



## Cooperative Connections



**Electric Co-op  
Leaders Get  
Involved  
Locally**

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**Rounding Up  
for a Cause**

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## Elections to take place at District Meetings

# Member-Owners Get a Vote



**Tim McCarthy, GM/CEO**

[tim.mccarthy@siouxvalleyenergy.com](mailto:tim.mccarthy@siouxvalleyenergy.com)

**Very few corporations** provide the end user the opportunity to be involved or have a say in its leadership or governance. Those end use customers don't get to vote on Board representation—they simply buy the product and hope the organization is being run ethically and efficiently. Electric cooperatives are different. The end use customer of a co-op is a member-owner. They own a piece of the business. Members can run for the Board, vote on representation, bring forward bylaw amendments and vote on those amendments. That's because co-ops were built on seven principles—one of which is democratic member control.

In the coming weeks and months, you will be invited to attend your district meeting. At the core of the meetings are elections, where you will be able to vote for a fellow member to serve as your representative on the Sioux Valley Energy Board. This is a right that you are afforded because you are a member. There will be six elections this year, which is more than usual. The Board made the decision to stagger terms so there would be more continuity when a director decides to retire or is defeated, and a new director is elected. Typically, Board terms are three-years, but there is a portion of the districts which will elect a director for a two-year term which will help with the staggering process.

Two of our Directors have decided to retire from the Board. Henning Hansen has represented District 1 (Eastern Brookings County) for 20 years. Arlyn Zylstra, of rural Edgerton, served on the Board for 13 years representing District 10 (Southern end of Pipestone County and the Northern part of Rock County). Only one candidate, Donald DeGreef, filed a petition to run for Hansen's vacant seat but there will be a contested election to fill Zylstra's seat— Lucas Roskamp and Leon Spronk both submitted valid petitions. You can read their bios on page 7. Directors Hansen and Zylstra have been valuable members of the Board for many years and will be missed. However, we are excited to welcome new leadership to the Cooperative as well!

There will also be elections in districts 2, 3, 4 and 6. These are not contested elections as only incumbent directors filed petitions to run for the Board. I encourage you to attend your district meeting and take part in the democratic process. The people you elect have significant responsibilities to the Cooperative and its members. They are responsible for setting rates, hiring the CEO, establishing policy and developing strategy for the Cooperative.

In addition to the elections, we will provide you a preview of the rate forecast, discuss how demand impacts the Cooperative's power bill and talk about some of our new Energy Service programs including electric vehicle incentives and rates. You can find a schedule of the meetings on page 3. A postcard will also be sent to you informing you of the date, location and time for your respective meeting. Members are invited to attend any of the meetings but to be eligible to vote, you must be a member within that specific district. We hope to see you in the coming weeks at the 2019 Sioux Valley Energy District Meetings!

# Sioux Valley Energy

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 497-440)

**General Manager/CEO:** Tim McCarthy

**Editor:** Carrie Vugteveen

### Board of Directors

#### President:

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#### Vice President:

Gary Fish, Brandon, S.D.

**Secretary:** Allan Kooima, Volga, S.D.

**Treasurer:** Arlyn Zylstra, Jasper, Minn.

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Bruce Martinson, Jasper, Minn.

Gregg Johnson, Pipestone, Minn.

Rodney DeMent, Humboldt, S.D.

Dave Daniel, Wentworth, S.D.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
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Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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**SIoux VALLEY ENERGY**  
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## Sioux Valley Energy 2019 District Meetings

### **\*All Members Welcome\***

Complimentary Meal: 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.  
Meeting: 7:00 p.m.

Menu: Turkey, dressing, mash potatoes and gravy, green beans and cookie



### **Thursday, February 21**

District 8- Location: Grand Prairie Event Center, **Luverne, MN**

### **\*\*Monday, February 25**

District 6- Location: Brandon Valley High School, **Brandon, SD**

### **Thursday, February 28**

District 9- Location: Pipestone High School, **Pipestone, MN**

### **Monday, March 4**

District 5- Location: Tri-Valley School, **Colton, SD**

### **\*\*Tuesday, March 19**

District 1- Location: Elkton Community Center, **Elkton, SD**

### **\*\*Thursday, March 21**

District 10- Location: Edgerton Public School, **Edgerton, MN**

### **\*\*Monday, March 25**

District 2- Location: Sioux Valley School, **Volga, SD**

### **\*\*Tuesday, March 26**

District 3- Location: William J. Janklow Community Center, **Flandreau, SD**

### **Thursday, March 28**

District 7- Location: West Central School, **Hartford, SD**

### **\*\*Monday, April 1**

District 4- Location: Madison High School Commons, **Madison, SD**

**\*\*Denotes Election Meetings**

## Protecting Your Home and Business

Every year, electrical equipment, wiring, appliances and tools cause injuries and fires at both homes and workplaces. Paying close attention to the condition of electrical equipment and taking appropriate and prompt action to correct electrical problems can help to ensure your safety and the safety of those around you. Below are guidelines to help identify and reduce electrical hazards.

