, like mistletoe and holly berries, strictly out of the reach of children.
- If utilizing an artificial tree, verify it is clearly labeled as "fire resistant."
- For live trees, cut two inches off the trunk for better water absorption. Water daily and remove it when dry.
- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- Discard and replace light sets featuring broken sockets, frayed wires, or loose electrical connections.
- Turn off all holiday lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

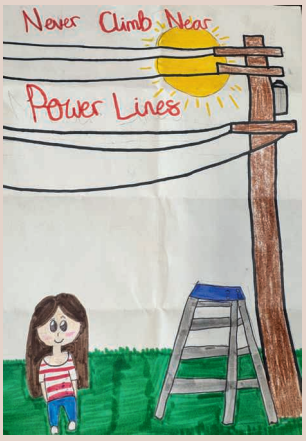
## Watch Out for Holiday Fire-Starters

The glow of candles and fireplaces is a holiday staple, but combined with combustible decorations, house fire risks skyrocket. The National Fire Protection Association notes candles cause 46% of December home fires.

- Place candles in sturdy holders away from curtains and curious children.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked, high cabinet.
- Consider battery-operated flameless candles as a very safe alternative.
- Never burn pine branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces; they can cause flash fires.
- Use a protective screen for burning fires and never leave lit candles unattended.

Be highly alert to the extreme dangers of turkey fryers. Hundreds of fires and severe burns are linked to these devices. Consider using oil-less fryers or purchasing fried turkeys from professionals. If you must fry your own, strictly follow all U.S. Fire Administration guidelines.

By taking these simple, proactive steps, you can protect loved ones and ensure your holidays remain merry, bright, and safe.




**"Never climb near power lines."**

**Penelope Poppen**

Penelope warns readers to never climb near power lines. Thank you for sharing, Penelope! Penelope's parents are Brett and Megan Poppen, members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

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.



# THE FAMILY TABLE

## ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 lb. hamburger
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 can (10 oz.) enchilada sauce
6 tortilla shells
1 cup shredded cheese
1 can pinto beans

### Method

In a glass baking dish, put the browned hamburger, onion, pepper, beans and sauce in shells and roll up. Layer with shredded cheese on top. Bake 20 minutes in oven.
Optional: Use 1 cup of sliced black olives on top of cheese

**Marla Gilbert**
**Southeastern Electric**

## PARTY IN A PAN

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

### Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside.
Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing, and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted.
Makes a 9x13-inch pan.

**Kathy Zomer**
**Douglas Electric**

## BEEF TERIYAKI

### Ingredients:

1lb. boneless beef sirloin steak
2 tbsp. cornstarch
14 oz. beef broth
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp. brown sugar
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
3 cups broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups rice
1 2/3 cups water

### Method

Cook the rice in water according to the directions on the bag.
Slice beef in very thin strips. In a large skillet, saute the beef strips until browned and the juices evaporate.
In a mixing bowl, combine cornstarch, beef broth, soy sauce, brown sugar and garlic powder. Mix thoroughly.
Add the liquid mixture and broccoli florets to the beef. Cook until mixture boils & thickens to a desired consistency, stirring frequently.
Serve over the cooked rice.

**Karen Soulek**
**Charles-Mix Electric**

**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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**

Picture from Shutterstock.

# ENERGY-SAVING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RENTERS



**Miranda Boutelle**
Efficiency Services Group

Renting a house or apartment can put you in a challenging spot when it comes to energy efficiency. Renting means that you can't make all of the decisions about energy efficient upgrades in your home. At the same time, renters are usually responsible for paying the electric bill. That means if the home has inefficient equipment, you're going to use – and pay for – more energy.

Typically, it is the owner's responsibility to make energy efficiency upgrades, such as adding insulation or new heating and cooling equipment. Don't assume they won't make upgrades. If the home needs upgrades, just ask. I've had landlords let me pay for an upgrade and provided a credit on my rent to offset the cost.

In a situation where you don't have control over all the decisions, choose to focus on what you can control.

