

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota Art

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There's More to it Than Sitting in the Board Room!



Bill Tostenson
Board President

At this year's annual meeting, you will elect three of your cooperative leaders for the next three-year term of this rotational cycle. But what I want to bring to your attention is your current District 2 board member, Dale Jensen, tenure of service, and Darren Strasser, your District 3 board member, and their contribution to the cooperative board room.

First, this will be Dale's last annual meeting as a director as his term has expired. Dale has served as your Vice President for most of his tenure with nothing but the best for the co-op and our membership as his agenda. Dale possesses a wealth of local co-op knowledge, history, and traditions. He has been relied upon, as an example to the rest of the board, of the seven cooperative principles that your board uses as its governing template. Dale's institutional knowledge and leadership is going to be missed around the boardroom table.

Secondly, Darren has one year remaining on his last term as a Whetstone Valley Electric director and has served as Secretary for most of his tenure as well. Darren's gift of understanding the nuances of cooperative financing has been a huge asset to the co-op and in the board room. Darren's cooperative knowledge and financial experience has propelled him into a respected leadership position on the board of East River Electric Power Cooperative and in turn sits on the South Dakota Rural Electric Association board, representing East River as well as an officer on the political action committee.

The accomplishments and cooperative skill set of these two board members does not just appear. First, it takes an investment of time by the director and cooperative resources over many years to be an effective and engaged board member; to understand the cooperative principles

and how that business model applies to rural electric co-ops. Second, from comprehending the cooperative financials to understanding the rolls and responsibilities of the board, management, and employees of your cooperative and co-ops that they work with. Third, from strong relationships built over time with cooperative partners, neighboring co-ops, and state and national legislators. Through years of experience, these directors have gained knowledge, built influential relationships, and developed mutual respect with peers and political leaders. What does this awareness gained by these individuals do for WVEC you might ask. This gives your cooperative a stronger voice among all the others. It brings integrity and cohesiveness to the board room. And of course, engagement in the local, state, and national cooperative arena.

So, here we are today, about to yield to time the contributions made by you, the member, and the elected director. An investment that helps to ensure the successes of WVEC and its membership. Can others learn as these board members have? Yes. Will it come at a price? Yes. Will they be as engaged and effective? Yes, over time. Will they become a cooperative influencer? Maybe, over time. Will it harm WVEC? No, but could inhibit the operational goals and progresses made daily due to the learning curve. Will WVEC members continue to enjoy a safe, reliable electrical utility and stable rates (no increase since 2017)? Time will tell.

Your current board will be participating in a two-day strategic planning process – to set a course for the future; to provide the background knowledge, tools, and insight to future board members; to mitigate the transition among the board members; to provide direction to management and staff; and to set a firm foundation for WVEC. Full steam ahead!

A black and white photograph of several incandescent light bulbs hanging from the ceiling. One bulb in the foreground is illuminated, casting a glow.

Save the Date
Annual Meeting is March 23rd at
Milbank High School

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WHETSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC

USPS 018-979)

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

Visit us at
www.whetstone.coop

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BASIN BUS TOUR

June 14th - 15th

Are you interested in learning about where your electricity comes from? If so, here is your chance. Contact Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative if interested in going on the bus tour this year. Open to members who have not participated before. Limited to 23 couples.

Privacy Notice

Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Inc. has always been committed to protecting the privacy and security of personal information we collect from or about our member-consumers in the normal course of business. We are providing this notice to you to assure you of our commitment to maintaining the privacy of such information.

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Spring Planting Safety

Farming equipment has become more massive and technologically advanced over time. While these welcome improvements help farmers cover more ground in less time, taller equipment and longer extensions can bring added challenges around power lines.

As farmers prepare to enter the fields for planting, we urge everyone working in the agricultural field to be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines, poles and other electrical equipment.



Follow the 10-foot distance rule

To stay safe around overhead power lines, follow safe work practices at all times to help prevent serious and even deadly accidents. Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from power lines.

This 10-foot rule applies not only to the area underneath the power line, but to the full 360 degrees around it. Not only can electricity change paths if direct contact is made, it can also happen when someone or something gets too close to a power line, and the current jumps, also known as arcing.

Other precautions

In addition to the 10-foot rule, take these steps to help decrease the chances of an electrical-related incident:

- If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab because you could be electrocuted. Instead, stay where you are and call 9-1-1 to dispatch the appropriate utility to deenergize the power.
- If it is not safe to stay in the cab due to fire or smoke, make

a solid, clean jump with both feet landing at the same time. Hop away with feet together as far as you can.