### Electrical Outlet Safety

- Avoid overloading outlets with too many appliances and ensure that electrical loads are appropriate for the circuits.
- Unplug appliances when they are not in use to conserve energy as well as minimize the opportunities for electric shock or fire.
- Use outlets instead of relying on extension cords and power strips. Consider having additional permanent outlets installed where needed.
- Use Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) in wet/damp areas like kitchens, bathrooms and outdoors.



### Electrical Cord Safety

- Inspect electrical cords to ensure that they are not frayed, cracked or damaged.
- Do not place electrical cords in high traffic areas, under carpets or across doorways where they pose a potential tripping hazard or could be easily damaged.

### Certification and Awareness

- Ensure that all electrical products and equipment are certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and read the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Allow only trained and qualified electrical workers to perform work on electrical equipment.
- Be aware of signs of electrical problems such as flickering lights and/or buzzing, sizzling or humming sounds from electrical systems.

Source: [www.acadiainsurance.com](http://www.acadiainsurance.com)

## Ladder Safety and How It Affects Everyone

THE NUMBERS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES



**ladder injuries** every day\*



**deaths** caused by falls each year\*



The **most common ladder falls** happen between 6 and 10 feet off the ground

WHETHER YOU'RE USING A LADDER AT HOME OR AT WORK, THESE NUMBERS AFFECT YOU.

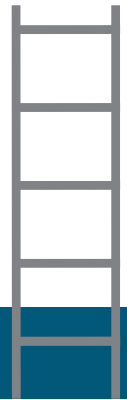
**2** most **common ladder accidents** include\*\*:

1. **Missing the last step when climbing down**
2. **Overreaching**

\*\*National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS) 2017 Data Highlights\*, 2017, CPSC

\*\*\*ALI Ladder Safety Training and Citation Report\* - United States, 2018, American Ladder Institute

Take safety into your own hands by taking ladder safety seriously. Visit [www.LadderSafetyMonth.com](http://www.LadderSafetyMonth.com) to learn more.



National Ladder Safety Month is presented by



Thank you to our Top Cap sponsor



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Be careful with farm equipment around power lines."**

**Carson Lee**, 10 years old

Carson is the son of Chris and Marisa Lee, Fairfax, Minn. They are members of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, Danube, Minn.

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 Sensations

## Clam Chowder Dip

- 2 slices bacon, chopped
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 pkg. McCormick® Original Country Gravy Mix
- 1-1/2 cups milk
- 1 cup shredded white Cheddar cheese, divided
- 1 (6.5 oz.) can chopped clams, drained
- 2 tsp. McCormick® Parsley Flakes

Cook bacon in large skillet on medium-high heat until crisp. Remove bacon, reserving drippings in pan. Add onion; cook and stir 2 to 3 minutes or until translucent. Stir in gravy mix, milk and 1/2 cup shredded cheese. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes or until gravy starts to thicken. Remove from heat. Stir in clams. Pour into 9-inch glass pie plate. Sprinkle with remaining 1/2 cup cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted. Sprinkle with bacon and parsley. Serve with toasted baguette slices or crackers. Makes 12 servings.

*Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 94, Total Fat 6g, Saturated Fat 3g, Protein 4g, Cholesterol 9mg, Sodium 278mg, Fiber 1g, Carbohydrates 6g,*

**Pictured, Cooperative Connections**

## Shrimp Lover Squares

- 1 (8. oz) tube refrigerated crescent rolls
- 1 (8. oz) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 tsp. dill weed
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup seafood sauce
- 24 medium shrimp, cooked
- 1/2 cup chopped green pepper
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese

In a greased 9x13-inch pan, unroll the crescent dough; seal seams. Bake at 375°F. for 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely on a wire rack. In a small mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sour cream, dill weed and salt until smooth. Spread over crust. Top with seafood sauce, shrimp, green pepper, onion and cheese. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. Cut into squares. Makes 2 dozen.

**Becki Hauser, Tripp, SD**

## Crab Quiche

- 4 beaten eggs
- 3/4 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground thyme
- 1 T. diced pimento
- 1-1/2 cups chopped broccoli
- 1 cup chopped imitation crab
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 2 T. minced onion
- 1 unbaked 10-inch pie shell

Mix together first 5 ingredients; set aside. Combine broccoli, crab, cheeses and onion; spread in piecrust. Pour liquid mixture over all. Bake at 350°F. for 50 to 55 minutes. Let cool 10 to 15 minutes before cutting.

