



# Cooperative Connections

**Faulkton mural is  
turning heads**

Pages 8-9

**Co-ops practice  
road safety**

Pages 12-13

The 110-foot mural that towers over the town of Faulkton has attracted attention from across the country



# Beneficial Electrification



**Tim McCarthy, GM/CEO**

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If you're like most Americans, you're interested in saving money on energy costs and in doing your part to help the environment. But wouldn't it be great if you could do both? Well, you can! It's through a concept called "beneficial electrification." This utility industry term means the innovations in energy technologies are creating new ways to use electricity instead of on-site fossil fuels, such as propane, natural gas and fuel oil, in a way that reduces overall emissions and energy costs.

In essence, by virtue of being plugged into the grid, the environmental performance of electric devices improves over time. As Sioux Valley Energy and other utilities shift to more options that include more renewable energy sources to make existing generation technologies cleaner, electricity will require less fossil fuel per kilowatt-hour of energy produced.

So, here's how this concept impacts you. It means that electric appliances such as your water heater, clothes dryer, oven and even your lawn care equipment have the potential to become greener. When Sioux Valley Energy takes advantage of advances in technology and the market at the generation point (how the electricity is produced), it means those efficiencies are inherently passed along to you, the consumer-member.

## Electricity is getting cleaner

Because large appliances have a typical lifespan of about 10 years, it means that you are able to benefit from the flexibility of the grid in addition to the increased efficiency of the particular appliance. In other words, the high efficiency electric oven you have today could be powered by renewable sources in the near future. This would not be the case with gas appliances where you are essentially locked into the technology of that gas appliance for the 10-year lifespan.

As Sioux Valley Energy is able to tap into more renewable options in the future, your electric appliance has the potential to become greener and more energy efficient. The only way you would be able to benefit from this trend is through an electric appliance.

## Small steps to help the environment

For consumers and homeowners looking for more environmentally-friendly options, choosing electric appliances, tools and cars over those powered by fossil fuels is an easy solution. Whether through electric lawn mowers, blowers and weed whackers (plug-in or rechargeable) or through electric water heaters and other appliances, beneficial electrification is a means to reducing greenhouse gases and helping our environment. It can also translate into a better quality of life. For example, when you can trade the loud rumble of a gas-powered mower or blower for the quiet efficiency of electric versions, you eliminate the exhaust emissions and the unpleasant noise.

## How we're doing our part to help the environment

As the overall energy sector continues to evolve, Sioux Valley Energy is striving to take advantage of the advances in technology and the opportunities of the market as they become available. This means Sioux Valley Energy, through its power suppliers, can leverage the flexibility of the grid to offer a wider range of renewable power selections as we continue to bring safe, reliable and affordable power to our community.

We also promote beneficial electrification through programs that incentivize the installation of efficient heat pumps, water heaters, smart thermostats, generators, commercial lighting, electric vehicle chargers and much more! You can find the full listing of our beneficial electrification programs in the 'Energy Solutions' insert that is included in this month's magazine. In addition, through our SmartHub app, we offer our members the convenience and ability to manage and monitor their energy use.

We care about our community because we live here too. I hope you'll reach out to Sioux Valley Energy, your trusted energy partner, to discuss available beneficial electrification programs and to learn about more ways to reduce your energy use. Because when you participate in the energy efficiency programs and incentives we offer, you're doing your part to save energy and better our environment. While each member's reduction might be small, together, they can lead to significant savings of money and emissions. And that means a brighter future for all of us.

# Sioux Valley Energy

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 497-440)

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Sioux Valley Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Rave Uhlich of Garretson High School was the Touchstone Energy® Cooperative Scholar of the Week for Jan. 25.

# Rave Uhlich of Garretson High School Recognized

Rave Uhlich, a student at Garretson High School, has been chosen as a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 'Scholar of the Week.' Uhlich was recognized with a cash award by Sioux Valley Energy and was featured on Dakota News Now for his accomplishments. He is the son of Benjamin and Winter Uhlich of Sherman.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, like Sioux Valley Energy, have joined together with Dakota News Now to recognize the achievements of high school seniors throughout the region. Recipients are highly motivated high school seniors who excel in the classroom and community. This program was founded on the four pillars of Touchstone Energy: Integrity, Accountability, Innovation, and a Commitment to Community.

"Rave is a talented young person who has an extensive list of accomplishments both in and out of the classroom. He is an example of what we need in our future leaders, and we are proud that he was chosen as a Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week," said Tim McCarthy, Sioux Valley Energy General Manager/CEO.

On his nomination form, Garretson School Counselor, Michelle Pliska, listed Uhlich's academic and sports accomplishments but also described his personal attributes which made him worthy of this honor, "He is a natural leader. He is the type of human being that is best captured in person. Every person he interacts with walks away feeling valued and genuinely respected. Rave is kind, empathetic, driven, positive and well balanced. He is welcoming to others and does not pass judgment. I have watched Rave overcome obstacles, all the while balancing a full academic course load, work, and multiple school activities. Besides being a responsible student and a role model, Rave is a joy to work with. Rave possesses good judgment, emotional maturity, and problem-solving skills. This young man is truly a well-rounded individual – bright, fun, skilled communicator and compassionate."