The thermostat is a great place to save energy. Nudging the thermostat a few degrees closer to the outside temperature can help you save money. Adjust the settings when you aren't home or at night when you're sleeping. Adding thick curtains can help keep heat out in the summer and make the room feel warmer in the winter. A rug can make a cold floor feel warmer in the winter. These additions can make changing the thermostat a few degrees more comfortable.

Make sure your property owner follows through with annual maintenance and HVAC filter changes. Ignoring these can lead to unnecessary energy waste.

Lighting is another element you can typically control. If your home has incandescent or compact fluorescent bulbs, switch to efficient LEDs. If you don't have the ability to change the lighting that's installed in your home, consider using plug-in LED lighting or lamps instead.

Check whether your water heater is wasting energy. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends setting it to 120 degrees. This keeps the water hot enough to be safely stored in the tank and prevents scalding. I recommend calling the owner or property management company to request an adjustment.

One of the benefits of renting is that you aren't on the hook when equipment breaks down. If the water heater is older than 10 years or showing signs of possible failure, such as leaking, unusual noises or discolored water, let the owner know. Upgrading to a heat pump water heater could be a great fit for your home, saving energy and preventing possible damage caused by a failed water heater.

Another way to save is by finding available rebates and incentives for your home. Because renters typically pay the electric bill, a landlord doesn't see the financial benefit of monthly energy savings. You can make it easier for them by finding opportunities for energy-efficient upgrades in your home. Your rental might be eligible for insulation, water heater or HVAC upgrades. You might also be eligible for discounts on products that you can buy yourself, such as air purifiers, dehumidifiers or other small home appliances.

If your home has electric heat, adding either a ducted or ductless heat pump – also called a mini-split – provides more efficient heating as well as air conditioning. That's a popular rebate offering across the country.

Energy efficient upgrades could benefit the homeowner by increasing the property value or keeping a good renter from looking for another place to live. It doesn't hurt to ask for upgraded equipment and provide information on eligible rebates or incentives. Partnering with your landlord on projects is a great opportunity to benefit both of you.



# CLASSROOM TO KOREA

## Mitchell-Area Educator Recalls Year at War

**Jacob Boyko**
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Warren Thomas was three weeks into his second year of teaching in 1951 when he got a letter in the mail. The sixth grade teacher from Mitchell, S.D., had just married his wife, Luella, that June. Now, he was being drafted to war in Korea.

"I was not happy," Thomas, 97, said. "When you've been married three months, well, you just expect to be able to settle down and get on with your career."

When the draft notice came, the Mitchell superintendent asked the draft board in Woonsocket to at least allow Thomas to finish the semester. The request was denied; Thomas wasn't a farmer, rancher or other worker eligible for an occupational deferment.

"I was just a teacher," he recalled. "And they said anybody could be a teacher."

Less than a month later, he said his goodbye to Luella. The 22 year old was taken to Fort Sill, Okla., for eight weeks of basic training. After passing that, the men boarded the troop ship and awaited their next stop in Korea.

In April of 1952, Thomas was brought to an army base near the town Kumwha, in present day north-central South Korea near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).

Being the only college-educated soldier in the75th Field Artillery, Thomas was assigned the duties of battery clerk, which included administrative and clerical work for the unit. He described the work as routine.

"I don't claim to be a hero because I had a desk job due to my education experience," he said. "At the time I arrived in Korea, the front lines had been pretty well established."

One of Thomas' many duties included fire direction, requiring him to help direct the firing of his unit's artillery.

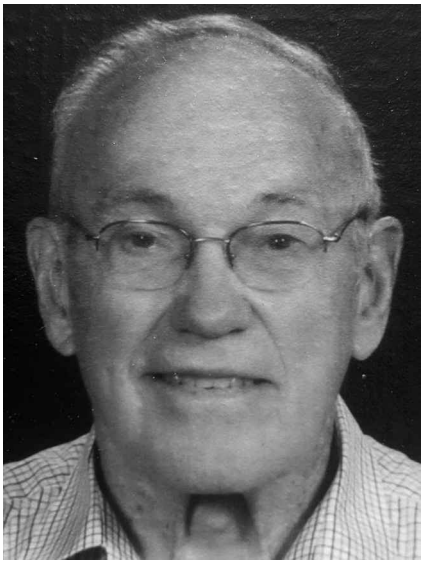
"We were firing our big guns on the Chinese and the North Koreans, but we couldn't get them dug out so we were in that one position," he recalled. "We fired against them and they fired against us … [They used] slave communist labor, and they dug back in the caves in the mountains, and we could see them – We were only about three miles apart in our rather static positions."