**Barbara Angerhofer, Hendricks, MN**

## Tilapia Parmesan

- 2 lbs. tilapia fillets
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 T. mayonnaise
- 4 T. butter, room temperature
- 3 T. finely chopped onions
- 1/4 tsp. dried basil

In a buttered 9x13-inch baking dish, lay fish fillets in a single layer. Do not stack fillets. Brush with juice. Bake at 350°F. for 10 to 20 minutes or until fish flakes. Meanwhile, combine cheese, mayonnaise, butter, onions and basil. Spread cheese mixture on fish fillets and bake an additional 5 minutes or until golden brown.

**Cortney Reedy, Tea, SD**

Please send your favorite appetizer, beverage, casserole or dairy recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3).

Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2019. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and co-op name.

# QUARTERLY CHALLENGE TO SAVE MONEY AND WIN BIG!

## You Could be a Winner!

Watch for our quarterly Energy Makeover Contest to have chances to win valuable prizes to enhance efficiency and conservation efforts in your home or business. Learn how little changes can help you save big!

The information gathered will help Sioux Valley Energy continue to educate our members about energy saving practices, safety, and to ensure the programs we offer meet your needs.

- Enter for a chance to win a programmable/smart thermostat including installation and programming from a contractor of your choice up to a \$600 value.

Please complete the entry below and mail to Sioux Valley Energy, Energy Makeover Contest, PO Box 216, Colman, SD 57017. The entry is also available online at [www.siouxvalleyenergy.com](http://www.siouxvalleyenergy.com). One entry per member. *Entries must be received by March 31, 2019.*

## Take Control of Your Savings!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Account Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### I would like more information on:

- Heat Pump Rebate  Electric Heat Rebate  
 Marathon/Westinghouse Water Heaters  
 Energy Audit  Weatherization Program  
 Electric Vehicle Program rebate  
 Time of Use Rate  SmartHub Program  Yard Light Rebate  Commercial/Ag LED Program  
 Irrigation Rebate  Renewable Energy Program  Energy Saving Tips

### CHALLENGE - FIRST QUARTER

## TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR SAVINGS

**Did you know that heating and cooling accounts for about half of your energy dollars?**

Using smart control technology and adjusting your thermostat is one way to reduce your heating and cooling cost, putting more money in your wallet. Turning your thermostat down just a couple degrees in the winter and up a few degrees in the summer can save you money.

Reset your thermostat when you are asleep or away from your home or business. You can reduce your usage as much as 10% a year by simply turning your thermostat back 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day. You can do this automatically without sacrificing comfort by installing an automatic setback or programmable thermostat.

About half of all thermostats sold are smart devices with an app allowing remote control and usage management by a mobile or tablet device. Many smart thermostats have the added convenience of learning your heating and cooling behavior and will auto-schedule based upon your preferences.

When purchasing a programmable thermostat, choose one that is appropriate for your type of equipment and read the instructions to ensure you get the optimal benefit based on the efficiency of your equipment.

# Candidate Profiles

- **Director Elections will take place in six districts this year. Incumbent directors Gary Fish (District 6), Allan Kooima (District 2), Bruce Martinson (District 3) and Dave Daniel (District 4) are all running unopposed. Petitions were filed in Districts 1 and 10 to replace retiring directors Henning Hansen (District 1) and Arlyn Zylstra (District 10). A full schedule of district meeting locations and dates are listed on page 3.**

## District 1

### Donald DeGreef - Brookings, SD

**I retired from 3M Company** in Brookings four years ago after 31 years service. While there I held positions as a Plant Maintenance Engineer and Energy Champion, Project Engineer, Database Engineer, Computer Systems Engineer, and Electronics/Electrical Technician. Before 3M, I worked at Daktronics in Brookings as a Project Engineer and Installation manager. Before moving back to Brookings with my wife, Bernadette and 2 daughters, we lived in Fort Collins, Colorado. I worked for Ideal Basics Industries Cement Plant as an Instrumentation Engineer, Project Controls Engineer/Process Controls Programmer.

We had moved to Fort Collins from Superior, Nebraska where I was an Electrical Supervisor at the Ideal Basics' cement plant. We moved to Superior, Nebraska from Fort Riley, Kansas after serving five years with the Army's Signal Corp both there and overseas. I joined the Army after graduating from SDSU with an Engineering Degree.

With my jobs at 3M and Ideal, I worked closely with our electrical providers, and I was always interested in the explanations of their rate structure and how it impacted our electrical costs. I am hoping by being on the Sioux Valley Energy Board, I will learn more about how electrical energy is brought to their customers and maybe help Sioux Valley and customers find ways to cut costs and keep rates low.