- If you come across an accident or incident near a downed power line, alert individuals (from at least 50 feet away) to stay in the cab or vehicle as long as there is no imminent danger. Call 9-1-1 and do not approach the scene.
- Have a daily meeting with staff to go over possible hazards. Map out and review routes where equipment will be moved and ensure it will clear power lines.
- Teach anyone working with or for you (including family members and seasonal employees) about power line awareness and proper clearance distance.
- When working around power lines, always use a spotter, who has a broader vantage point than the person in the cab.
- Visually inspect overhead lines, which may not meet height codes due to age or pole damage. If a wire is hanging low, never try to move it; instead, contact your electric utility for assistance.
- Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.



Take care when plugging in appliances

Stella Nilson

Stella Nilson gives good advice on circuit safety. Overloading circuits is a major cause of residential fires, and she warns people to take care when plugging in appliances. Stella is the daughter of Kyle and Alision Nilson, members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

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.

SEAFOOD SPECIALTY

SEAFOOD PARTY DIP

Ingredients:

1 pkg. mock crab sticks
 1 pkg. mock crab pieces
 1 pkg. mock lobster
 1 pkg. salad shrimp
 1 can water chestnuts
 1 medium onion (optional)
 1 c. real mayonnaise
 2 pkg. Philly cream cheese
 Dried parsley, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to taste

METHOD

Grind crab, lobster, shrimp, and water chestnuts. Chop onion. Using a mixer, blend mayo and cream cheese until smooth. Add parsley, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to taste. Combine with seafood. Mix well and refrigerate. Serve with various kinds of crackers.

Kari Larson Reder, Warner, S.D.

WALLEYE CAKES

Ingredients:

8 oz. walleye (cooked, cooled, and flaked)
 1 1/2 c. mayonnaise
 4 eggs
 1 c. cooked wild rice
 1/2 c. Parmesan cheese
 4 green onions (chopped)
 1 sleeve saltine crackers (crushed)
 1 tsp. crushed garlic
 2 tsps. seasonings (salt, pepper)
 2 tbsp. oil or butter

METHOD

In large bowl, combine walleye, mayo, rice, onion, garlic, and cheese. Add eggs and seasonings. Fold in crushed saltines until the mixture is firm enough to form cakes. Fry in olive oil for 2-3 minutes on each side or until crispy. Serve with topping: 1/2 c. mayo, 1 tsp. garlic powder, and 1 oz. crumbled blue cheese. Mix together.

Dar Duncan, Milbank, S.D.

SHRIMP PASTA

Ingredients:

1 can (14 1/2 oz.) diced tomatoes, undrained
 1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
 1 c. water
 2 tsps. sugar
 1 tsp. basil leaves
 1 tsp. garlic powder
 1 tsp. oregano leaves
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 tsp. crushed red pepper
 8 oz. pasta, such as linguine or spaghetti
 1 lb. medium shrimp, peeled and deveined

METHOD

Mix tomatoes, tomato paste, water, sugar, basil, garlic powder, oregano, salt and red pepper in large saucepan. Bring to boil on medium-high heat. Reduce heat to low; simmer, uncovered, 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, cook pasta as directed on package, adding shrimp during last 3 minutes of cooking. Drain. Return pasta and shrimp to saucepot. Pour tomato sauce over shrimp and pasta. Toss gently to coat well. Serve immediately with shredded Parmesan cheese, 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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Save Energy and Money with a Heat Pump Water Heater

Q: I'm looking for options to replace my old water heater. What should I choose to make my home's water heating more efficient and save money?

A: Consider upgrading to an energy efficient heat pump water heater. Heat pump water heaters – also called hybrid water heaters – use heat pump technology to heat water more efficiently than a standard electric storage water heater.

Think of them as a standard water heater with a heat pump on top. The heat pump heats the water two to three times more efficiently than the electric elements, but the unit still has the electric elements as backup, if needed.

Here are some details about their efficiency, how the units operate, installation considerations and when you should replace your old water heater.

Efficiency and Operation

By moving heat instead of creating it, a heat pump water heater uses 60% less energy than electric storage water heaters. That can add up to hundreds of dollars a year and thousands during the life of the water heater.

Improved controls make it easy to set the desired temperature and programming, including vacation mode, which saves energy when you are out of town.

Some models offer Wi-Fi connectivity to be controlled by a smartphone from anywhere. Other helpful features include leak detection and automatic shutoff.

Installation Considerations

A heat pump water heater uses heat from a room to heat water. It tends to make the space about two degrees cooler, which is something to consider before installation. Ideal placement is an unconditioned space, such as a garage or unheated basement. A heat pump water heater requires enough space around the unit to supply the air needed for efficient operation – about 750 cubic feet.

