

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Bringing the Light

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Spread Holiday Cheer  
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REED Fund: Powering  
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# 2024 WVEC Upcoming Director Elections

Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative is making plans for its 82nd annual membership meeting. The 2024 annual meeting will be held at a date, time, and place yet to be determined.

This year, three members must be selected to serve on the board of directors, all for three-year terms. The districts with open seats are as follows:

**District 3:** Alto, Spring Grove, Ortle, Summit, Springdale, Garfield Townships

**District 4:** Geneseo, Lockwood Townships

**District 6:** Melrose, Big Stone Townships

Without a candidate for District 3, it will become vacant as of the date of the next annual meeting due to term limitations of no more than five consecutive terms or a total of fifteen consecutive years set forth in Article IV, Section 2 of the cooperative bylaws.

Director nominations are by petition only. Petition forms are available at our headquarters at 1101 East Fourth Avenue in Milbank. A candidate must be a bona fide resident of the district and return a petition with at least six (6) signatures from current members of the same district to the Whetstone office not less than 40 days prior to the annual meeting.

Because of publication deadlines, to have a candidate profile published in the March issue of Cooperative Connections, petitions should be submitted at or prior to February 1, 2024.

The process for becoming a Director for Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc. (WVEC) is contained in the Cooperative bylaws Article IV. Each candidate for a director position should carefully read the bylaws and understand the procedures. The bylaws can be found on our website, whetstone.coop or by contacting our office.

The Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative board serves on behalf of the membership to provide oversight and strategic governance, while day-to-day operations are led by the cooperative general manager. The board is responsible for sending representatives to the associations of which the cooperative is a member. Directors are expected to attend education seminars and may be asked to serve on other associated cooperative boards. Directors may be asked to lobby and remain informed on pertinent legislative issues. Reading and studying is necessary to keep informed of current issues and how they may affect the co-op. It is the responsibility of the board to evaluate and develop long-term strategic plans to assure the financial and operational stability of the cooperative. Directors should expect to commit about 30 days per year for cooperative related activities.

In addition to the rewards of being a director, there are some important responsibilities. A director must:

- Be prepared to abide by and uphold the bylaws of the cooperative
- Be open to new ideas and have a desire to learn
- Be able to understand and engage members as their expectations change
- Be adept at analyzing complex options to make sound decisions

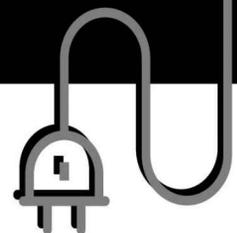
If you are interested in learning more about what it means to be director, please feel free to contact a board member or our General Manager.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Get smart with a better way to heat and cool your home! Smart thermostats are Wi-Fi enabled and automatically adjust heating and cooling temperature settings in your home for optimal performance. Smart thermostats learn your temperature preferences and establish a schedule that adjusts to energy-saving settings when you're asleep or away.

For maximum energy savings, look for smart thermostat models with the ENERGY STAR® label.

*Source: Dept. of Energy*



**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

**WHETSTONE VALLEY  
ELECTRIC**

USPS 018-979

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**General Manager:**

Dave Page – davep@whetstone.coop

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

**Visit us at**

**www.whetstone.coop**

Design assistance by SDREA.

# Whetstone Valley Electric Welcomes New Employee



Bailey Anderson started as Whetstone Valley Electric's billing clerk in October. Bailey comes to us from Big Stone Therapies where she was an accounting assistant for the last two years. She also has a background as a dental assistant.

Bailey and Caleb live in the Wilmot area and have a son named Wynston (3). She enjoys concerts, crafting, and spending time with family.

You're invited to our  
**HOLIDAY**  
*Open House*

Tuesday | **12** | December  
10am-3pm | 2023

JOIN US FOR COOKIES, COFFEE,  
APPLE CIDER, & A CHANCE TO  
WIN A \$50 BILL CREDIT

*Happy Holidays!*

Whetstone Valley Electric's office will be closed Monday, Dec. 25 and Monday, Jan. 1.

Please call 605-432-5331 in case of an emergency.