My wife and I have been Sioux Valley customers for over 25 years. I feel being a residual customer and an industrial customer representative gives me a good insight from different customer points of view. My hobbies include: gardening, woodworking, beekeeping and hunting. My wife, Bernadette, and I live on a small acreage east of Brookings. We have been married for 47 years. We have two daughters and three grandchildren.



## District 10



### Lucas Roskamp - Edgerton/Trosky, MN

**I grew up on our farm** and attended school in Edgerton. Upon graduation, I attended Ridgewater College where I earned degrees in Farm Operations and Ag Business. After college, I was employed at Cargill in Pipestone and then Chandler Co-Op in Lake Wilson. I am married and have three children at home.

Initially, I wanted to be a SVE Director for all the fame and fortune I was sure it would bring, but then I was told that wasn't the case. In all seriousness, I am interested in learning more about SVE and where we get our electricity, and being on the board will help that.

Working in the elevator and agronomy business, I learned to work well with others and to be helpful to the customers. I will bring a young, fresh perspective to the board and will help make decisions for future long-term and affordable electric service.



### Leon Spronk - Edgerton, MN

#### Education and Career

- SDSU graduated BS Animal Science December 1974 Livestock and Meats judging Teams
- John Morrell and Co Sioux Falls, SD January 1975 – April 1981 Started as Hog Buyer then Hog Evaluation Department Manager then Cattle Buyer
- Spencer Foods Land-O-Lakes Spencer, IA 1981-1983 Cattle Buyer
- Dugdale-Dupaco-Beef America Norfolk, NE 1983-1998 Cattle Buyer
- Monfort-Conagra-Swift Grand Island, NE and Greeley, CO 1999-2005 Cattle Buyer
- Greater Omaha Packing Co Omaha, NE 2006-2015 Cattle Buyer 2015-2017 Head Cattle Buyer
- Farmer/Retired Cattle Buyer Edgerton, MN 2017-Present

**Other Activities:** Member of First Christian Reformed Church Edgerton, MN – Presently serving as Elder and Vice Chairman Board of Directors of former Ellison Meat Co. Pipestone, MN. Enjoy pheasant hunting and fishing.

**Why do I want to be a SVE director?** I have been an electric cooperative member since 1976 at rural Garretson, SD until 1988 and then at rural Edgerton, MN until present. I am interested in energy conservation and new technology having built a new house on our acreage in 2011 and installing a geothermal heating and cooling

system. I am always looking for new ways to increase my personal energy efficiency and reducing my carbon footprint.

**What skills/assets would you bring to the board of directors?** For 41 years I have traveled Eastern South Dakota and Southwestern Minnesota buying cattle from many of SVE's livestock producers. I know and understand many of their concerns and challenges. I have much to learn but also much to share.



Rushmore Electric's Mike Bowers, fifth from left, is one of 17 members of the Rapid City YMCA board of directors.

# LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## Co-op Leaders Contribute to Local Boards, Youth Programs and More

**Brenda Kleinjan**

[editor@sdrea.coop](mailto:editor@sdrea.coop)

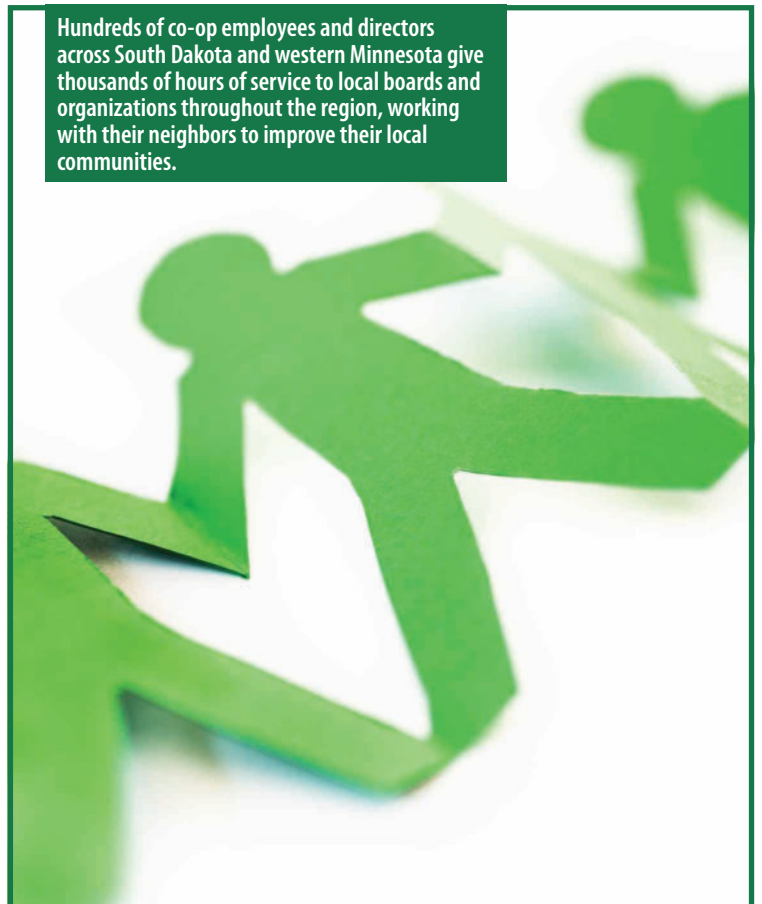
When cooperatives say they are committed to their communities, it's not just lip service. It's service rooted in fact.