Heat pump water heaters tend to be slightly taller than storage water heaters and require additional clearance above the unit to access the filter for cleaning. If your water heater is in a conditioned space or a room smaller than the unit requires, venting might be a

solution for your installation.

Another consideration is noise. A heat pump water heater generates about as much noise as a modern dishwasher, so it may not be a good solution if the water heater is located where sound could be a nuisance.

Installing a heat pump water heater is much like installing a standard electric water heater, except for the location of the cold-water inlet, which is located at the bottom of the unit.

Because moisture in the air condenses when it is drawn through the heat pump, it also requires a condensate drain that must be routed to a drain or pumped outside of the home.

Heat pump water heaters can replace electric, gas or propane water heaters. They typically require a 240-volt circuit, which might necessitate an electrical upgrade by a licensed electrician.

When to Replace an Old Water Heater

The life expectancy of a standard water heater is about 10 years. If your water heater is older than that or showing signs of failing, you may want to consider replacing it with a heat pump water heater before it fails.

It's easier to find the product you want when it is not an emergency replacement. It also can be more expensive to replace it during an emergency. While heat pump water heaters are sold at a higher price than standard water heaters, the cost savings over time can offset the purchase and installation cost – and will result in a more energy efficient home.

You also are likely to save by taking advantage of sales, rebates or tax credits. Check with your electric utility, state department of energy and federal tax information before purchasing a new water heater.

I installed a heat pump water heater in my home. I love it and can see how my energy use has decreased since installation. Now, if I can only figure out how to get my children to take shorter showers.



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group



FROM DECAYING TO DISPLAYING

The Ziebach County Historical Center's exhibits showcase artifacts of local history.

Ziebach County Historical Society Preserves Local History

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdcra.coop

Ziebach County found its place in the annals of history when one of its residents, Fred Dupris, helped save the buffalo from extinction in the late 19th century. It's a piece of history that is at the heart of the sparsely populated county, so much so that even Ziebach's county seat of Dupree is named after the man himself.

Luckily, the area's zeal for preservation has remained. In the spirit of Fred Dupris, a small group of women in Ziebach County set out more than 40 years ago to save their community's history. This group of historians began to collect everything from vintage maps to old newspapers.

As interest grew, so did their accomplishments. Together, they published a book of local history and family stories, all while collecting an ever-growing amount of local artifacts and papers. Their actions inspired others, and a younger group of history buffs quickly took hold of the reins. The newly inspired volunteers incorporated the Ziebach County Historical Society in 2004 and purchased the town's historic Catholic church.

Dupree school teacher Shawn Olsen is now the current Ziebach County Historical Society president, and the goals of the historical society have since expanded to include not only preserving history but sharing it too.

"People were donating all sorts of artifacts and documents, but we had nowhere to put

them," said Olsen. "These histories were just stored away in boxes, sitting in a house."

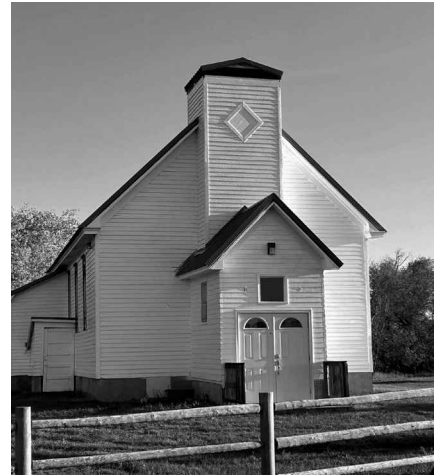
The Ziebach County Historical Society found a solution for their problem in their former church, a community structure that was built in 1913 and in near disrepair. Needing the space, Olsen and other volunteers spent hours of their time upscaling the building into a new historical center for the community. They replaced windows, installed new wiring, and breathed new life into the building with a fresh coat of paint. They even included air conditioning.

"If you could have seen it before the renovations, you would have thought to throw a match in it," laughed Olsen. "But when I started working, people would stop by to ask questions about the project. They would see my truck parked outside and ask, 'What are you doing in there?' It really generated a lot of interest from the community. I think there's just a lot of people out there that take pride in where they come from out here and they want to keep that going."

The work paid off. What used to be empty walls and chipping paint, now hosts rows of display cases and local history.

The historical society, wanting to share its achievement with its supportive community, opened the Ziebach County History Center to the public in early May. The result was a hustling and bustling grand opening that featured the Dupris family's buffalo branding iron, a piece of history that the family loaned to the center for the occasion.