Soldiers earned points toward returning home based on their assignments, Thomas explained. Front-line infantrymen earned four points a month, reaching the required 36 points in nine months. Thomas earned three points a month in his position farther behind the lines, keeping him in Korea for a year.

Due to the stalemate, Thomas would remain in that one location. He bunked in a dugout he and a fellow soldier excavated from a hillside, counting the days before he could return home. During this period, Thomas relied on two things: his Chrsitian faith and letters from Luella.

"We wrote every day," he recalled. "I had a lot of college friends, some teaching friends and some relatives too, which a lot of the guys didn't have. During the 366 days I was on Korean soil, I received just about 500 letters by airmail."

After his military service, the couple taught school in Seattle before returning to South Dakota in 1954 to help his father on the farm. They moved into a farmhouse without running water or indoor plumbing, but Thomas was familiar with life without modern conveniences. Growing up, his family didn't get electricity until 1948 when Intercounty Electric Cooperative electrified rural Sanborn County.



Warren Thomas worked more than three decades in education.
*Photo submitted by Kevin Thomas*

Today, at age 97, Thomas lives on land north of Forestburg close to where he grew up decades ago without electricity.

The couple raised two sons, Kevin and Lyndon. Warren continued his career in education, becoming principal at Alpena High School and earning a master's degree in education from South Dakota State University. He retired in 1993 as principal of the Mt. Vernon Elementary School after more than 30 years in the profession.

He and Luella shared nearly 68 years of marriage before her passing in 2019.

Today, Thomas still takes opportunities to get out and learn. He has joined four Central Electric Cooperative tours of member-owned power generation facilities in North Dakota.

His memories span a childhood without electricity, a career in classrooms and a year of military service far from home. But the subject of Korea isn't one he brings up often.

"War is not good," Thomas said. "I didn't have any idea whether I'd be coming back or not because a lot of GIs were being killed in Korea. But I did survive, obviously."



# HONORING OUR HEROES

## Veterans Memorial Undergoing Revamp

The WWII memorial on Capitol Lake shows soldiers saluting the American flag after battle. Later, after the Korean and Vietnam soldier statues and walls were added beneath the flag, the WWII veterans appear to salute them too. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

**Jacob Boyko**
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lee Leuning's father was about 80 when he sat in his son's sculpting studio to become the sailor at South Dakota's World War II memorial.

For three days, Leuning studied his face and shaped his features. His father slowly began talking about the war. After 50 years, the experience still weighed heavy.

Today, more than 25 years later, Leuning's father stands immortalized in bronze on the shore of Capitol Lake in Pierre, representing sailors like himself who served in World War II.

He stands among five other slightly larger-than-life statues representing members of the U.S. armed forces. The display, called "Why We Fought," depicts the service members in tattered uniforms saluting toward the American flag.

"It's soldiers in each individual moment stepping out of battle and recognizing the flag and what they fought for," Leuning said.

A member of Northern Electric Cooperative, Leuning created the figures with fellow sculptor Sherri Treeby. Visitors to Pierre will find their work throughout the city, including statues along the Trail of Governors and a relief plaque commemorating the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge. At Capitol Lake, their sculptures honor veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Several of the World War II figures have family connections. Leuning used his mother's likeness for the army corps mechanic – she served as a plane mechanic in WWII – and his sons as models for the pilot and Marine. Treeby's father, an Army veteran, provided the face of the Coast Guardsman.

The WWII memorial was the first memorial unveiled, dedicated by Gov. Bill Janklow just four days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Leuning recalls being amazed by the turnout – thousands of visitors were at the Capitol for the dedication.