From city councils, township boards and county commissions to school boards, church boards and other community organizations, co-op employees and directors are answering the call to serve on boards of various shapes and sizes.

Some specialize, focusing their involvement in one arena. Others are generalists, taking the skills and lessons they've learned through their roll at their local electric cooperative and translating it to benefit their local community through involvement on several boards and groups.

For much of his co-op career, Mike Bowers has also served on boards associated with the Rapid City YMCA. Bowers, the manager of Rushmore Engineering, a part of Rushmore

Hundreds of co-op employees and directors across South Dakota and western Minnesota give thousands of hours of service to local boards and organizations throughout the region, working with their neighbors to improve their local communities.





Electric Power Cooperative in Rapid City, has spent 20 years on the YMCA building committee. He's also been a part of the YMCA board of directors for 10 years, serving as secretary and board chairman.

But, his Y involvement has even deeper roots.

"I grew up with the Y," said the Wisconsin native. "I've been a Y member here for 42 years. I joined the Y the first month I was in town and never looked back."

Bowers said the YMCA's commitment to people in the community is appealing and resonates well with the work of electric cooperatives.

"Both invest in the community, absolutely," Bowers said. "The YMCA is very much a cooperative structure; not-for-profit, open to all and every member is an owner, if you stop to think about it."

The Rapid City YMCA and the Rapid City Area Schools are in the midst of a \$10 million renovation of a 68,000 square foot building in downtown Rapid City that once housed an electric and gas utility company. When completed, the facility will house YMCA early childhood development and also provide

infant childcare as well as hold school district administrative offices.

The facility, which is slated to open in August, will be known as the Rapid City Education Center. It recently secured \$1.1 million in funding from the Rapid City Vision Fund.

**We all need to be involved and give back to the community.**

"The Rapid City Education Center will more than double our capacity for childcare," Bowers said.

Bowers sums up his work with the YMCA succinctly.

"This is the way I want to be involved and give back," said Bowers.

Bowers is not alone in his commitment to his local community.

From youth wrestling, basketball, baseball and football programs to coaching varsity-level sports and serving as

referees, co-op employees and directors are working alongside their neighbors to ensure these programs succeed.

You'll also find co-op employees and directors setting aside their co-op hats to take on the work of members of school boards at several districts across the state.

Dozens of co-op employees serve as trustees and council members of towns and communities across the state. More than a dozen township boards are comprised of officers who work for electric cooperatives or who serve as a director for an electric cooperative. County commissions from Custer County in the west to Grant County in the northeast – and a few counties in between – have co-op employees and directors serving on their governing boards.

And, the work doesn't stop there. You'll find co-op directors and employees in service organizations like Lions, Rotary and Kiwanis, on in veteran's organizations like the American Legion and VFW, church boards, airport, library and transportation boards.

As Bowers notes, "We all need to be involved and give back to the community."



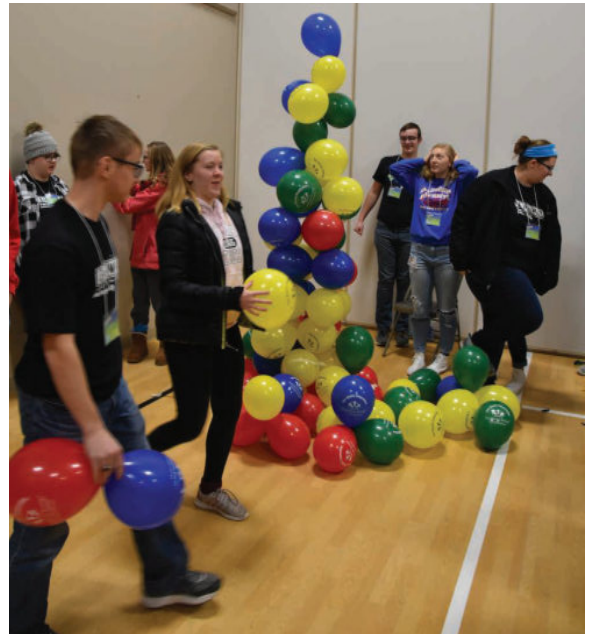
Chris Larson, General Manager of Clay-Union Electric Corporation in Vermillion, moderates the District 17 Legislative Public Forum held in October. Larson is member of the VCDL Governmental Affairs Committee, which hosted the candidate forum. Candidates present were, from left, Gregory Baldwin, Ray Ring, John Gors and Howard Grinager. Arthur Rusch attended by phone.