"We have an exhibit with artifacts from



History enthusiasts of Ziebach County have spent months upscaling one of their community's decaying buildings into a local history center.

our bank and another exhibit featuring the story of Fred Dupris," said Olsen. "We have a wide variety of items that make up our history."

With a successful grand opening behind them, the historical society now wants to reach beyond its local membership and attract history enthusiasts from the surrounding region. In hopes of spurring new traffic to Ziebach County, the historical society is planning to open the newly renovated center to the public with regular hours in the coming months.

"The community has supported this project because they know we have a wonderful local history in Ziebach County," said Olsen. "Now that it's finished, it's time to open the center and share our story with others."



TRASHYARD TREASURES

Lee Lindsley of Piedmont turns trash into treasure when he isn't on the clock working for the South Dakota Department of Transportation.

South Dakota Man Welds Junkyard Scraps Into Pieces of Art

Frank Turner

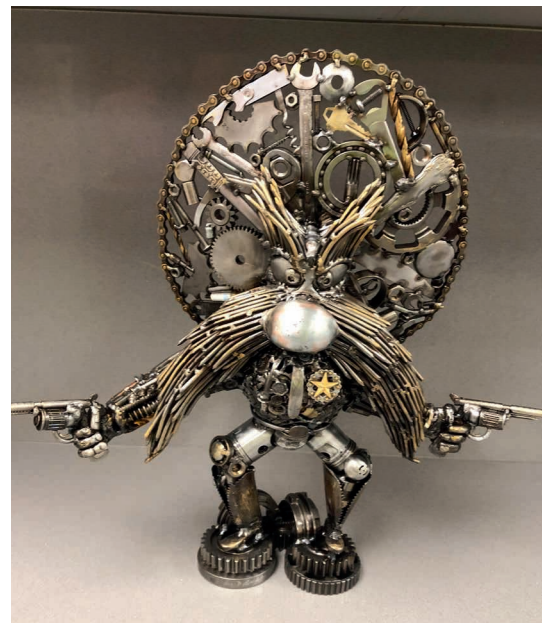
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Lee Lindsley has a real talent for welding trash into treasure. Given the time, Lindsley can sculpt even the most unwanted junkyard scrap – busted gears, rusted lug nuts and mangled bicycle chains – into an artistic masterpiece.

By day, Lindsley works as a region inspector for the South Dakota Department of Transportation in the Black Hills, but by night, he can be found in his shop putting hours of work into his metallic puzzles, welding them together piece by piece.

When not on the clock, Lindsley is busy tackling his next project, investing anywhere from 30 to 100 hours into each sculpture. The end result often portrays a snapshot of rural life in the Black Hills: a life-size hunting dog made from a mix of old tools and spent rifle rounds, a miniature snowmobile standing on a displaced piston and a gun-slinging Yosemite Sam with a beard fashioned from old nails.

“Metal sculpting is some-



Famous cartoon character Yosemite Sam is one of Lindsley's favorite metal creations.

thing that anyone can do if they put their mind to it,” said Lindsley. “All I do is throw parts of junk together.”

In many ways, Lindsley’s passion for sculpting and welding echoes the resourcefulness of the very artwork he makes. When Lindsley began his metal sculpting journey, he didn’t have a formal education or even a background in art to guide him. Instead, he relied on his welding skills and the bits of scrap he had available to make his remarkable artwork.

“It’s hard to put a price on these pieces, but if my artwork does sell, I want to donate a portion of the sale to a charity.”

It was Lindsley’s second cousin Chris Degen, a teacher at Mitchell Technical College, who inspired Lindsley’s first foray into metal sculpting four years ago. Degen recalls gifting Lindsley’s son, a former lineman, a simple lineman made from nuts and bolts during the holidays. The quirky Christmas gift became a catalyst for the two to start creating new projects and bouncing new ideas off each other. According to Degen, Lindsley just ran away with the idea.

“He went crazy with it,” Degen laughed. “Lee started making sculptures that went way above and beyond what I was doing. I would put an hour into my project, and he would put one hundred into his.”

Taking another step forward in his hobby, Lindsley began researching works and art pieces posted online by world-famous metal sculptors, including metal sculptors John Lopez – a South Dakotan – and Brian Mock, whose masterpieces provided Lindsley a roadmap of what can be accomplished.

Since embarking on his metal sculpting journey, Lindsley has completed more than 18 metal sculptures, and his hobby continues to blossom. For the first time ever, Lindsley put one of his sculptures

up for sale in A1 Al’s Pheasant Ranch in Emery S.D. Since November, Lindsley’s metal hunting dog has stood proudly in one of the ranch’s hunting cabins, waiting for a buyer, and although the dog hasn’t left the shelf just yet, Lindsley said he is

excited to see his work out in the open and visible to the public eye.