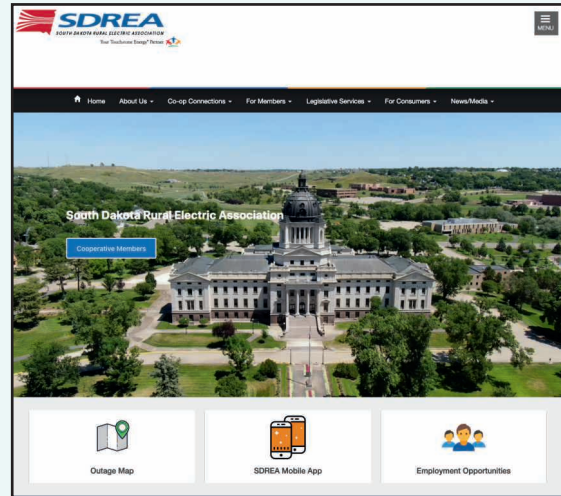
## Five Electrical Dangers in Your Home

Of all the hazards that exist around your home, getting shocked by electricity is one that should not be taken lightly. Depending on the level of electrical current, contact with electricity can result in something as innocuous (but still painful) as a mild shock to more severe injuries like nerve damage and burns. In some circumstances, it can even cause cardiac arrest and death. Here's a list of some of the most common shock risks inside a home.

- **Appliances.** Most shocks from appliances occur when people are trying to repair them. It's not enough to just turn off an appliance before attempting to work on it – you also need to unplug it to reduce risk. Large appliances are responsible for 18 percent of consumer product-related electrical accidents; small appliances account for 12 percent. There's also danger if your appliance comes into contact with water. Many of these hazards can be avoided by using a ground-fault circuit interrupter. A GFCI is a protective device installed on electrical outlets, primarily used where water is present.
- **Ladders.** Typically, ladders present a falling hazard, but 8 percent of consumer product-related electrical shocks were also related to ladders. Electrocutation typically happens when the ladder makes contact with electrical wires. Before you use a ladder, make sure you can clearly see all power lines in the area, including those that may be hidden by tree branches. Ensure that the ladder is at least 10 feet away from them.
- **Power tools.** Power tools account for 9 percent of consumer product-related shocks. When you use power tools that are not double-insulated, are damaged or have damaged cords, you increase your chances of being injured. The chance of danger also increases when you use incompatible cords with power tools, use power tools incorrectly or use them in wet conditions. This is another situation in which GFCIs can help.
- **Electrical outlets and extension cords.** Inserting anything that doesn't belong – screwdrivers, knives, fingers or toy cars - into an electrical outlet can result in a dangerous electrical contact. Use cover plates that fit properly and safety covers on all outlets. By installing tamper-resistant receptacles, outlets will have permanent security against foreign objects being inserted into the slots. Any broken, loose or worn-out plugs, switches and light fixtures should be replaced immediately.

## Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at [www.sdrea.coop](http://www.sdrea.coop). You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Don't hit the pole! Be safe!"**

**Monroe Steiner, 6 years old**

Monroe is the daughter of Brandon and Jen Steiner of Lake City, SD. They are members of Lake Region Electric.

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

# Super Seafood Recipes

## Sheet Pan Fish and Chips

1/4 cup buttermilk	1 tablespoon oil
5 teaspoons OLD BAY® Seasoning, divided	1/4 cup flour
1 pound cod fillets, cut into 4x2-inch pieces	1 egg
2 large russet potatoes, cut into wedges (about 1-1/2 pounds)	1 cup cornflake crumbs
	McCormick® Tartar Sauce

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Mix buttermilk and 1 teaspoon of the OLD BAY in large resealable plastic bag. Add fish, then seal the bag. Refrigerate for 20 minutes. Toss potatoes and oil into large bowl. Sprinkle with another 2 teaspoons of OLD BAY; toss to coat evenly. Spread potatoes in single layer on foil-lined 15x10x1-inch baking pan that has been sprayed with no-stick cooking spray. Bake 25 minutes, turning potatoes halfway through. Remove pan from oven. Push potatoes to outside edge of the pan. Set aside. Place flour in a shallow dish. Beat egg, another 1 teaspoon of OLD BAY and 1 teaspoon water in a separate shallow dish. Mix cornflake crumbs and remaining 1 teaspoon OLD BAY in another shallow dish. Remove fish from the buttermilk mixture, allowing excess to drip off into bag. Coat fish in flour, shaking off excess flour. Dip in egg mixture, then press into the cornflake mixture until evenly coated. Discard any remaining flour, egg and cornflake mixtures. Place fish on a wire rack in center of pan with the potatoes. Bake 15 minutes or until fish is golden brown and flakes easily with a fork and potatoes are tender. Serve fish with potatoes and tartar sauce, if desired.

[www.mccormick.com](http://www.mccormick.com)

## Salmon Cheese Balls

1 16 oz. can of salmon	1 T. salt
8 oz. cream cheese	1 T. lemon juice
1 T. chopped onion	1 T. horseradish

Mix all ingredients together and shape into individual balls. Roll balls in chopped pecans and serve with crackers. Chill before and after shaping into a ball.

**Denene Miles, Doland, SD**

## Shrimp Fettuccine with Pesto

15 extra large shrimp	comes in gluten free variety)
6 cloves of garlic	2-6.7 oz. jars of basil pesto
Extra virgin olive oil	Finely shredded parmesan cheese
12 oz. box of fettuccine (also	

Peel and chop garlic until finely diced. In large saute pan, pour a couple of tbsps. of extra virgin olive oil. Add shrimp (shelled and wiped dry with a paper towel). Cook until orange and slightly browned on each side (2-3 minutes per side). Add garlic and cook until light brown (do not over cook or garlic becomes bitter). Put on plate. Fill saute pan 3/4 full with cold water and bring to a rolling boil. Add entire box of pasta and cook 12 minutes. Stir to make sure pasta has separated. Drain in colander. Put the pasta, shrimp and garlic back into the saute pan. Add two jars of pesto sauce. Cook until heated. When serving, add parmesan cheese on top. Serves 4-6. Shrimp & Garlic with Cocktail Sauce: Prepare shrimp and garlic as directed above. Cool. Serve with cocktail sauce.