He remembers one Navy veteran watching the dedication parade from a hospital bed with an attendant.

"Every time a flag came by with an honor guard … that guy would have his aide get him out of the bed, and he'd snap to attention," Leuning said. "That, to me, showed this really means something to them."



Recent renovation improved water drainage. Previously, water under the granite tiles caused loosening. The tiles have since been replaced with sod grass. The stream bed was also replaced. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Subsequent dedications for the Korean and Vietnam memorials during Gov. Mike Rounds' administration attracted even more visitors. The state estimated 32,000 people attended the two-day Vietnam dedication in 2006. Some veterans watched the ceremony from pontoon bridges on Capitol Lake.

Unfortunately, years of exposure have taken a toll on the site. Trapped water beneath the granite tiles caused some to loosen and crumble, explained Leah Haugan, Special Projects Coordinator for the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration.

"Try as we might to keep it in great shape, you can't keep up with deteriorating stone," Haugan said.

Over the summer, the state began work on a renovation project for the memorials, which will bring some changes to the site.

Sections of granite have been replaced with grass. The military seals embedded in the walkway were lifted out and placed on pedestals. The stream from the Artesian well remains, but it's now bordered by a concrete curb. The granite tiles around the fountain were upgraded from ¾ inch thick tiles to 2 inch thick tiles, and the fountain enclosure was remade with concrete and granite tiles around the top.

Restoring the site is part of the state's commitment to honoring veterans and their service, Haugan said.

"Words are words, but when you build something like that that memorializes their efforts and their sacrifice, I think that shows them there's proof positive that we recognize and honor them," Haugan said.

The renovation does not bring back the Flaming Fountain's flame. Methane rising from the artesian well that feeds Capitol Lake kept the flame burning for decades, but it went out around 2015 when the flow could no longer sustain it. Haugan said a more ambitious fountain project is among the ideas for the site, depending on funding.

A separate proposal would honor Native American code talkers who served in World Wars I and II using their native languages to transmit messages that enemy forces were not able to translate. Funding for that memorial also remains unresolved.

Visiting the memorials, Leuning has seen what that recognition can mean to a family. The day after the Vietnam memorial dedication, he returned to take photos and was approached by a woman asking him to take her picture. He obliged, and the lady went up to the bronze statue and hugged it.

"She said, 'That's my Davy. It looks just like my Davy.'"

Then she pointed to her husband's name on the wall.



Leuning's Vietnam War memorial.
*Photo submitted by Lee Leuning*



Sculptor Lee Leuning with his dad, Donald Leuning, at the World War II Veterans Memorial dedication Sept. 15, 2001, in Pierre.
*Photo submitted by Lee Leuning*



An estimated 32,000 people attended the Vietnam War Memorial dedication in 2006.
*U.S. Airforce Photo by 1st Lt. Carrie L. Kessler*