“It’s hard to put a price on these pieces, but if my artwork does sell, I want to donate a portion of the sale to a charity,” he said. “We will see what happens.”



Lindsley’s metal German shepherd sits proudly in his workshop.



Position portable generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.

Play it Safe: 10 Do's and Don'ts When Using Portable Generators

Abby Berry

NRECA

Storm season is upon us, which means greater potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, we want to remind you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

1. **DO:** Install backup CO alarms.
2. **DO:** Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times.
3. **DO:** Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
4. **DO:** Ensure your generator is properly grounded. Use a portable ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) to prevent electric shock injuries.
5. **DO:** Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
6. **DON'T:** Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
7. **DON'T:** Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
8. **DON'T:** Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
9. **DON'T:** Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
10. **DON'T:** Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous – even deadly – if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, we're here to help. Give us a call.

Jack Hoeke and Kenne Dailie Retire

Jack Hoeke

Jack Hoeke will park his service truck and hang up his WVEC hard hat on Feb. 28, 2023. Jack has been employed with Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative (WVEC) for more than 27 years, having started his employment on June 5, 1995. He began his employment as an apprentice electrician and through experience and furthering education is ending his time with WVEC as a contractor electrician licensed both in South Dakota and Minnesota.



Jack is not retiring but has taken a job with Agralite Electric Cooperative in Benson, Minn. Having grown up in Willmar, Minn., there are many old friends still residing in the area that he is looking forward to catching up with. This employment move will allow him to spend more time with his girlfriend of two years, Tanya, who is a jailer with the Swift County Sheriff Department. "I guess you might say that's the biggest reason for the change!" Jack stated.

When asked about his family, Jack shared a little about his two grown children. His daughter, Angela recently graduated from the University of South Dakota, Vermillion and decided to return to school at the University of Minnesota for a teaching degree. His son, Josh, having recently purchased part of the family farm near Revillo, S.D., works for Engelstad Electric.

Jack also talked about his work "family" and the fun he has had over the years working with many different people. He specifically mentioned that you never know when it may be the last time you work with someone. "Joey George, RIP. He was a good friend!" Jack reminisced.

Remembering when he began working at WVEC, Jack stated, "There were a dozen or so employees in a small office, now we have a heated warehouse/garage to park vehicles and equipment in." Equipment changes were something else Jack talked about: "Cordless tools that can do just about anything have really improved the job. However, using mini excavators to fix underground faults versus a shovel is probably my favorite improvement!"

Jack expressed, "Working at Whetstone Valley Electric has been a great opportunity. Everyday was different than the day before. Repairing storm damage lines and hooking up generators was more fun in my thirties than it is now! But, I thank Whetstone and its members for the opportunity to serve them!"

Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative thanks Jack for his years of service and dedication to its membership and wish him the best as he begins a new chapter with Agralite.

Kenne Dailie

Kenne Dailie hangs up his hard hat for the last time on March 3, 2023, as he retires from his 17-year employment with Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative. He joined the WVEC team on Nov. 1, 2005, as an apprentice electrician and HVAC Assistant. Kenne said his first 1,000 hours with WVEC went by fast due in part to the eight-day ice-storm that same November. He has weathered several storms since, but none quite as devastating as that one.



Many changes over the years have happened but Kenne noted one of the more obvious is how much bigger everything has gotten. The electric services being added are larger and require larger wire. Bigger heating and cooling systems and motors are being installed. Lighting needs are being met with more energy efficient LED options. Electronic meters, load controllers, and other electronics have improved members service greatly. Kenne stated he has changed out more than 300 water heater controllers during his employment.

Kenne and wife Sheila have already started the transition into retirement with the addition of a camper and plans to travel and visit their growing family. They have four daughters: Laura (Scott) Mueller, Milbank, S.D.; Shaunna (Scot) Johnson, St. Paul, Minn.; Julianne (Steven) Keil, Alexandria, Va.; Ashley (Ethane) Robish, Fargo, N.D. Ten grandchildren will also keep Kenne busy and entertained: Kenadee and Olivia Mueller; Micah, Caleb, and Nehemiah Johnson; Jack and Luke Keil; Mya, Parker; and Flynn Robish. In addition to traveling to visit and spoil grandchildren, Kenne plans to spend time on the farm working on rebuilding his '49 Chevy and his '74 Chevy Shortbox and tune up his "Old Tractors."

Kenne stated, "Whetstone Valley Electric has been a great place to work. I will miss my co-workers; they are all so willing to serve our members."