# Be Prepared for Winter Driving

### Prepare Your Car for Winter

In addition to annual maintenance, here are some tips to winterize your car:

- Test your battery; battery power drops as the temperature drops
- Make sure the cooling system is in good working order
- Have winter tires with a deeper, more flexible tread put on your car
- If using all-season tires, check the tread and replace if less than 2/32 of an inch
- Check the tire pressure; tire pressure drops as the temperature drops
- Check your wiper blades and replace if needed
- Add wiper fluid rated for -30 degrees
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze

Remember to keep your car's emergency preparedness kit fully stocked, too.

### Before You Start Out

- Clean your car's external camera lenses and side mirrors
- Remove dirt, ice and snow from sensors to allow the assistive-driving features, like automatic emergency braking, to work
- In frigid weather, you may want to warm up the car before you drive
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never leave a vehicle running in your garage – even with the garage door up
- If the forecast looks iffy, wait out the storm; if you must travel, share your travel plans and route with someone before you leave

### How to Avoid a Crash

AAA offers the following driving tips:

- Avoid using cruise control in wintry conditions
- Steer in the direction of a skid, so when your wheels regain traction, you don't have to overcorrect to stay in your lane
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly
- Increase following distance to 8 to 10 seconds
- If possible, don't stop when going uphill

If visibility is severely limited due to a whiteout, pull off the road to a safe place and do not drive until conditions improve.

Avoid pulling off onto the shoulder unless it is an absolute emergency. Limited visibility means other vehicles can't see yours on the shoulder.

### Know Your Car's Capabilities

**My Car Does What?** is a national campaign to help educate drivers about the safety features built into vehicles. Search for your car and find out what safety features are already built in.

Traction control is now standard on most new vehicles. This function helps your vehicle gain traction on snowy, icy or wet surfaces, particularly when accelerating from a stopped or slowed position, or when trying to make it up a slippery hill.

Anti-lock braking system (ABS) helps you steer in emergencies by restoring traction to your tires and is standard on most new vehicles. ABS may vibrate or pulse when engaged. This is normal. Continue to press and hold pressure to the brake pedal.

Remember, you are your car's best safety feature. Take precautions to ensure you arrive safely at your destination. If you become stranded in an unfamiliar area, do not leave your car. Light flares in front and behind the car and make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked by snow, mud or objects.



### Don't Dig Near Power Lines

#### Hayes Schomp, Age 10

Hayes Schomp cautions people to be careful where they dig. Hayes is the son of Thad and Devan Schomp from Eklton, S.D., members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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

# HOLIDAY FAVORITES

## OYSTER STEW

### Ingredients:

- 1 qt. medium/large oysters
- 1 medium onion (diced)
- 2 qts. half and half
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 lb. real butter (no cheating here)
- 3 tbsps. Worcestershire Sauce

### Method

Before you know it, Christmas Eve will be here so get ready the traditional Oyster Stew. In a saucepan, saute onions and oysters with the butter. Simmer untill the oysters crinkle. In a crock pot, add half and half, cream of mushroom soup, and Worcestershire Sauce. Then, add the oysters, onion and butter. Season to taste with fresh ground black pepper and salt. Simmer for six hours on low heat (high heat will curdle the milk). Serve with oyster crackers.

Kari Larson- Reder  
Warner, S.D.

## BETTER THAN CANDY PIE

### Ingredients:

- 1 nine in. chocolate ready crust
- 1 cup sliced bananas
- 1/4 cup chopped, dry roasted peanuts
- 1 small pkg. instant butterscotch pudding
- 2/3 cup dry milk
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 2 tbsps. peanut butter
- 3/4 cup whipped topping
- 2 chocolate graham crackers, chopped

### Method

Mix together dry milk, pudding, and water with wire whisk. Add peanut butter. Cover bottom of pie crust with bananas. Spread pudding mixture over bananas. Spread whipped topping next. Sprinkle with chopped peanuts and chopped graham crackers.

Janet Ochsner  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CHRISTMAS CRACK BARK

### Ingredients:

- 1 sleeve saltine crackers, (about 35 crackers)
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/8 tsp. sea salt
- 1 1/2 tpsps. pure vanilla extract
- 1 pkg. (10 - 12 oz.) chocolate chips, semi-sweet, milk or dark chocolate

### Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. Spray lightly with no-stick cooking spray. Arrange crackers on baking sheet in single layer so that the edges almost touch. Heat butter and brown sugar in two-quart saucepan on medium heat. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Simmer two to three minutes. Remove from heat; stir in salt and vanilla. Pour caramel sauce over crackers and spread to evenly coat crackers. Bake six minutes. Remove pan from oven. Sprinkle chocolate chips over caramel layer. Let stand five minutes. Spread chocolate chips into an even layer on top of caramel. Refrigerate 2 hours or freeze 30 to 45 minutes or until firm. Break or cut into pieces to serve. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to one week.