# Youth Program Prepares Students Ready to Lead

**Session Two of the 2019 EmPOWER Youth Leadership Program** centered around helping students explore their leadership abilities and improving their health. Motivational speaker, Craig Hillier provided hands-on leadership training while Avera employees guided students in learning about stress management and healthy eating.

EmPOWER Youth Coordinator, Chinelle Christensen, says this year's group of EmPOWER Leaders are exceptional.

"I have no doubt that these students will do great things. They have really stepped up to the plate and out of their comfort zones to develop their leadership abilities. I am proud of each and every one of them!"



## Operation Round Up Grant

# Lake County Food Pantry

The Lake County Food Pantry was recently awarded \$1,500 from Operation Round Up to support the 'Kids Pantry Backpack Program'. The program helps feed Lake County kids who are in need. In total, 160 public school students from pre-school through fifth grade and Head Start receive food backpacks each week. Valiant Living and Bethel Home residents in Madison prepare the backpacks during the school year. SVE Operation Round Up funds have been an essential part of sustaining the program as the cost of food each week is approximately \$700. The Lake County Food Pantry relies entirely on volunteers to help with the Backpack Program and all other aspects of food distribution.

Operation Round Up has provided communities and organizations more than \$1.65-million since the year 2000. Nearly 75 percent of SVE members and employees participate in the program. The average member will contribute approximately \$6.00 per year. To learn more about Operation Round Up and how to apply for a grant, log on to <https://www.siouxvalleyenergy.com/my-community/operation-roundup>.



## Co-op In the Classroom



**Pictured:** Brookings Fifth Grader, Lauren Bortnem, generates power while pedaling a bike during a 'Co-op in the Classroom' presentation conducted by Education & Outreach Coordinator, Jennifer Gross. Sioux Valley Energy's power supplier, East River Electric, provides the program to area schools.

**Sioux Valley Energy** held multiple "Co-op in the Classroom" presentations during the months of January and February. More than 1,000 local elementary students took part in the program from the following schools: Estelline Elementary School, Red Willow Colony, Edgerton Public School, Edgerton Christian Elementary, Brookings Camelot Intermediate School, Brandon Valley Intermediate School, Brandon Elementary, Elkton Public School, St. Mary Grade School and Luverne Elementary. This program was developed by the Cooperative's power supplier, East River Electric.

Kimball School received \$1,000 from Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program to update their former playground for safety, entertainment and school pride.



# MAKING CHANGE

## Contributions by Co-op Members Add Up for Good

**Brenda Kleinjan**

[editor@sirea.coop](mailto:editor@sirea.coop)

Thirty years ago, South Carolina's Palmetto Electric Cooperative conceived of an idea to benefit residents in the three counties it serves. By having members round up their monthly electric bills, co-op members could have a lasting impact on charitable groups in the area.

Since that beginning in 1989, Operation Round Up® has been an incredibly successful way in which the co-op and its members have been able to help the less fortunate in their community. Through Operation Round Up, Palmetto Electric automatically rounds up a participating member's electric bills to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumer's monthly bill of \$52.73 would be automatically rounded up to \$53, with the additional 27 cents going to the Operation Round Up fund. On an annual basis, the co-op is able to donate roughly \$6 for each participating customer – and that pool of money is then allocated to a variety of worthy causes throughout their service area.

The concept spread nationwide and today, several cooperatives in South Dakota and western Minnesota have the program.



Central Electric Cooperative's Operation Round Up® program awarded \$2,300 to Helping with Horsepower, a therapeutic riding program at Reclamation Ranch outside of Mitchell, S.D., for a lift that allows wheel-chair-bound clients to ride horses.

Since 2000, members at Sioux Valley Energy have awarded more than \$1.5 million to community groups, including funding more than \$10,000 in scholarships each year to members and their children.

Across the border at Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative in Tyler, Minn., their Operation Round Up board funds grant requests ranging from fire department requests to school and other educational requests.

Danube, Minn.-based Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association is launching its Operation Round Up in June.

“All co-ops adhere to the seven cooperative principles, including “Concern for Community.” The Operation Round Up® program is the perfect embodiment of this core principle,” said Lenae Wordes, Renville-Sibley’s communications manager. “The average co-op member donates \$6 with a maximum possible contribution of \$11.88 per year. This may not seem like a large amount, but when combined with nearly 1,900 of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power member accounts, it adds up to make an impact.”