It's clear that Kenne cared for the cooperative members. His friendliness and willingness to help others will be greatly missed, and Whetstone Valley Electric wishes him the best in his well-earned retirement.

We invite any members who wish to congratulate Kenne to join us at the co-op's headquarters on Friday, March 3, 2023, at 3 p.m. for cake and ice cream.

THE STORY OF DUDE DAD

Taylor and Heidi Calmus play with their kids (Theo, Juno and Otto) on a playset Taylor built. The family will welcome another baby in March.

Howard Grows More Than Corn

Tara Miller

Central Electric Cooperative

His kids may only know him as dad, but Jimmy Kimmel, the entire internet and 7 million followers can't be wrong – Howard native Taylor Calmus has evolved into a new-age celebrity. Better known as Dude Dad, Calmus is an accomplished actor, video producer, digital content creator, author, builder, television show host and comedian. Besides making regular appearances on Jimmy Kimmel Live, Calmus has also shared the screen with home remodeling experts Chip and Joanna Gaines, acclaimed actor Anthony Anderson and several YouTube stars.

Calmus is the son of Larry and Julie Calmus. He grew up west of Howard with siblings Zach and Maggie, and graduated from Howard High School in 2005. He now lives in Fort Collins, CO, but Calmus credits much of his creativity to his rural upbringing.

“Growing up in rural South Dakota was awesome because it forced us to create our own fun. My parents were big advocates of that. They would say, ‘Go outside and

find something to do.’ It enabled us to be creative,” Calmus said.

His mom, Julie, agrees. “We were sticklers. We didn't let them play Nintendo or watch tv all day.” Instead, the kids often spent time outside constructing BMX bike ramps, among other things.

Building Strong Connections

Now a dad himself, Calmus enjoys putting his ingenuity and building skills to work for his kids. “Building things with your kids is one of the best ways to bond with them,” he said. “I've made carnival rides, backyard bike parks, multiple tree houses, a boat, just so many things. Being a dad gives you permission to imagine the impossible like kids do. It allows me to connect with them.”

Calmus and his wife Heidi, who is originally from Fargo, have three children and another baby due in March. Heidi is often the subject of her husband's videos. Calmus puts his acting skills to work, sporting a long brunette wig as he comedically embellishes her life. Luckily, Heidi is a good sport, and they often share reaction videos in which she critiques his performance.

The couple went on tour this year, performing comedy shows as a team in North Dakota, South Dakota and Colorado. Calmus said without his wife, they would not have experienced this level of success. “Heidi believed in me before I did. Without her, Dude Dad wouldn't exist today.”

The Evolution of Dude Dad

Success didn't happen overnight, Calmus explained. Early on, he would often pick up work doing set construction for tv shows and movie projects to make ends meet.

“When I moved away, I worked hard to make it in Hollywood as an actor, and I had some success,” he said. “Then, when Heidi was pregnant with our second child, it was clear to me that I needed to do something more stable to support a family. That's when we created Dude Dad.”

Mastering the Dude Dad brand took a great deal of time and commitment. Calmus constantly brainstormed new ideas for videos that would align with the brand and appeal to viewers. After all, the more views his content generates, the more income he earns from paid advertising on the various platforms.

A humble individual, Calmus doesn't necessarily consider himself famous. He said, “I think my content caught on faster in



Taylor and Heidi perform stand-up comedy as a team. They recently sold out shows in Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Fort Collins.

South Dakota because I have family here.”

But the numbers don't lie. Dude Dad content has more than 1 billion views on Facebook and roughly 150 million views on YouTube. So, his reach is far greater than just the state of South Dakota.

“With TikTok and other apps, there are a billion new creators every year, so it's a challenge all the time,” Calmus said. “Anybody can make videos online now, but not everybody can stand in front of an audience and perform comedy. It's been a fun and rewarding challenge. Now we get to see the people who are connecting with our content.”

Calmus authored a book entitled “A Dude's Guide to Baby Size” to help expectant dads understand their baby's size throughout pregnancy. He shares guy-friendly size comparisons for reference, such as a lug nut, a tape measure, a pound of ground beef and a football.

Giving Back

Because of his success, Calmus has been able to give back in unique ways. In 2019, he partnered with HGTV “Fixer Upper” star Chip Gaines to raise \$1.49 million for St. Jude's Children's Hospital. This partnership led to Calmus's television show, Super Dad, where he helps other dads build custom backyard play areas for their children.

Calmus is also a champion for Horizon Health Foundation's Smiles for Miles program. He helped the non-profit raise more than \$20,000 in a single day to provide free dental care for local kids.