**Sue Nipe, Sioux Falls, SD**

## Parmesan Baked Salmon

1/4 c mayo	4 salmon fillets
2 T. Parmesan Cheese	2 t. lemon juice
1/8 t. ground red pepper (cayenne)	10 crackers, crushed

Mix the mayo, cheese and pepper. Place salmon on foil on a cooking sheet. Drizzle with lemon juice. Top with cheese mixture. Sprinkle on cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 for 15 minutes. Then enjoy!

**Julie and Jared Frank, Sioux Falls, SD**

Please send your favorite beverage recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Solutions for Saving Energy



**Sheila Gross**

Energy Services Specialist

Tucked in the center of this month's issue of *Sioux Valley Energy Cooperative Connections*, you'll find the *2021 Energy Solutions* catalog. This handy reference gives an overview of the rebates, incentives, and services we offer to you, our members, as you explore energy-efficient upgrades at your home, farm, or business.

Offering these programs is part of what we do: Serving Our Members. Always.

Among the new offerings are rebates for mini-split heat pumps, which could be a great solution for your heating and cooling needs in an addition or an older home where installing ductwork is a problem. Sioux Valley Energy's rebates and special electric heat rate make choosing electric a great value – and we've increased those incentives for 2021 to make it an even easier choice! So, if it's time to replace your old equipment, consider the fact that it's tough to beat the efficiency of an electric heat pump that not only cools your home in the summer (replaces your central air conditioner) but also heats it in the winter.

Looking to save even more? Check out our time of use rate, which allows you to maximize your savings by shifting the time of day you use energy. Rearranging tasks to off-peak times and conserving energy during on-peak times is good for the member and the utility – we both save money! Smart home automation, like smart thermostats, can help you take advantage of the time of use rate. Make the switch to a smart thermostat and get a \$50 rebate when you sign up to try our three-month risk-free time of use trial. Members on our regular rate program pay 10.26 cents per kWh any time of the day. Members on the time of use rate program pay a reduced rate of 5.84 cents per kWh during off-peak times of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. A higher rate of 16.15 cents per kWh is charged during peak times of 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. (Time of use rates do not affect members' electric heat rate of 6.35 cents per kWh.)

Is a new water heater in your future? We offer two brands of efficient lifetime-tank warranted water heaters – both for just \$400. (Some restrictions apply, so contact us to learn more.)

We're constantly learning and researching new programs and technologies that will benefit you, our members.

This year, we've launched a Beneficial Electrification Department to take a deeper dive into these technologies. We're exploring expansion of electric vehicle charging stations and partnering with area businesses to pilot innovative energy efficiency programs.

Contact us to learn more about these programs or to suggest other areas you'd like us to explore.



## Tell Me More!

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heat Pump Rebate         | <input type="checkbox"/> SmartHub Account Tool     | <input type="checkbox"/> Renewable Energy Credit             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Heat Rate       | <input type="checkbox"/> Smart Thermostat Rebate   | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Saving Tips                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy Audit             | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial/Ag LED Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Interlock Kit/Generator             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loan Program             | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Heat Rebates   | <input type="checkbox"/> Marathon/Westinghouse Water Heaters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Vehicle Program |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time of Use Rate         |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irrigation Rebate        |  |  |

### Please contact me about the topics at left.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this form to: Sioux Valley Energy, PO Box 216, Colman, SD 57017

## SVE Bylaws

### Article IV, Section 5:

# Director Qualifications

**Any member shall be eligible to be nominated or elected or to remain a Director, provided that:** (a) They are a natural person receiving electric service from the Cooperative at their primary residence or meet the qualifications for corporate representation; (b) They have the capacity to enter legally binding contracts; (c) They have been and shall remain a resident of the district for which they are or were nominated or elected for at least one (1) year prior to nomination, and continue to reside therein during their entire term as Director; (d) While a Director and during the five (5) years immediately prior to becoming a Director, they have not been convicted of a felony; (e) They or their spouse are not employed by, materially affiliated with or have a material financial interest in any individual or entity which either is: (i) Directly and substantially competing with the Cooperative, or any of its subsidiaries; or (ii) Selling goods and services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative or its subsidiaries; or having sold goods or services in substantial quantity to the Cooperative or its subsidiaries within three (3) years of seeking nomination. (iii) Possessing a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative or any of its subsidiaries; or (iv) They are not in any way employed by the Cooperative or any of its subsidiaries nor have they been employed by the Cooperative or its subsidiaries within three (3) years of the directors nomination, and (v) They are not a close relative of any existing Director or existing employee of the Cooperative or its subsidiaries. For the purpose of this section only "close relative" shall mean a person who is either a child, grandchild, stepchild, parent, grandparent, stepparent, brother or sister, by blood or in-law, of the principal. (f) A designated representative of any non-human member such as a corporation, shall, notwithstanding that he or she does not receive service from the Cooperative at their primary residential abode, be eligible to become a Director, if: 1) He or she is an officer of said non-human member; and 2) He or she is in substantial permanent occupancy, direction or use of the premises served by the Cooperative; and 3) He or she is a permanent year round resident within the district for which the Corporation or non-human member is receiving service, and 4) Otherwise meets the qualifications set forth herein, provided, however, that no more than one (1) such person as the designated representative may serve on the Board at the same time and in the event that he or she should resign or is unwilling to so act, the directorship shall become vacant.