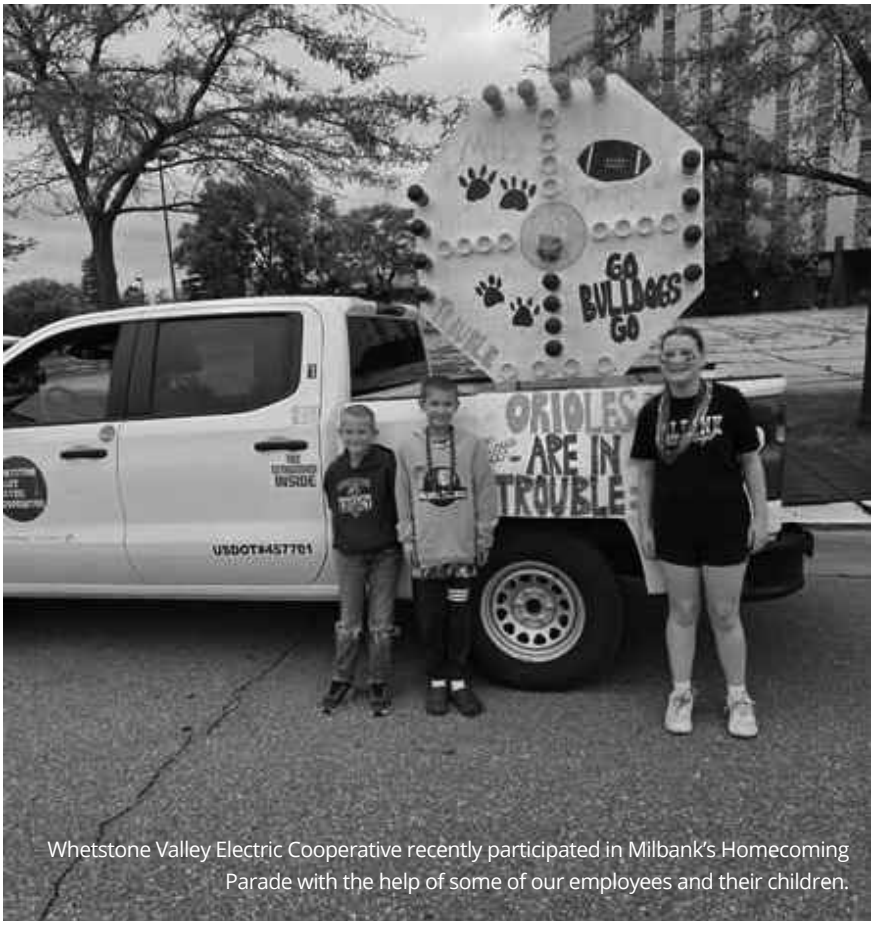


## Three Jars for a Lesson That Lasts

The holidays tend to bring small money moments for kids: birthday cash from a relative, extra allowance for holiday shopping, coins gathered for a food drive. Each one can be a chance to create a teachable moment, and a simple way to do it is the three-jar system.

Label one jar "Save," one "Spend" and one "Give," and let a child decide how to split whatever holiday money comes their way. The real value isn't in the jars; it's in the conversations they invite. A savings jar filling up over time helps teach patience. A spending jar, spent thoughtfully, builds a sense of judgment. And a giving jar turns generosity into something a child helped create, not just something they watched happen.

It's a small system, and there's no single right way to use it. But it offers a way to talk about saving, spending and sharing – and these are lessons that can stick around well beyond the holiday season.




Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative recently participated in Milbank's Homecoming Parade with the help of some of our employees and their children.



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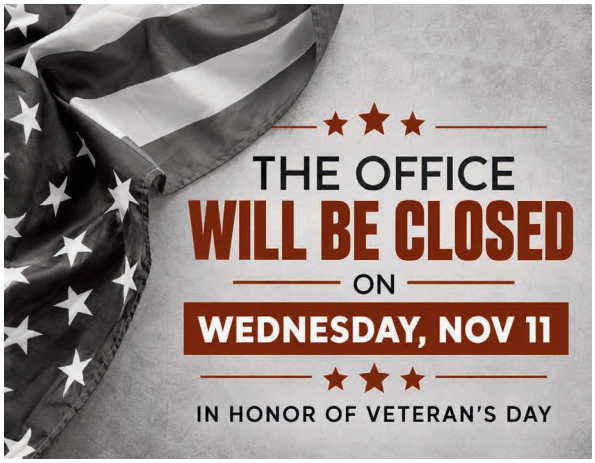
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| h. Total *(Sum of 15f and g)* | | | 2661 | 2665 |
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| 16. Electronic Copy Circulation | Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months | No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date |
|---|---|---|
| a. Paid Electronic Copies ▶ | | |
| b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶ | 2589 | 2595 |
| c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶ | 2661 | 2665 |
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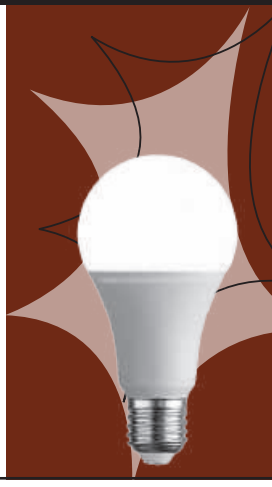




## ENERGY EFFICIENCY
### TIP OF THE MONTH

Adjust your water heater settings to save energy. As cooler weather arrives, your water heater may be working harder to keep up with longer, hotter showers. Check its temperature setting and consider lowering it to 120°F, which the U.S. Department of Energy recommends for most households. Lowering the temperature can reduce energy use while also helping prevent scalding. Always check the owner's manual before making adjustments.

*Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy*






# How a Youth Tour Friendship Changed Marty Larsen's Life

The 1969 South Dakota Youth Tour group. Marty Larsen is pictured in the top row, seventh from the right. John Nordlie is pictured in the top row, fifth from the left. *Photo courtesy from the SDREA Archives*

**Frank Turner**
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When Marty Larsen earned a spot on the 1969 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., through Turner-Hutchinson Electric Cooperative, he had every reason to believe dairy farming would remain at the center of his life. Turner-Hutchinson, a predecessor of today's Southeastern Electric Cooperative, served the area around his family's dairy farm seven miles west of Hurley.

Youth Tour gives high school students sponsored by their local electric cooperatives the chance to spend a week in Washington, D.C., visiting historic sites, learning about government and electric cooperatives and meeting students from across the country. South Dakota began sending students on the trip in 1963. Larsen went just six years later.

Back then, Turner-Hutchinson Electric selected its Youth Tour delegates through 4-H, rewarding young people for their accomplishments. In 1969,

Larsen placed eighth at the national 4-H dairy judging competition in Ohio. The accomplishment earned him the cooperative's Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

But before Larsen could make the trip, an Army recruiter threw a wrench in his plans, warning him that he was likely to be called for service soon. Rather than wait to be drafted, Larsen chose to enlist, expecting to head to basic training and then Vietnam.

Not long after, Larsen received an induction notice, but first he had to complete a military physical. Larsen, who is hard of hearing, failed the hearing test and was disqualified from service. Had he passed, he said he would have left for basic training about a week before the 1969 Youth Tour departed.

"Somebody upstairs was looking out for me," he said.

With the Army no longer standing in the way, Larsen was going on the trip. To prepare, his mother bought him new clothes and a new pair of shoes. Even still, he returned home with the soles nearly worn through. At the Washington Monument, he and a small group of students climbed 897 steps rather than wait in the long elevator line, then rode the elevator back down.

Near the end of the trip, the group ate at a seafood restaurant along the Potomac River. Larsen persuaded the chaperones that the students ought to try lobster, something many of them had never eaten before. When the waitress brought lobster bibs to the table, Larsen passed his around and asked everyone to sign it.

His mother later saved the bib in the scrapbook she kept of his childhood, alongside years of 4-H ribbons, judging cards and other keepsakes. Larsen still has the scrapbook today.

The students took an evening cruise on a multilevel paddlewheel-style boat on the Potomac, complete with live music. South Dakota Youth Tour students continue the tradition of a river cruise today aboard the Cherry Blossom.

For Larsen, though, the most important part of Youth Tour was the people he met. One of them was John Nordlie of Sioux Falls, a young photographer who worked with the Argus Leader and later attended Augustana College.

The two became friends during the trip and stayed in contact after returning home.

"We stayed friends after we got back," he said. "I was in his wedding party when he got married. He was in my wedding party when I got married."

For the next several years, Larsen stayed close to the life he knew, working in dairy and welding. Nordlie, meanwhile, developed an interest in pipe organs. In 1983, he called Larsen and asked if he wanted to come work for him building organs for cathedrals and music halls.

Larsen agreed, bringing his experience as a welder, machinist and mechanical problem-solver into a trade he had never expected to enter. He spent the next 20 years working with Nordlie and became deeply involved in the mechanics of organ construction.

His work eventually went far beyond basic fabrication. Larsen built components, developed specialty tools and designed machinery for organ builders. One machine he created transformed a wire-bending process that had taken workers several minutes per piece, allowing them to produce several pieces per minute. Other tools he built ended up with organ companies elsewhere in the United States and overseas.

The work also took Larsen far beyond southeastern South Dakota. Over the years, he traveled throughout the country and to Japan, worked on historic instruments and helped construct and restore pipe organs in churches, museums and other settings. More than four decades after entering the trade, he is still involved in restoration work.