Most recently, Taylor and Heidi performed

a live show in Fort Collins and donated the proceeds to a neighborhood family who sadly lost their father.

“He left behind two little kids who are friends with our kids, and we just wanted to be there for them however we could,” Calmus shared.

Making the Family Proud

Reggie Gassman, Calmus's uncle, is the Manager of Customer Electrical Services at Sioux Valley Energy in eastern South Dakota. He said he's proud of his nephew's accomplishments.

“When the kids were little, Taylor and Zach were already making home movies. His success creating videos doesn't surprise me at all,” Gassman said. “He takes something from normal, everyday life and sees it from a different angle.”

Gassman joked, “I told Taylor acting genes run in the family because I was named best actor in the junior class play. That's like the Emmys of Canova!”

Calmus said both sides of his family – Calmus and Gassman – are naturally funny and talented in different ways. While Gassmans are widely known for their baseball skills, his uncle Kurt (and his mustache) have famously inspired some of Dude Dad's most iconic characters.

He's Still Just Taylor

Despite his growing list of accomplishments, he's still the same guy his family knows and loves.

Calmus's mom Julie shared, “Since he was two years old, Taylor was always entertaining people and goofing around. His older brother Zach is just as clever, so there's always laughter when the family gets together. It's pretty cool he's been able to make a living doing that.”

She said when strangers recognize her son as Dude Dad, she chuckles. “He's still just Taylor to us.”



“Husbands of Target” is a viral video with more than 80 million views that Taylor developed in collaboration with other digital content creators.



ONLINE SAFETY

Information provided by KidsHealth.org from Nemours Children's Health. © 1995-2021. The Nemours Foundation/KidsHealth®

Keeping your kids safe online

The Internet can be wonderful for kids. They can use it to research school reports, communicate with teachers and other kids, and play interactive games.

But online access also comes with risks, like inappropriate content, cyberbullying, and online predators. Using social media apps and websites where kids interact, predators may pose as a child or teen looking to make a new friend. They might prod the child to exchange personal information, such as address and phone number, or encourage kids to call them, seeing their phone number via caller ID.

Parents should be aware of what their kids see and hear online, who they meet, and what they share about themselves. Talk with your kids, use tools to protect them, and keep an eye on their activities.

Online Protection Tools

Online tools let you control your kids' access to adult material and help protect them from Internet predators. Many Internet service providers (ISPs) provide parent-control options. You

can also get software that helps block access to sites and restricts personal information from being sent online. Other programs can monitor and track online activity.

Getting Involved in Kids' Online Activities

More important than blocking objectionable material is teaching your kids safe and responsible online behavior, and keeping an eye on their Internet use.

Basic guidelines to share with your kids for safe online use:

- Follow the family rules, and those set by the Internet service provider.
- Never post or trade personal pictures.
- Never reveal personal information, such as address, phone number, or school name or location.
- Use only a screen name and don't share passwords (other than with parents).

- Never agree to get together in person with anyone met online without parent approval and/or supervision.
- Never respond to a threatening email, message, post, or text.
- Always tell a parent or other trusted adult about any communication or conversation that was scary or hurtful.

Basic guidelines for parental supervision:

- Spend time online together to teach your kids appropriate online behavior.
- Keep the computer in a common area where you can watch and monitor its use, not in individual bedrooms. Monitor any time spent on smartphones or tablets.
- Bookmark kids' favorite sites for easy access.
- Check your credit card and phone bills for unfamiliar account charges.
- Find out what, if any, online protection is offered by your child's school, after-school center, friends' homes, or any place



where kids could use a computer without your supervision.

- Take your child seriously if he or she reports an uncomfortable online exchange.

If you're aware of the sending, use, or viewing of child pornography online, call the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at (800) 843-5678 or go online to their CyberTipline. They'll make sure the info is forwarded to law enforcement officials for investigation. Contact your local law enforcement agency or the FBI if your child has received child pornography via the Internet.

Watch for warning signs of a child being targeted by an online predator. These can include:

- Spending long hours online,

especially at night

- Phone calls from people you don't know
- Unsolicited gifts arriving in the mail
- Your child suddenly turning off the computer or other device when you walk into the room
- Withdrawal from family life and reluctance to discuss online activities

Talk to your kids! Keep an open line of communication and make sure that they feel comfortable turning to you when they have problems online.