# 2021 Meetings Scheduled for Three Director Districts

This year, as Sioux Valley Energy and others continue to adapt to restrictions made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, district meetings will be held only for the three districts with director elections scheduled:

- May 10 – District 3 meeting, Flandreau, S.D.
- May 11 – District 1 meeting, Elkton, S.D.
- May 13 – District 8 meeting, Luverne, Minn.

Look for more information on these meetings in the April issue of *Sioux Valley Energy Cooperative Connections*.

## Notice of Director Petition Deadline

### What is the time commitment of being a Director?

*The Board meets once a month for regular meetings. These meetings generally last an average of six hours and are held on a weekday during business hours. Directors are sometimes also required to take part in special meetings and other co-op events. In addition, directors put in extra hours of preparation and research each month prior to the Board meeting. In total, our directors estimate they spend between 20-30 hours a month on Sioux Valley Energy business.*

**Can I run for the Board if I don't have any background in electric utilities?** *Most directors do not have a background in electric utilities. Current director careers range from military service to farming to business ownership.*

Members who are interested in running for a board seat must submit a nominating petition at least 60 days prior to the meeting in their respective district.

### 2021 Petition Deadlines:

**District 3: March 11**  
**District 1: March 12**  
**District 8: March 14**

Incumbent District 1 Director, Don DeGreef, and incumbent District 8 Director, Dan Leuthold, are planning to seek re-election for another three-year term in their respective districts.

District 3 incumbent Director, Bruce Martinson, has chosen to not seek re-election in 2021 which will create a vacancy on the Board of Directors for District 3.

Petitions must be received at the Colman Headquarters or other SVE service center by the above dates. To ensure timely receipt, members may consider delivering the petition to a SVE office, placing it in the drop box located in the entryway or submitting an electronic (online) petition. If you would like an electronic (online) petition, please contact Sioux Valley Energy.

Members who are interested in running for the Board of Directors are encouraged to contact Brenda Schelhaas, Executive Assistant, at 800-234-1960.

**Questions? Give us a call at 800-234-1960!**



The mural in Faulkton is a prominent feature in the town. Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.

# EYE-POPPING APPEAL

## Faulkton Mural Attracts Attention from Far and Near

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sirea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sirea.coop)

The story of how the small town of Faulkton became an attraction for art aficionados far and near actually begins on another continent many years ago.

Today, Faulkton is home to an imposing 110-foot mural displayed on three sides of an Agtegra grain elevator, the town's most prominent structure. Visible from long distances on Hwy. 212, the mural depicts a boy and girl and several wide-brimmed hats blowing between them in the prairie wind. While the meaning of the mural is open to as many interpretations as there are viewers, the intriguing story of how the artwork came into existence is a "10 beer tale," according to Dave Hedt, the community leader who initiated the project.

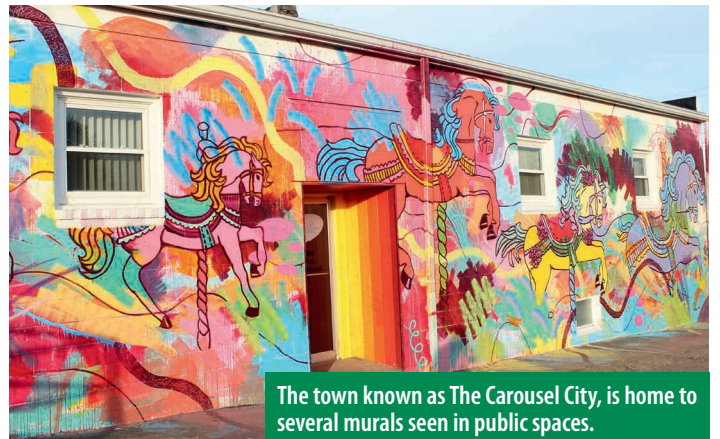
A native of Australia, the mate known among the locals as "Aussie Dave" was nursing a "frothy" in a bar in Melbourne when he encountered a chap from Faulkton who happened to be in Melbourne on business. He and Craig Mutsch struck up a conversation during that chance encounter in 1998 and kept in regular contact until 2013 when Hedt decided to relocate to South Dakota on a permanent basis.

Hedt went to work for Mutsch in the beginning before eventually setting down roots in Faulkton. He later married a gal from Harrold, became a regular at Lakeside Golf Club, built a retail strip center along the highway across from the Agtegra elevator and established several businesses in the quiet town.

The idea of creating the mural is actually credited to Hedt's father, who was visiting his son one day in 2015: "He was here and we were driving into town and he saw the grain elevator. He said, 'Hey, why don't you call Guido about painting a mural on that.' Right away I thought it was a great idea," Aussie Dave recalled.

In this case, Guido is the internationally renowned photographer and visual artist Guido Van Helten, who had painted a highly acclaimed mural on the side of a set of grain silos in Brim, Australia, not far from Hedt's home town of Dimboola.

"That mural had such a positive impact on the community, I knew it would get the same kind of response here and create the



The town known as The Carousel City, is home to several murals seen in public spaces.