[McCormick.com](http://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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# How Energy Efficiency Contributes to a Better Grid



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** What does “peak energy time” mean, and why should I use less energy at home?

**A:** “Beat the peak” has become a unified message among South Dakota’s electric cooperatives as the demand for electricity grows year after year. Your electric co-op must deliver around-the-clock electricity to power your life. To understand why it is so important for everyone to use less energy when there is high demand for electricity, known as peak times, let’s start with the complex system that delivers electricity to your home.

The U.S. power grid is often considered one of the largest machines in the world. Some could argue it is our country’s greatest achievement because reliable electricity has become essential to our daily lives and our economy.

The U.S. has three main interconnected power grids: the Eastern Interconnection, the Western Interconnection and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas. Each interconnection has regional balancing authorities, which are organizations that ensure electricity supply constantly matches electricity demand.

The interconnections are powered by electric generation in various sources, including hydropower, nuclear, coal, gas, wind, solar and more. Some of these generation sources can supply power constantly or be ramped up or down depending on demand, while others supply intermittent power. The energy produced by these sources connects to the grid and moves along transmission lines that allow power to travel long distances.

Your electric co-op is known as a distribution utility, which operates the power infrastructure connecting transmission lines to the distribution power lines that bring electricity to your home.

This whole system and the more than 2 million people who operate it are continually working behind the scenes so we can take advantage of a 24/7 supply of electricity at the flip of a switch.

Throughout the day, demand for power supply

fluctuates. If supply and demand fall out of balance, local or widespread blackouts can occur. To maintain reliable power, especially during peak times, there must be enough power supply to equal demand.

Due to supply and demand, the cost to buy power is higher during peak times. Peak times vary across the country but are typically in the morning as we start our day and, in the evening, when we return home.

The demand for power increases every year. The U.S. Energy Information Administration projects residential consumption of purchased electricity will increase between about 14% and 22% from 2022 to 2050. Industrial, transportation and commercial consumption is also projected to experience increased demand.

As generation, transmission and distribution utilities work to increase production and maintain and protect our grid, it’s important for all of us to take steps to use less energy every day. In turn, it will help you save on your monthly electric bill.

To beat the peak, think about how you can use less energy in the morning and evening. Start with the area that uses the most energy by adjusting your thermostat during peak hours, either up or down a few degrees depending on the season. A smart thermostat can do this for you automatically.

Are there certain appliances or devices you can wait to run until after peak hours? For example, start the dishwasher or dryer before you go to bed. If you have an electric vehicle, program it to charge overnight instead of right when you return home in the evening. Smart power strips ensure your devices are not pulling power when they are turned off. These devices work well for TVs and gaming devices.

If you have appliances that are 10+ years old, consider replacing them with new, efficient ENERGY STAR®-rated appliances. Your electric cooperative may have rebates to help lower the initial cost.

By embracing energy conservation, we can all make small changes that have a big impact on our community and the intricate system that powers our lives. To learn more about your local peak times and how you can use less energy, contact your electric co-op.

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# Miss South Dakota

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Six years ago, Miranda Orth O'Bryan had just finished her first year at South Dakota State University when she set her eyes on the Miss South Dakota crown.

Her good friend and reigning Miss SDSU at the time – Miranda Mack – had just been crowned Miss South Dakota 2017.

It inspired her to throw her own hat into the ring.

Soon after, O'Bryan realized it was so much more than a beauty pageant.

"The moment that I set foot on my first local competition stage I was hooked," O'Bryan said.

"I didn't even realize at that point what it would mean to be Miss South Dakota, and over the years I realized how impactful it is to have that platform."

O'Bryan was crowned Miss South Dakota 2023 last June.

According to the organization's website, the Miss America opportunity has evolved over the years to better serve the women involved in the program and the communities in which they live.

"Throughout the competition and in interviews, delegates have the opportunity to connect with the judges, showcase their community service initiatives, and demonstrate how they are uniquely qualified for the exciting 365-day opportunity of being Miss America," the website reads.