“Renville-Sibley’s program will operate



with a board of trustees that is different from the board of directors for the electric co-op. This allows a group of members to focus on the mission of representing our communities,” said Wordes.

In the Watertown, S.D., area, Codington-Clark Electric’s Operation Round Up has helped 4-H clubs, a child hunger group and a local living history fair.

Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell, S.D., awarded \$12,500 to 10 groups in November 2018. Among the groups receiving funding were community improvement associations and community centers, speed meters for two cities, 4-H, Habitat for Humanity and other groups. Since launching the program in 2015, the program has made \$72,500 in awards.

“Applications typically come from volunteers in your community who feel strongly about a project and making a difference,” said Courtney Deinert, Central’s manager of communications.

For the past 10 years, members of Oahe Electric Cooperative in Blunt, S.D., have distributed more than \$92,000 to groups and organizations in Hughes and Sully counties. The money raised has helped volunteer fire departments, animal rescue shelters and other groups selected by the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees.

At Elk Point, S.D., Union County Electric Cooperative started its program in 2018. This year, it awarded \$4,000 to four organizations including the local historical society, the Boys and Girls Club, an animal rescue and the local Veterans of Foreign Wars group.

Co-op members at West River Electric Association in Wall, S.D., are also involved. In 2018, the Operation Round Up fund awarded more than \$8,200 to groups ranging from rodeo booster clubs and cemetery associations to ambulance services, athletic groups and pre-school and community groups. One award helped purchase a heater for the New Underwood city pool.

Contact your local cooperative to find out what ways they are involved in their communities and how to participate.



The Letcher, S.D., 4-H “Kids Kountry Club” breaks ground on their new playground area after receiving a \$3,500 Operation Round Up grant from Central Electric Cooperative members.

# Fighting to Keep the Lights On

**Paul Wesslund**

NRECA

Did you know squirrels, lightning and trees have something in common? They can knock out your electricity.

Electric cooperatives work hard to keep your lights on all the time, but “you’re going to have power outages, and that’s just the way it is,” says Tony Thomas, senior principal engineer with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

An electric utility’s basic job of keeping the power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also means battling the unpredictable. Thomas cites the top three troublemakers to electric reliability as trees falling on power lines and other interferences from vegetation, lightning strikes and animals going about their daily routines, especially squirrels chewing on electrical equipment.

“Utilities do an awfully good job,” says Thomas. “But Mother Nature gets in the way sometimes.”

Humans contribute to power outages as well, with vandals deliberately damaging electrical equipment and drivers accidentally crashing into utility poles.

## Statistics say the lights are almost always on.

Numbers collected from electric utilities show that power in the United States is incredibly reliable. According to these figures, the percentage of time that the average American has electricity at the flip of a switch is 99.97... oh forget it, you get the idea. Thomas says what’s most important to know about those numbers is that they don’t change much.

“I don’t see big swings from year to year,” says Thomas. “If things are fairly consistent, that means the utility is operating about as efficiently as it can.”

But utilities still try to improve on that reliability. Among the techniques being used to foil critter catastrophes are snake



When it comes to electric reliability, the biggest challenge is maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation’s electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines.

barriers around substations, buzzard shields on transmission towers and mesh coverings on wood poles to protect them from woodpeckers.

For some of the other causes of outages like trees and lightning, there’s now an app for that.

Utilities operate extensive right-of-way programs to keep vegetation away from power lines, from clearing underbrush to publicity campaigns asking people not to plant trees where they can fall on power lines. These days, those efforts can be aided by digital software that forecasts the growth of trees and other plants so that utilities can prune branches before they cause a problem.

Other software tries to manage lightning by analyzing the age and wear on the utility’s equipment that minimizes the damage from lightning strikes so it can be

replaced before it fails.

Fighting storms and squirrels are two ways to keep the power on, but by far the biggest part of reliability comes from the decades of building, maintaining and updating the massive machinery of the nation’s electric grid. More than 8,500 power plants generate electricity that is shipped through 200,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines. Banks of substations and transformers step-down that voltage to send it to homes and businesses through 5.5 million miles of local distribution lines.

Keeping that network up and running calls for a lot of planning among utilities to anticipate how electricity will be used in the future. Part of that reliability planning has focused on protecting the electricity system from computer-based digital attacks.



Electric cooperatives' top priority of keeping power flowing 24/7 calls for maintaining a complex network of power plants, poles and wires. But it also requires preparing for the unpredictable. Electric co-ops are winning the reliability battles against the top three troublemakers: storms, squirrels and hackers.

## The never-ending job of cyber security

Bridgette Bourge is among those over-seeing how digital technology affects reliability for electric co-ops and their consumer-members. As director of government affairs for NRECA, she sees both the positives and the negatives to the latest internet-based, or cyber, technology.