Looking back, Larsen can draw a direct line from the Youth Tour trip to the career that followed. Without the trip, he may never have met Nordlie. Without that friendship, the call inviting him into organ building may never have come.

"It meant a lot to me to be able to go on that trip," Larsen said. "It changed me from a dairy farmer to a pipe organ builder."

More than 50 years later, Larsen still has the scrapbook his mother kept from the trip, along with the signed lobster bib awnd other reminders of that week in Washington. But the most lasting thing he brought home was the friendship that, years later, opened the door to a life he never could have planned.




Marty Larsen and his wife, Barbara.
*Photo by Frank Turner*

**Interested in attending Youth Tour?**
**Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about the application process.**



# A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Volunteers cook hundreds of meals for community members in Marshall, Minn.
*Photo submitted by Teri Hively*

## Thanksgiving Meals Bring Neighbors Together in Marshall and Murdo

**Frank Turner**
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Across the Midwest, Thanksgiving has a way of becoming a community project. By late November, church kitchens, senior centers and fellowship halls fill with volunteers roasting turkeys with all the fixings for neighbors who need a meal or simply somewhere to spend the holiday. Nearly every town seems to have its own version. In Marshall, Minn., and Murdo, S.D., community Thanksgiving meals have lasted for decades.

### Marshall, Minnesota

In Marshall, a community Thanksgiving dinner has grown from 35 meals served out of crockpots into an annual event that reached more than 900 people last year. Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative member Teri Hively of Balaton, Minn., has been involved from the beginning and now leads the meal through Grace Life Church in Marshall.

The dinner started 35 years ago when Hively's late mother-in-law, inspired by God's vision, began to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the community. Her idea came with a standard that still guides volunteers today: serve great food for a great community.



Kelly Deutz, left, and Teri Hively coordinate the Thanksgiving community meal in Marshall, Minn.
*Photo submitted by Teri Hively*

That standard means real turkey, real potatoes and a home-cooked meal served on glass plates with real silverware.

"I want it to be a home-cooked meal," Hively said. "I want it to feel like you're at home."

The Thanksgiving dinner requires months of planning and a network of volunteers. Hively and Kelly Deutz begin organizing in August, lining up cooks, servers, donations and the smaller jobs that need to be finished before Thanksgiving Day. Deutz helps organize all the volunteers and delivery routes.

The cooking begins days before anyone sits down to eat. Volunteers arrive at the start of the week to peel fresh potatoes while another group handles setup the day before Thanksgiving. When the big day arrives, even more volunteers fill the kitchen to set up serving lines, dessert tables and a proper dining area.

Some volunteers cook turkeys at home. Others donate pies or pans of bars, while local businesses and private donors provide ingredients and money. Hively estimates that more than 200 people contribute to the dinner each year.

"I could never do it alone," Deutz said. "It takes many hands to make that happen. I just happen to be the piece that helps drive it forward."

Luckily, feeding a crowd is familiar work for Hively, who spent more than 12 years working in catering.

Service is familiar to Hively, too. She has been an EMT for 37 years and a firefighter for 32 years, including volunteer service with the Balaton Fire Department, Balaton Ambulance and Tyler Ambulance.

In 2014, Hively's mother-in-law told her she was ready to step back and pass leadership of the dinner to Teri. Soon after, Hively's mother-in-law passed away unexpectedly, and Hively took over the following year in her memory.

"I took the lead role, not knowing I was going to be in charge without her," Hively said. "But I wasn't worried because I had been there every step along the way, so I knew what the meal entailed from beginning to end."

Today, the meal remains open to anyone, regardless of income or circumstance, and volunteers also deliver meals to older residents and those who are homebound. Some people need the food, Hively explained, while others simply need somewhere to spend Thanksgiving.

Hively's children grew up helping with the dinner, and now her grandchildren are taking part. She finds jobs for families with young children so they can help, too.

"Be the hands and feet of Jesus," said Hively.