The 25-year-old Martin native knows a thing or two about community leadership and the importance of community service.

That's because she grew up in a rural co-op family.

Her grandpa is Wayne Sterkel, who served as general manager for Lacreek Electric Association, Inc. from 1982 through 2017.

Her membership with the cooperative began before she was even born.

According to O'Bryan, her mother's baby shower celebration was hosted right in the co-op's conference room.

Her parents, Mikaela and Chris O'Bryan, would gather at the co-op's headquarters in Martin for many special occasions

throughout the years.

"We'd go to the annual meeting every year. That's what built me up and gave me opportunity," O'Bryan said. "It's important. A lot of people may not understand. They say, 'Why they'd ever need to go to a rural electric cooperative meeting?' But that's your opportunity to connect with the people who keep your lights on and your community."

O'Bryan was also in the group of high school students who visited Washington, D.C. through the South Dakota Rural Electric Youth Tour. She also won a \$1,000 scholarship to attend South Dakota State University through the Lacreek Electric scholarship program.

"Without seeing that those opportunities were there, I would've never thought about pursuing greater ones down the road," O'Bryan said.

Growing up, O'Bryan was heavily supported by the community services within the small, rural community of Bennett County, especially the public library.

O'Bryan said her mother had her at a young age and during her childhood, money was tight.

She fondly recalls spending countless hours at the public library in Martin with her grandmother while her parents were at work.

The library became an invaluable resource for O'Bryan.

So as part of her community service initiative as Miss South Dakota, she's doing what she can to highlight, support and enhance reading resources so more children have access to the same opportunities as she did.

"Reading has always played a significant role in my life. Growing up with a single mom who was attending college, living on Medicaid, and in free/reduced housing meant I might not always get the new Barbie I wanted, but a book was never turned down," O'Bryan wrote in her blog.

"I spent my nights living in a crime-stricken neighborhood bonding with my



mom and adoptive dad over tales of far-off lands and grand adventures. As a young girl on the Pine Ridge Reservation, I spent my time reading in my mom's classroom and my grandma's library in Martin, engulfed in as many books as I could get my hands on."

She hit the ground running after winning the state crown, launching a successful reading initiative which put 10,000 books in school libraries statewide.

She's the published author of a children's book, *Jericho the Journalism Kitty*.

She founded *Page Turners: Fall in Love with Reading*, a program that encourages children to read.

Building a foundation for children to access literature regardless of their household income or location was the first step.

Now she's working with youth throughout the state and making visits to classrooms in an effort to spark a love of reading within their young minds.

O'Bryan shares with classrooms how reading influenced her success and showing just how powerful literacy is in personal development.

"I see it happening – people are finding that passion. Reading is a foundation for everything in life," O'Bryan said.

She firmly believes and serves as living proof that it's not where you started that determines your future successes.

"It's where you're going," she said.

And during the first week of January, O'Bryan is going to Orlando, Fla. To compete against 50 other women for the Miss America crown.

The Miss America Pageant is slated for Jan. 6-14 at the Walt Disney Theater in the Dr. Philips Center for Performing Arts.

## LIGHT PARADE



# BRINGING THE LIGHT

## Electric Cooperatives Spread Holiday Cheer

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

While Santa's elves are hard at work at the North Pole, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are working to bring their own magic to their local neighborhoods, illuminating local parades with festive lights. Black Hills Electric Cooperative is just one of many examples of how a co-op can not only bring light but also creativity to their community.

Every December, Black Hills Electric crafts an exceptional float for the annual Custer Parade of Lights. For Bill Brisk, the manager of operations at Black Hills Electric, the parade isn't merely an event – it's a cherished tradition for their co-op.

As the parade approaches, the Black Hills Electric workshop bustles with

activity, mirroring Santa's very own workshop. Guided by a design from Brisk, linemen and staff assemble their unique Christmas float – crafting, welding and fabricating many of their designs from scratch.

“Just a few nights before the parade, we host a family night where we bring out the families of our employees,”



said Brisk. “The co-op provides food and drinks and we all work together to finish the float.”