## Faulkton Mural Fast Facts

- The mural stands 110 feet high
- The project took seven weeks to complete
- Artist Guido Van Helton has done similar projects all around the world
- Local residents donated their time and labor to prepare the grain elevator for painting

same kind of excitement, for the town,” Hedt said.

He got in touch with the artist, who didn’t hesitate to take on the project. Van Helten visited Faulkton several times conducting preliminary work before taking his brushes in hand. As he’d done with previous similar projects, Van Helten spent time getting involved in community events and getting to know the residents of The Carousel City. He was hosted by a local family and tried to capture the ambiance of the town to inspire the visual and thematic elements of his work.

He received tremendous support from the community as folks chipped in to help the project financially and also contributed some “sweat equity” by scraping, cleaning and pressure-washing the elevator’s concrete surface in preparation for Van Helten’s artistic touch.

Grant funding was received from the South Dakota Arts Council and other non-profit groups, while the balance of the funds were raised privately through sponsorships and contributions from local businesses. Hedt is quick to point out no taxpayer money was used. For its part, Agtegra was quickly sold on the idea as plans were to eventually take the elevator out of service and move the operation to another site east of town.

As for what would ultimately appear on the side of the elevator, the residents were lending their support without knowing how the project would actually turn out. They figured they could always paint over it if they felt the mural’s theme wasn’t congruent with the town’s self-image.



Artist Guido Van Helton spent several weeks in Faulkton getting to know the local residents and getting a sense of the town’s spirit before he started painting.

“Guido kind of kept that a secret,” Hedt said. “He wanted it to be a surprise, but knew from the other things he’d done that it would be spectacular and something that we would all be proud of. He always paints what he feels is reflective of the town and the people.”

After the surface was prepared, it took several weeks for Van Helten to complete the painting while working suspended beside the large concrete canvas. The painting was unveiled on Sept. 1, 2018. Hedt said the result of the project has brought more positive results than anyone in the town could have anticipated.

“In terms of the financial impact, it’s just unbelievable the traffic we get through the town,” he said. “We had a woman from Washington state fly all the way here just to see it.”

Dawn Melius is owner of a local insurance agency and has been involved in the project since the beginning. She said the mural has brought a unique and welcomed vibrancy to the community.

“It’s such a great work of art, and people can interpret it however they want. That’s part of the fun of it and the attraction of it. It’s such an amazing project and it has brought a lot of interest to the town. Of course, once people are drawn here by the mural and they stop and spend some time around town, they like what they see and they have a real positive experience.”

Find an aerial video of the mural by visiting the Cooperative Connections Plus YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/n2gEDAltHMk>. Find out more about Van Helten at [www.guidovanhelten.com](http://www.guidovanhelten.com).



# SHORT-CIRCUITING THIEVES

Would-be criminals are targeting utility users, including members of Sioux Valley Energy. The tactics change from time-to-time, but their aim is the same: to con their victims out of their hard-earned money with ominous threats.

Savvy co-op members are pulling the plug on these scams. A common scheme used is to call a potential victim and claim to be from the electric company. (In some cases, we know of Sioux Valley Energy members who were called and told that they were behind on their bill with a neighboring investor-owned utility. This was a huge warning flag for the members.)

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission notes that scammers typically use phone, in-person, and online tactics to target customers. In many cases, the caller will pose as utility company personnel and use false threats to persuade consumers to provide payment or personal identification information.

“Scammers posing as utility company personnel typically threaten service disconnection or a financial penalty hoping to make the target panic and react in haste. That’s why we tell South Dakotans to identify threatening language and an urgent need for action as warning signs,” said PUC commissioner Gary Hanson. “The way a payment is requested can be another red flag. No legitimate utility company will insist on immediate payment specifically through pre-paid debit cards or other untraceable methods,” he continued.

When it came to scam calls in the past, the most vulnerable groups were usually older and known to be less tech-savvy. While these groups are still vulnerable, the development of new, more sophisticated scams have changed the risk outlook in recent years. According to the Federal Trade Commission, in 2019, millennials in their 20s and 30s were 25% more likely to report losing money to fraud than those 40 or older.

“The PUC wants to help South Dakotans protect their information, assets and identities. Learning to identify signs of a scam call and react appropriately are the first two steps to ensuring that you and your loved ones don’t fall victim to scammers. If you receive a suspicious phone call, hang up and contact your utility company using the phone number found on your utility bill. The company can verify if the call was legitimate and advise

other customers not to fall for the same scheme,” stated Vice Chairman Chris Nelson.

Scam calls can come in many shapes and sizes. Some versions have been around for years, but other newer versions may be more difficult to identify.

Callers posing as tech support, claiming you’ve overpaid your

utility bill, offering to restore power more quickly following a big storm and contacting you through text or SMS messages that you never signed up for are all common scams to be aware of.

“Telephone scammers are criminals who want to defraud and trick consumers. Unfortunately, they’re also very difficult to catch. That’s why, when it comes to avoiding scams, knowledge is power. Educating yourself about scam calls happening in your area, identifying resources available to you, and understanding how you should respond to a call if you receive one are great steps to take now,” said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

Find more information about avoiding telephone scams on the PUC’s website at [www.puc.sd.gov/scamcalls](http://www.puc.sd.gov/scamcalls).