## Murdo, South Dakota

In Murdo, the Thanksgiving dinner began about 20 years ago with Joe Connot, who worked at West Central. When Connot retired, the Murdo Lions Club took over and continued serving the meal at the local senior center.

The club sponsors the dinner, and members cook the turkeys and help serve. The senior center provides the space and prepares the rest of the meal. Murdo Lions Club President Travis Van Dam said about 75 people usually attend, not including those who receive deliveries.

Van Dam joined the Lions Club after watching his father volunteer with the organization and wanting to do the same for Murdo.

"There's not a lot to do in our little town, so it's just something that we can do to provide for the community," said Van Dam.

The dinner is meant for people who do not want to cook, cannot cook or may not have family nearby. Volunteers also deliver meals around Murdo, including to employees at businesses that remain open on Thanksgiving.

Last year, Van Dam used Facebook to collect meal requests and organize deliveries.

"Just helping – it just feels good to help somebody and give them a meal," he said.

Freewill donations collected at the dinner help fund local service projects. Much of the club's fundraising supports Caring and Sharing, which helps people facing illness pay for travel, medical care, food and hotel stays.

Club members also help with community cleanup, sponsor a movie day for students, collect eyeglasses and volunteer at school sporting events.

"As long as we keep getting the turnout and people appreciate it, we'll keep doing it," he said.

In Marshall and Murdo, volunteers keep showing up to cook, serve and make sure their neighbors have a place around the Thanksgiving table.




Bruce Vennard (left) and other volunteers with the Murdo Lions Club serve a Thanksgiving meal for their local community.
*Submitted Photo*

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.



**NOV. 7**
**Wine, Cheese & Chocolate Stroll**
Deadwood, SD
www.deadwood.com/events/

**NOV. 2**
**Junior Achievement Bowl-A-Thon**
3:30 & 6:30 p.m.
$400 for team of 5 bowlers, 2 hours, shoe rental, pizza & fun!
The Village Bowl
Aberdeen, SD
Register at jasd.org/events

**NOV. 6-8**
**Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend**
Hill City, SD

**NOV. 7**
**Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Show**
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Dakota Christian School
Corsica, SD

**NOV. 7**
**Black Hills Meat Fest**
Free Admission
Central States Fairgrounds
Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
Rapid City, SD
Facebook.com/BlackHillsMeatFest

**NOV. 7-15**
**Rustic Designs & More Christmas Country Show**
9 a.m.-5 p.m.
41450 264th St.
Ethan, SD
605-770-2411

**NOV. 8**
**32nd Annual Lutefisk, Meatball & Lefse Supper**
4-7 p.m.
Trinity Lutheran Church
Chamberlain, SD
605-730-0553

**NOV. 12**
**The Satin Dollz**
Patriotic Female Vocal & Dance Quintet
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

**NOV. 14**
**Kick-Off to Christmas & Santa Shop**
10 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
7 p.m. Parade
Eureka, SD
605-230-1777

**NOV. 14**
**Lake Campbell Lutheran Church Lutefisk Supper**
Seatings: 4:30, 5:45, 7 p.m.
Volga, SD
Reservations: 605-690-4868

**NOV. 14**
**Club 14 Craft & Vendor Fair**
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Hendricks Public School
Hendricks, MN
605-690-5586

**NOV. 14-15**
**Zonta Holiday Craft & Vendor Show**
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Ramkota Hotel
Pierre, SD

**NOV. 16-21**
**Yelduz Shrine Festival of Trees**
Mon.-Fri. 4-7 p.m.
Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.
802 S. Main St.
Aberdeen, SD
605-225-4841
Yelduz.com

**NOV. 20**
**Aberdeen University Civic Symphony Concert**
7:30 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

**NOV. 21**
**Lille Norge Fest**
8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Canyon Lake Activity Center
2900 Canyon Lake Dr.
Rapid City, SD
borgundlodge.org

**NOV. 27-28**
**Sip, Shop & Stroll**
Viborg, SD

**NOV. 28**
**Gregory Mid-Winter Fair**
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory Memorial Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

**DEC. 5**
**Hometown Christmas**
All Day
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656
MilbankSD.com/Chamber

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**