In just two weeks, the co-op repurposes discarded equipment and scrap parts into creative masterpieces. One year, the co-op created an oversized shopping cart from old pipe laying around the shop. The next, they used retired meter loop pipes, guy wires, and meter covers to create palm trees and coconuts for a beachside Santa scene. Even Willie Wirehand, the co-op’s safety mascot, has been outfitted for a festive float. Despite being fabricated from old parts, the end result is always something worthy of a debut at the North Pole.

“Most everything we do is built in our shop.” said Brisk. “We do all

of the fabrications ourselves, and we haven’t had a flop yet.”

Luckily, the co-op’s efforts haven’t gone unnoticed. Since 2015, they’ve clinched an award every year at the Custer Parade with the only exceptions being 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic halted festivities. Their trophy collection holds a wide range of awards, boasting awards like the Rudolph’s Choice Award, Best Light, Best Music and most recently, the Custer Fruit Cake Award.

Dawn Murray, the executive director of the Custer Chamber of Commerce, expressed her admiration. “They really go all out. Beyond the parade, they even participate in our scarecrow decorating contest. I remember one year they had a scarecrow up in a

bucket truck, which was really cool.”

Yet, for Black Hills Electric, Custer is just the beginning. The co-op has grand visions for a broader festive footprint. With a service area that stretches from just south of Terry Peak to Nebraska, Brisk sees even more opportunities to shower communities with holiday cheer.

“It’s a festive time of year and something that we want to extend out to different towns in our service territory,” said Brisk. “Seeing the kids’ eyes brighten when we light up our float for the first time really makes the whole thing worth it, and if we can spread that to more of our members, all the better.”





# Rethinking Energy

**Paul Wesslund**

Of all the world's changes during the past 30 years, few are as significant as how we use energy.

In the 1990s, new drilling techniques brought a boom in natural gas production. That increase in supply cut prices so much that natural gas started replacing coal power plants, which used to generate half of the country's electricity. Concern for the environment grew and now renewable energy produces more of our electricity than coal.

Major changes to the ways we use energy have also come into our homes. If you go to the movies and forget to turn off your kitchen lights, you can switch them off from an app on your phone. If you're returning from a vacation, you can adjust your thermostat from anywhere so the temperature of your home is comfortable when you get back.

Every vehicle manufacturer is racing to build electric models. Last year, Ford even started producing an electric version of their best-selling pickup truck. And the F-150 isn't just being promoted as better for the environment. The ads show it running power tools on a remote job site.

That approach to showing the benefits of an electric vehicle highlights a whole new way of thinking about energy.

## Powering your home with a truck

For example, instead of just going out and buying a new pickup truck, you or a business could think about the advantages

of electric options. A traditional gasoline-powered model would be best for long trips, but how many miles a day does the truck really travel? What would it be like to plug it in overnight and never have to visit a gas station again? What if it could also power home appliances during a power outage?

There's a name for that kind of thinking – beneficial electrification. Although that phrase doesn't easily roll off the tongue, the idea is catching on because it's basically a way to get things done better and cheaper.

There's even an organization called the Beneficial Electrification League. The group aims to improve the nation's economy by making broader use of electricity, from heating and cooling homes and businesses to electric school buses, to replacing diesel motors on farm irrigation systems with more efficient electric models.

The benefits of electrification, says the League, are money savings, less impact on the environment, improved quality of life and smoother operation of the nation's increasingly internet-connected electric grid.

One of the clearest effects of switching from fossil fuel to electricity is on environmental impact. Natural gas, coal and oil all produce greenhouse gases. Electricity uses some fossil fuels to generate power, but it is increasingly made with renewable energy. So switching from an internal combustion engine to an electric vehicle, for example, will reduce the burning of fossil fuels.

## No more gas cans

Utilities are exploring ways to use the growing number of electric vehicles to create a more resilient electric grid. Using smart-grid analytics, all those electric cars sitting in garages and charging overnight could supply power back into the electric system during outages or during times when the demand for electricity is high.

Consumers can consider beneficial electrification for the home as well, to see how electric options might improve quality of life. Replacing lawnmowers, leaf blowers and other yard tools with battery-powered versions would reduce noise and could get all the gas and oil cans out of your garage.

You might love your gas stove and heating system, but do you like it enough to pay for two forms of energy, with both gas and electric bills coming due even when you're on vacation? Add to that, the continual improvements in electric heat pumps that will both heat and cool your home with an incredible 300% efficiency.