Additionally, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission warns consumers to be aware of spoofing, a tactic where a scammer falsifies their caller-ID to make it appear that the call originates from the utility company or other entity. For more information, go to <https://mn.gov/puc/newsroom/?id=14-370222>

Elsewhere, an Indiana cooperative reports that its members have been receiving letters that appear to be sent from the cooperative asking members to call a number to provide personal information. If you are ever in doubt if a phone call or a written communication is from Sioux Valley Energy, always call the Cooperative’s Member Services department at 877-511-8062 to confirm.

## DISCONNECTION DECEPTION

Scammers call and threaten service disconnection, demanding immediate payment.



## SMISHING

Scammers attempt smishing (short for SMS phishing) to trick mobile phone users into sharing personal information.



## OVERPAYMENT TRICK

Scammers call claiming you overpaid your bill, asking for your personal banking information.



## BOGUS BILLS

Scammers send suspicious emails that include a bill that appears to be from us. Never open these attachments or click links in suspicious emails.



**If someone calls demanding immediate payment, hang up and call Sioux Valley Energy at 877-511-8062.**



Troy Ziebart, line foreman at Douglas Electric in Armour, loads up his vehicle before hitting the road to perform maintenance work on the co-op's system. Photo by Billy Gibson.

# On the Road Again

## Cooperative crews log millions of safe miles each year

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Some people follow their instincts to run away from emergency situations, others are obligated to steer towards them.

South Dakota's electric cooperative linemen often find themselves headed toward the site of potentially hazardous predicaments, whether it's simply answering an emergency outage call or engaging in rebuilding many miles of poles and lines in the most austere conditions in the aftermath of a major storm.

In any event, the first task for linemen is to arrive at the scene and make the return trip to co-op headquarters with themselves and their vehicles all in one piece. Many cooperative consumers are unaware of the fact that co-op linemen in South Dakota collectively log more than 8 million miles on the road each year taking care of maintenance projects, installing equipment, performing public service work, answering outage calls or other daily duties.

That figure includes those instances when linemen are called upon to drive long

distances across state lines to assist other fellow cooperatives restore power after a natural disaster, which raises the potential risk for accidents.

Compared to the amount of time and number of miles they travel on a routine basis, cooperative linemen have an impressive track record of operating their vehicles without incident and without harm to either themselves or the motoring public.

According to Mark Patterson, manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre, safe operating practices do much more than just save lives and property; they also keep insurance premiums down and help control the cost of fleet maintenance.

“Safety is such an important aspect of what we do as electric cooperatives, and it takes on many dimensions,” Patterson said. “We often think of safety as adopting prudent practices when it comes to working in close proximity to different equipment such as power lines, transformers and substations. But it also includes other aspects such as safety in the workplace,

emergency preparedness, handling hazardous materials and knowing how important it is to be safe out on the road every time we leave the back shop and pull out of the gate.”

As with many aspects of their operations, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are using the power of computer software and advanced technology to promote safety on the road. Many co-ops use software programs such as NexTraq, which processes and provides a wealth of information to help maintenance managers keep records on vehicle tracking and telemetry, fuel use and efficiency, service scheduling, driver performance, job completion and more.

These systems deliver real-time data not only on vehicle speed, heading, location, etc., but they also indicate where each vehicle is positioned at any given moment within the service territory so that supervisors can more effectively and efficiently coordinate movements of various crews throughout the system and throughout the work day.

“Linemen from the old days would be amazed at the advanced technology we



Cooperative linemen log thousands of hours on the road but sometimes find themselves having to take their vehicles off the paved surfaces. *Aerial photography by Billy Gibson.*

now have at our disposal,” Patterson said. “And it’s not just things like hydraulics and buckets and all the equipment we use today, but also the computer-based tools we have to help us do our jobs better. It all adds up to making the best use of the members’ resources and ultimately making sure the electricity we deliver is as affordable as possible. Members can count on the fact that cooperatives are trusted stewards of their resources and we’re doing everything we can to keep costs low.”

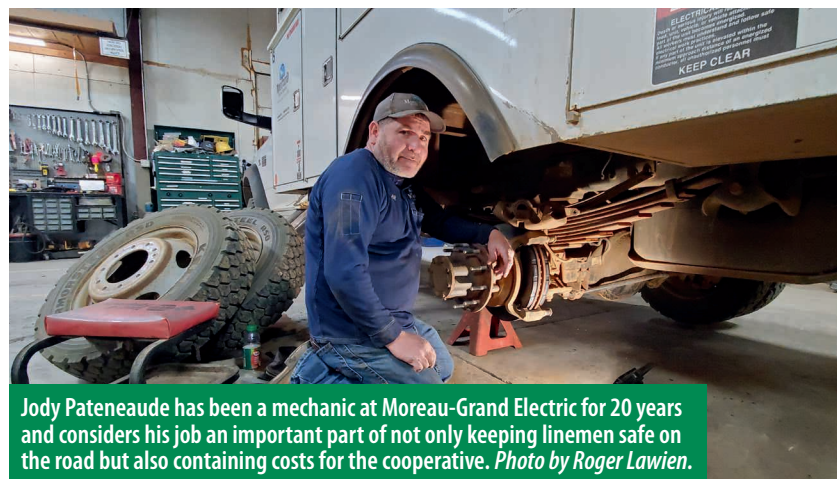
One of those mechanics who remembers the “old days” is Jody Pateneau, who has kept watch over the vehicle fleet at Moreau-Grand Electric for the past 20 years. Pateneau, who notes that linemen are required to carry a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and that he has one himself, said fleet maintenance was more of an art in the past.