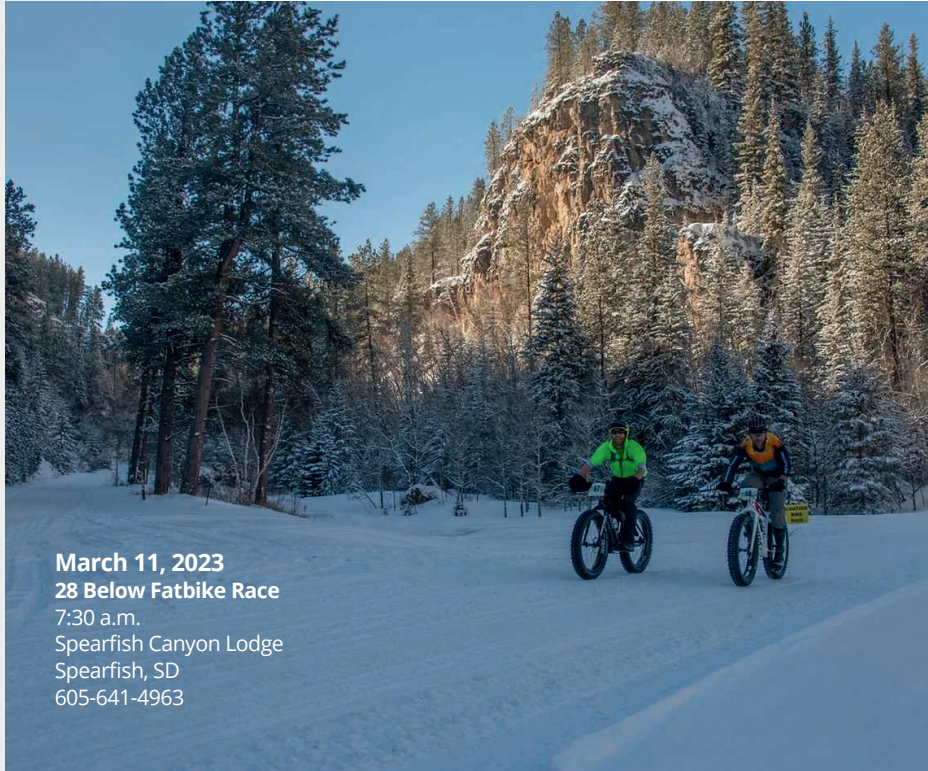
The Internet and Teens

As kids get older, it gets a little trickier to monitor their time spent online. They may carry a smartphone with them at all times. They probably want – and

need – some privacy. This is healthy and normal, as they're becoming more independent from their parents. The Internet can provide a safe "virtual" environment for exploring some newfound freedom if precautions are taken.

Talk about the sites and apps teens use and their online experiences. Discuss the dangers of interacting with strangers online and remind them that people online don't always tell the truth. Explain that passwords are there to protect against things like identity theft. They should never share them with anyone, even a boyfriend, girlfriend, or best friend.

Taking an active role in your kids' online activities helps ensure that they benefit from them without being exposed to the potential dangers.



March 11, 2023
28 Below Fatbike Race
 7:30 a.m.
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge
 Spearfish, SD
 605-641-4963

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.

MARCH 1-7
"In Flanders Fields" Art Exhibit & Silent Auction
 Vermillion Public Library
 Vermillion, SD
 605-658-6654

MARCH 4
Annual Ag Day
 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

MARCH 4
Hill City Arts Council: Live On Stage
 5:30 p.m.
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2810

MARCH 11
28 Below Fatbike Race
 7:30 a.m.
 Spearfish Canyon Lodge
 Spearfish, SD

MARCH 18
Shamrock Shuffle Fun Run
 12 p.m.
 Main Street
 Presho, SD
 605-895-2559

MARCH 18
Shriners Kids Fun Day
 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Scherr-Howe Event Center
 Mobridge, SD
 605-845-2500

MARCH 18
Hill City Arts Council: Live On Stage
 5:30 p.m.
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2810

MARCH 21
Knee High Naturalist: Birds
 Peter Norbeck Outdoor Education Center
 Custer, SD

MARCH 24-25
Schmeckfest
 Freeman Academy Campus
 Freeman, SD
 605-321-7351

MARCH 25-26
Greater Sioux Falls Model Train Show
 Multi-Cultural Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 30
"The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest"
 5:30 p.m.
 South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-339-1203

MARCH 31-APRIL 2
70th Annual Hayes Play: Trouble in Tumbleweed
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD
 605-280-6556

APRIL 1
East Dakota Chapter NWTf 30th Banquet
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-940-0702

APRIL 2-4
"The Psychic-a Murder Mystery of Sorts" Community Theater Performance
 Town Players Theater
 Watertown, SD
 605-882-2076

APRIL 21-22
Junkin' Market Days, Spring Market
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

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