And if you're concerned about power outages, battery backup systems are getting increasingly powerful and efficient. Compared to a gasoline generator, a battery wouldn't need to be "started up" and wouldn't emit poisonous carbon monoxide.

You may not be ready to make the switch to all electric. These shifts can take time as technology advances and costs become more competitive. But the notion of beneficial electrification offers a new way to evaluate the tools we depend on for everyday life.

**HOLIDAY EFFICIENCY  
WORD SEARCH**

The holidays are a fun, festive time of year! We typically use more electricity during the holiday season. Read the holiday efficiency tips below, then find and circle the **bolded** words in the puzzle.

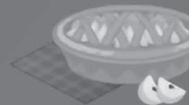


W	G	W	P	D	K	S	S	J	J	W	S	U	M	M
V	Y	F	K	F	N	E	Z	Z	H	T	T	F	C	B
T	J	L	P	C	W	V	E	B	H	V	P	V	W	J
P	I	G	I	L	Z	V	L	G	W	K	K	Z	G	R
I	U	M	D	M	W	W	I	H	C	N	J	N	K	O
G	F	X	E	R	A	L	S	D	N	E	I	R	F	G
J	K	H	W	R	D	F	P	X	G	V	L	F	B	O
C	A	T	H	E	R	M	O	S	T	A	T	I	D	E
F	E	V	L	Y	C	H	U	O	Y	O	T	R	T	O
U	I	O	K	C	S	N	X	G	Q	V	J	E	C	T
J	C	A	J	G	L	X	M	Y	A	W	A	P	Q	V
N	O	D	R	I	A	S	U	E	D	K	S	L	B	D
P	C	H	G	S	Q	X	P	X	H	C	U	A	V	A
Q	V	H	E	A	L	X	O	S	D	U	E	C	V	G
O	T	R	N	F	Z	H	Q	G	V	V	S	E	H	V

- Decorate your tree with energy-saving LED lights.
- Control home heating costs with a smart or programmable **thermostat**.
- Save energy by using a **timer** to turn off holiday lights when you're sleeping.
- If you have a **fireplace**, ask an adult to close the damper when a fire is not burning.
- Open blinds and curtains during the day to let **sunlight** in to warm your home.
- Lower the thermostat when you invite **friends** and **family** over.  
*(The extra people in your home creates additional warmth.)*

**10 Ways to Save Energy  
During the Holidays**

- 1. Switch to LED lights.
- 2. Choose fiber optic decorations.
- 3. Use smart plugs and timers for your holiday lights.
- 4. Give the gift of smart tech.
- 5. Buy gifts that use alternative energy.
- 6. Choose ENERGY STAR® equipment and appliances.
- 7. Stop phantom energy drain while you're away.
- 8. Bake several dishes at a time.
- 9. Avoid preheating when possible.
- 10. Turn down the thermostat when you have guests over.





Garretson Childcare helpers are getting ready to help grow their daycare.

# REED FUND

## Powering Your Community

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

The community development financial institution powered by rural electric cooperatives in South Dakota is about to reach a major milestone.

The (Rural Electric Economic Development) Fund's total dollar amount in projects impacted is anticipated to reach \$1 billion by the end of 2023, according to Eric Fosheim, Economic Development Manager for REED.

REED also exceeded 10,000 in jobs impacted (created or retained) since its creation in 1996.

"Currently, we sit at just over \$998 million in total projects impacted," Fosheim said in October.

The REED Fund is a 501(c)3

corporation and operates as a revolving loan fund that provides financing for economic development projects in rural areas.

Those projects that receive REED Fund dollars must promote growth and be a catalyst in creating more business, wealth and job opportunities within the rural community. The projects are also expected to improve infrastructure and economic base in rural areas.

The REED Fund provides financing from the federal government and other lender, in addition to revolving interest payments collected over the years. The REED Fund does not use money generated by electric rate charges.

Fosheim said that as of September 30, REED has issued 401 loans for a total of \$125.26 million.

"This includes \$104,174,418 in loans made using REED dollars and \$21,082,793 from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program," Fosheim said.



Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen, left, delivers REED funding to Mitchell Technical College.

Fosheim said it isn't entirely surprising that the \$1 billion was hit this year.

"REED has seen steady growth over the years, but typically sees higher than normal application volume in times of rising interest rates. In addition, costs are rising as well, so total project costs for each individual project have been higher as well.