“We kept records as well as we could, but we would just kind of know when parts or brakes or oil needed to be changed

and what needed to be done,” he said. “But with the new technology, we know what needs to be taken care of a long time before the guys driving the vehicle know. Our job is to make sure there are no break-downs when our guys get out there and that no one is in danger, and the computer helps us accomplish that goal.”

Patterson pointed out that the public also plays a role in making sure cooperative linemen and their vehicles stay accident-free. He said every year linemen and other utility workers across the country are severely injured or killed either in their vehicles or in their work sites.

“We should all be more aware of emergency workers who perform their jobs along roadsides or other places where traffic is present,” Patterson said. “We always remind the public to ‘slow down and move over’ when they see a work area or utility vehicle nearby. It’s not only good, sound advice, but it’s also the law in the state of South Dakota.”



Jody Pateneau has been a mechanic at Moreau-Grand Electric for 20 years and considers his job an important part of not only keeping linemen safe on the road but also containing costs for the cooperative. *Photo by Roger Lawien.*

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



Call Sioux Valley Energy at 800-234-1960 to learn more about solar installation.

## Ten considerations when **INSTALLING SOLAR**

As prices decline and technology improves, installing a residential solar system—also called a photo-voltaic or PV system—makes sense for some consumers. However, even with these recent improvements in PV, it's important to find out the facts before committing to a purchase. Consider these points as you explore whether solar is right for your situation.

### ■ **MAKE YOUR HOME MORE ENERGY EFFICIENT BEFORE BUYING A SOLAR SYSTEM.**

Adding insulation, sealing air leaks, and completing other basic fix-it projects make sense for several reasons. You can cut your energy costs immediately, and you'll also be able to reduce the size of PV system you purchase.

### ■ **RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH, BEFORE INVESTING IN A SOLAR SYSTEM.**

Sioux Valley Energy should be one of your first contacts. Experts at your co-op can answer basic questions, provide resource materials, direct you to reputable websites, and might also maintain a list of reputable contractors and other experts in your region.

### ■ **UNDERSTAND HOW A SOLAR SYSTEM MESHES WITH YOUR COOPERATIVE'S SYSTEM.**

Most solar systems are designed to provide you with a portion of the electricity needed, but won't provide 100 percent of your needs. At night and on cloudy days, and possibly at other high-energy-use times, you'll need more power than your PV system can produce.

That means you'll still be connected to your cooperative's power lines. Because these systems are grid-connected, energy can flow both ways. As you begin to explore solar systems, be sure you ask Sioux Valley Energy experts about rate structures, interconnection, essential safety precautions, and any other connection-related details.

### ■ **REVIEW YOUR CURRENT ENERGY USE SO YOU CAN DETERMINE WHAT SIZE PV SYSTEM TO INSTALL.**

Your electric cooperative staff can help you review your past energy use, and help you determine how the projects you've undertaken to improve energy efficiency may help lower your future energy use. One pertinent bit of information that will be useful is looking at how your energy use fluctuates throughout

the day. Having that information will help you determine – with expert assistance – the size and type of system best suited to your situation.

### ■ **TALLY UPFRONT COSTS.**

If you purchase a solar system, you will be the owner, and you'll be responsible for the purchase price, as well as ongoing maintenance and repair costs. If leasing is the option you prefer, you will pay less initially, but you'll likely have higher ongoing costs. In either case, it pays to spend time figuring out all of the expenses you'll be responsible for during the life of the system. These may include: installation (in addition to the price of the system), interconnection costs, insurance, taxes, and possibly others, too. If you are leasing, ask contractors about the length of the term, if the contract is transferable to a new homeowner should you sell your home, potential for price increases, as well as the same questions you'd ask if you were to purchase a PV system. In the "credit" column of your price comparisons, look at any incentives, rebates, and tax credits offered for either a purchase or a lease.

### ■ **SEARCH FOR INCENTIVES, REBATES, AND TAX CREDITS.**

Any financial incentives available will help reduce your investment costs. Opportunities vary by state and locale, and many have expiration dates. One database offering details is [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org). This site includes a clickable, interactive map, showing federal and state incentives, credits, exemptions, grants, loans, and rebates for residential and commercial/industrial projects. In addition, your electric cooperative staff and your contractor should have up-to-date details about incentives available where you live.

### ■ **ACCEPT SHORT- AND LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES.**

If you purchase a PV system, you'll need to meet the requirements of your electric cooperative's interconnection agreement. That includes paying any costs of connecting to the cooperative grid. Local and/or state officials are responsible for conducting safety inspections, but it's your responsibility to notify them in advance about your installation. After the interconnection requirements are met, and the safety

## Generator Safety

The peace of mind a standby electric generator brings to your home, farm or business is big. It's nice to have a backup plan to keep things running through unpredictable weather and occasional outages. But with big peace of mind comes big responsibility.