“Cyber helps a lot on reliability because it gives us the ability to monitor and know everything right away,” she says. “But whenever you increase reliability through a technology, you do potentially open up vulnerabilities as well from the security angle.”

For any organization, including electric utilities, the benefits of the internet come infested with mischief makers. Bourge says it's routine for a company to receive tens of thousands of attempts each day to break into its computer network. Those “knocks” at the cyber door can come from individuals, countries and organizations, or from the army of automated “bots” roaming the internet worldwide, testing for weaknesses where a hacker could enter.

For a utility, a troublemaker inside the computer network could affect electric service, and that's why NRECA has organized a variety of cyber reliability programs.

Bourge says those cyber reliability programs aim to help protect against a range of threats, from broad attempts to shut down parts of the electric grid, to more focused efforts to corrupt pieces of software used by electric cooperatives.

**As community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.**

NRECA's cyber protection efforts include a national program of working closely with the nation's electric co-ops to share the techniques for protecting utility systems from internet invaders. NRECA also works closely with federal government cybersecurity groups in the Department of Energy and the Department of Homeland Security.

NRECA is also part of a national program to create a cyber mutual assistance agreement. Much like how groups of line-

workers from an electric co-op travel to help restore power after a hurricane, these cyber agreements would be able to utilize teams of information technology experts in the case of a cyber incident.

“You can't solve cybersecurity,” says Bourge. “No matter what you do today, the bad guys are going to figure out a way around it tomorrow. You have to keep thinking about the next step.”

Bourge sees electric co-ops as well-placed to pay attention to cybersecurity. She says as community-based, member-led businesses, electric co-ops have a unique interest in protecting the reliability of the local community's energy supply.

“Electric cooperatives take cybersecurity very seriously,” says Bourge. “It's built into their DNA.”

*Paul Wesslund writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural*

*Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.*

## February 21-23

Sno Jam Comedy Festival, Sioux Falls, SD, siouxfallssnojamcomedyfest@gmail.com

## February 24, March 24

Meat Shoot, Gun Club, Practice rounds at 10 a.m., Shoot starts at 11 a.m., 2378 310th St., Rock Valley, IA, 712-540-9757, 712-470-6794 or 712-451-8366

## March 1-2

Mardi Gras Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

## March 3

Meat Shoot, Crooks Gun Club, Practice rounds at 10 a.m., Shoot starts at 11 a.m., 2808 W. 84th St. N., Sioux Falls, SD, 605-941-1984

## March 9-12

Summit League Basketball Championship, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

## March 10

Meat Shoot, Sportsmen's Club, Practice rounds at 10 a.m., Shoot starts at 11 a.m., 48605 255th St., Garretson, SD, 605-359-3844

## March 14-16

SD State Class AA Boys and Girls Basketball Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD

## March 16-17

Dakota Territory Gun Show, Codington City Ag Building, Watertown, SD, 605-793-2347

## March 17

Meat Shoot, Izaak Walton League, Practice rounds and shoot starts at 11 a.m., 5000 North Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-359-9516



## March 15-16

28 Below Fatbike Race, Lead, SD, 605-584-3435

## March 23

Ag Day, Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

## March 29-30, April 5-6

Annual Schmeckfest, Freeman, SD, 605-925-4237

## March 29-31

Black Hills Home Builders Home Show, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-7850

## April 4

McCrossan Banquet Auction featuring Loop Rawlins and the PBR, 5:30 p.m., Arena, Sioux Falls, SD, Tickets: \$75 each, 605-339-1203, www.mccrossan.org

## April 4-5

Holiday Arts Spring Craft Show, Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

## April 5-6

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

## April 5-7, 11-14

Green Earth Players presents Drinking Habits, April 5, 6, 11, 12 and 13 at 7:30 p.m., April 7 and 14 at 2 p.m., Palace Theatre, Luverne, MN, 507-283-9226

## April 5-7

Professional Bull Riders Unleash the Beast Tour, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

## April 13

Izaak Walton Dinner and Raffle, Broasted Chicken and Pork Chop Dinner, Izaak Walton Clubhouse, 6:30 p.m., Annual Fund Raiser for The Conservation of the Soil, Air, Woods, Waters and Wildlife, Sioux Falls, SD

## April 26-28 and May 3-5

The Opland Singers Spring Festival of Music, Friday and Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday 2 p.m., Pipestone Performing Arts Center, Pipestone, MN, 507-825-2020 or 877-722-2787

## May 1-5

Black Hills Film Festival, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9454

## May 4

Consignment Auction, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644, www.prairievillage.org

## May 5

Opening Day, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644, www.prairievillage.org

**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.**