Dakota Energy General Manager Chad Felderman has been on the REED Fund board since 2018.

He said the impact the REED Fund has on local communities is unique, noting that the businesses the fund helps aren't necessarily ones that Dakota Energy provides electricity to, but are ones that help our communities, "which in turn helps our members where they live," he said.

"It is gratifying to help our hospitals, fire departments, and schools purchase equipment so our small communities can provide those essential services," Felderman said.

One of those projects funded by REED is the Huron Regional Medical Center dialysis building.

"We are proud to support HRMC in sustaining and expanding local access to critical medical services right here in our community," Felderman said.

Douglas Electric Cooperative General Manager Jay Spaans echoed Felderman's sentiment, noting that the REED Fund is special because co-ops get to loan money to businesses that they don't always serve.

"For us, it is just about making

improvements in the community. Sure, we would like to serve the load, but even if the new load doesn't reside in our territory, we still will fund the loan," Spaans said. "It is all about the greater good for our communities."

West River Electric CEO Dick Johnson also serves on the REED Fund board. He's one of the first board members to represent a co-op in the western part of the state. The REED Fund was originally set up by co-ops in eastern South Dakota. After two decades of successful growth and development, the REED Fund decided to allow co-ops in western South Dakota to join in 2017. Johnson said West River Electric was one of the first western co-ops to be accepted into the REED Fund.

"It was one of the best things we could ask for. We were struggling with our own revolving loan fund but we had primarily loaned to government entities, no businesses," Johnson said.

"When we became members of REED that gave us another tool in our toolbox to offer our members who were interested in our area or needed to expand their businesses or infrastructure."

West River Electric hasn't had many loans, but Johnson is still encouraged by what he's seen as a board member.

"Sitting on the Board and seeing the applications and the impact we are having on the economy of small towns all over South Dakota is phenomenal," Johnson said.

Johnson had high praise for the folks at the REED Fund office in Madison, calling

them a "class act" who really understand the region's rural areas.

"They work hard to say yes and somehow make it work. The fact that the local co-op board can help make the decision to move a project forward is unheard of – real boots on the ground who are in the communities we serve and understand what is needed to thrive," Johnson said. "It is a unique model just like the cooperative business model."

## Did You Know

From 2018 to 2022, electric cooperatives in South Dakota spent \$5.7 Billion on capital investment, operations, and maintenance activities and retired \$102.8 Million in capital credits paid to consumer-members.

Through these expenditures, co-ops drive economic benefits in their local communities and throughout the state.

Over the five-year period, electric co-ops in South Dakota are responsible for:

### STATEWIDE IMPACT

- \$4.2 Billion to South Dakota's Gross State Product (GSP)
- An average of 5,848 jobs in South Dakota each year
- \$2 Billion in labor income in South Dakota
- \$194.1 Million in federal taxes
- \$423 Million in state taxes
- \$418.4 Million in local taxes

All of these impacts occur in counties where electric cooperatives operate, showcasing the substantial local economic benefits that co-ops provide in the communities they serve.



Participants celebrate the groundbreaking for the National Music Museum in Vermillion.



Cameras give producers the opportunity to monitor one of the ranch's most valuable assets: cows!

# BOVINE BABY MONITORS

## Local Producers Blend Tradition with Innovation

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Just as parents rely on baby monitors to keep an eye on their sleeping infants, ranchers across South Dakota are embracing advanced camera systems to protect their prized newborn calves. These bovine baby monitors offer a crucial safeguard, ensuring the safety of one of the ranch's most valuable assets.

Producers Logan and Layton Hendrickson, hailing from Meadow, S.D., represent the sixth generation of their family's operation in farming and ranching in South Dakota. The

surveillance technology utilized by Logan and his family, however, is a far cry from the farming practices of Logan's great-great-great-grandfather, Franz Seidel, who at the unlikely age of 56, established their farmstead in 1907 after fleeing from unsettled times in Russia. Despite a legacy spanning over a century, the Hendrickson and Seidel family operation proves that even a long-standing operation can embrace new technologies and modern solutions.

"Our farm has been passed down through the generations, and we have been building on it ever since, like Lego bricks," said Logan.