- **TELL US.** First things first, let us know if you're installing a generator. Call Sioux Valley Energy at 800-234-1960 to notify us. The Cooperative also offers generator services if you need assistance. It's important that we update your account and are aware of all generators in the area. This keeps our linemen safe during outages.
- **DANGERS OF BACKFEEDING.** The generator must be properly installed, by a licensed electrician, using a transfer switch. A connection without the correct type of switch can cause backfeeding on the utility system. A backfeed creates a dangerous situation, which can be deadly to you and/or linemen. When backfeed enters a power line from a generator it can create an energized line. If a lineman expects the line to be de-energized due to an outage situation, but it's not de-energized because of your generator, it could create a life-threatening situation.
- **BE AWARE OF CARBON MONOXIDE.** Never operate generators in enclosed buildings. Be sure your generator is vented and has enough air to be safe. Carbon monoxide emissions can build up quickly and can be deadly.
- **FUEL SAFETY.** Whether propane, gasoline or diesel, be sure generator fuel is stored correctly in approved containers. Never refuel while the generator is running or still hot.
- **DISCONNECT FROM MAIN SOURCE.** Always power down and disconnect from your utility service, using an approved transfer switch, before starting your backup generator.
- **GIVE IT A BREAK.** Manage the use of your generator during outages to save on fuel. It helps you be more energy efficient and keeps your generator in good running order. If the power is out for an extended period of time, use the generator to run the refrigerator every few hours so it stays cool enough for food without taking up constant energy. Giving the generator breaks is important. Most portable generators are not equipped to run around the clock. Be sure to shut it down and let it cool off.

**Sioux Valley Energy is now offering services of installing interlock kits and Kohler standby generators to give you peace of mind for Mother Nature's temperament. Here are our programs and services:**

- **Interlock Kit:** One of the simplest and least expensive methods of readying your home for the connections of a portable generator is to install an interlock kit in the main electrical panel and a permanently installed generator inlet on the outside of your home. By feeding your entire electrical panel with the generator you will not have to run any extension cords from the generator throughout the house. Most interlock kits can be installed for less than \$500.
- **Kohler Standby Generator:** A permanently installed standby generator keeps your power on during an outage. It's installed outside (like an AC unit) and comes on automatically – whether you are home or away – all within seconds of a power outage. The Kohler standby units come in a range of sizes from 10 KW to 20 KW. Loans are available up to \$10,000, 5% interest with a 7-year term for the purchase and installation of standby generator equipment by the Cooperative.

**Call us at 800-234-1960 for more information or go online at <https://www.siouxvalleyenergy.com/my-programs/rebates>.**

and integrity of your system are approved, your cooperative will take care of the connection to the grid. And, as the owner of the system, you'll be responsible for maintenance.

### ■ FOLLOW ALL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS.

Most solar systems are grid-connected. Because of the two-way flow of electricity, excess energy your PV system collects during the daytime flows into your cooperative's lines. This shoulders you with the responsibility for the safety of your cooperative line staff, others who may come in contact with a downed power line, and your cooperative's equipment. Improper connection and maintenance of your system may endanger people and the reliability of the grid.

### ■ CHOOSE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR/INSTALLER.

Start with a list of options garnered from website research, your electric cooperative, local or state Better Business Bureaus, renewable energy associations, your state energy office, your state Attorney General's office, extension service staff, and any other local experts you can call on for assistance and advice. Contact at least a few of those contractors appearing on your list, especially if recommended by multiple state and local experts. Cut back your list after asking many questions checking out other installations the contractor has completed, comparing bids (get at least three), checking references, and thoroughly examining contracts. If possible, ask a contract specialist or lawyer to review the contract before signing.

### ■ MAINTAIN GOOD RECORDS.

Keep files on your pre-purchase research and pre-installation data provided by your cooperative, as well as bids, contracts, inspection reports, maintenance records, and all other details you may need to refer to in the future. In addition, you'll want to know about system performance, so set up a system to track and compare your actual system performance with predictions provided by the contractor/installer.

Sioux Valley Energy can help you through the solar installation process, call Reggie at 800-234-1960 to learn more or visit <https://www.siouxvalleyenergy.com/my-electricity/renewable-energy>.

**Source:** Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives



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

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**February 18-25**

Twelfth Annual Black Hills Film Festival, Virtual  
605-574-9454

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**February 20**

Family Gras, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-367-6000

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**February 20-27**

SD State High School Wrestling Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

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**February 25**

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live: Neighbor Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-367-6000

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**February 27**

Nemo 500 Outhouse Races Nemo Guest Ranch, Nemo, SD  
605-578-2708

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**March 5-6**

SD High School State Debate & IE Tournament, Central High School, Aberdeen, SD

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**March 5-7**

BH Rapid's President's Cup 2021, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD 605-394-4115

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**March 11-14**

Team 8-Ball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Rushmore Hall, Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4115

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**March 12-13**

St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976



St. Patrick's Day Weekend, Mar. 12-13, 2021

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**March 13**

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride and Tour, Spearfish Canyon Lodge, Lead, SD  
605-641-4963

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**March 13**

St. Patrick's Day Celebration, Knights of Columbus Hall, Watertown, SD  
605-886-5814

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**March 13-14**

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun Show, American Legion Hall, Philip, SD  
605-859-2280

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**March 19-20**

Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6000

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**March 23-24**

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center Fine Arts Theatre, Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4115

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**March 25**

A Lakota View of the Dead Hills, Homestake Adams Research and Cultural Center, Deadwood, SD  
605-722-4800

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**March 27**

SD State High School All-State Band Concert, Mitchell Fine Arts Center, Mitchell, SD

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**April 8**

The Wildest Banquet Auction in the Midwest, Sioux Falls Arena/Virtual, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-339-1203

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**April 9-10**

Forks, Corks and Kegs Food, Wine and Beer Festival, Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

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**April 9-18**

Four Weddings & An Elvis, Mitchell Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD  
605-996-9137

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**April 17**

Winefest Renaissance, Boys and Girls Club of Aberdeen Area, Aberdeen, SD  
605-225-8714

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**April 23-24**

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

**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.**