Recent winters marked by challenging weather and significant snowfall have emphasized the role of cameras during the calving season. After all, it doesn't matter whether the sun is shining or a blizzard is rolling in, nature persists. Beyond staying warm, these cameras offer producers a less invasive method of observing their cattle, reducing the amount of stress put on cow and calf pairing. Installed in their barn, the Hendrickson's camera system streams live video of the cows straight to



The Hendrickson family uses a camera to keep an eye on their cattle during the calving season.



The Hendrickson-Seidel ranch is a sixth-generation operation in northwest South Dakota.

a cellphone, often without the cows ever knowing.

“We aren’t in their space, disrupting their natural habits,” he said. “All we have to do is pull out our phones and we know what is going on.”

In addition to convenience, cameras can also help producers catch complications that arise following the calving process. For instance, accessible oversight can allow a producer to prevent an unruly cow from unintentionally harming their newborn calf. The result is a better operational efficiency, fostering a more relaxed environment during an otherwise stressful time and creating better outcomes for both the calf and mother.

“It doesn’t take long for these systems to pay for themselves,” said Logan. “And at the end of the day, it creates a more comfortable experience for the cow and calf during a very stressful time.”

The development of technology on the Hendrickson-Seidel ranch isn’t just limited to cameras. Their family operation like other operations across the state has seen development in nearly every aspect of their operation through the generations.

“It’s not technology in the sense of having the latest electronics but technology in the sense of development,” said Logan. “My great grandfather went from using a 20-horsepower tractor with steel tracks at the beginning of his career

to using a 400-horsepower tractor with auto-steer and air conditioning.”

Whether it’s record-keeping on your cellphone or using advanced technologies like GPS guidance, Logan said his family has utilized new technologies in a way that has kept their operation competitive and relevant for over a hundred years, proving the old myth, “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” simply isn’t true.

“One of the first people to adopt a new technology on the farm is my grandfather,” said Logan. “He is the person pushing to new innovations because he sees the economic benefit long before any of us do.”





**Dec. 14-17**  
**Christmas at the Cathedral**  
 521 N Duluth Avenue,  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-988-3765

**DEC. 2**  
**Tabor Parade of Lights**  
 Vendor Fair  
 4 p.m.  
 Parade of Lights  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Ham Drawing  
 7:30 p.m.  
 Tabor, SD

**DEC. 2**  
**Julefest Scandinavian Christmas Festival and Bazaar**  
 8 a.m.  
 Our Saviors Lutheran Church  
 Spearfish, SD

**DEC. 3**  
**Hartford's Hometown Christmas**  
 7:30 a.m.  
 Hartford, SD

**DEC. 8-9**  
**Alexandria's Winter Festival**  
 5 p.m.  
 Alexandria, SD

**DEC. 8-9**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Center  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**DEC. 9**  
**Parade of Lights**  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Wessington, SD

**DEC. 10**  
**Hill City Senior Saturday Breakfast**  
 Hill City Center  
 Hill City, SD

**DEC. 17**  
**Christmas Cantata**  
 3 p.m.  
 Hermosa United Church of Christ  
 Hermosa, SD

**NOV. 24**  
**Parade of Lights**  
 7 p.m.  
 Dakota Avenue  
 Huron, SD

**NOV. 25**  
**Mid-Winter Fair**  
 Gregory Auditorium  
 Gregory, SD  
 605-830-9778

**NOV. 30**  
**Christmas on the Prairie**  
 5 p.m.  
 Miller, SD

**NOV. 30-DEC. 3**  
**Hatchery Holidays**  
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery  
 Spearfish, SD

**DEC. 1-2**  
**Christmas in the Hills**  
 Hot Springs, SD

**DEC. 1-30**  
**Trees and Trains Exhibit**  
 SD State Railroad Museum  
 Hill City, SD

**DEC. 1-30**  
**Holiday Express and Holiday Express Spiked**  
 1880 Train  
 Hill City, SD

**DEC. 2**  
**Rapid City Garden Club's 62nd Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale**  
 8 a.m.  
 Central States Fairgrounds  
 Rapid City, SD

**DEC. 2**  
**6th Annual Holiday Party, Tour of Homes, Silent Auction**  
 4 p.m.  
 Olive Grove Golf Course  
 Groton, SD

**DEC. 2**  
**Parade of Lights**  
 6 p.m.  
 Redfield, SD

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.

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