

Bon Homme Yankton Electric

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

March 2021 Vol. 21 No. 11

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



What is Beneficial Electrification?



Stephanie Horst

horst@byelectric.com

As the overall energy sector continues to evolve, Bon Homme Yankton Electric is striving to take advantage of the advances in technology and the opportunities of the market as they become available.

If you are like most Americans, you are interested in saving money on energy costs and doing your part to help the environment. But wouldn't it be great if you could do both? Well, you can! It is 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 Bon Homme Yankton Electric and other utilities shift to more options that include renewable energy sources to make existing generation technologies cleaner, electricity will require less fossil fuel per kilowatt-hour of energy produced.

So, here is 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 Bon Homme Yankton Electric 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 can benefit from the flexibility of the grid in addition to the increased efficiency of the 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 Bon Homme Yankton Electric taps 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.

How we are doing our part to help the environment

As the overall energy sector continues to evolve, Bon Homme Yankton Electric is striving to take advantage of the advances in technology and the opportunities of the market as they become available. This means Bon Homme Yankton Electric 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 energy efficiency through our load management program. In addition, our members can manage and monitor their energy use through our SmartHub app. To save you money, we also offer water heater rebates and heating incentives.

As members are becoming more and more curious about renewable energy and would like to invest in renewables themselves, we have a low-cost solution with our REC program. For members interested in investing in their own renewable systems, we have information on the steps for a smooth interconnection process on page 3 of this issue.

We care about our community because we live here too. I hope you will reach out to Bon Homme Yankton Electric, your trusted energy partner, to discuss available renewable energy options 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 are 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.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 018-973)

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Inc
PO Box 158
134 S Lidice St
Tabor, SD 57063

Office Hours:
Monday through Friday
7:30am - 4:30pm

To pay by phone, call:
1-888-395-5315

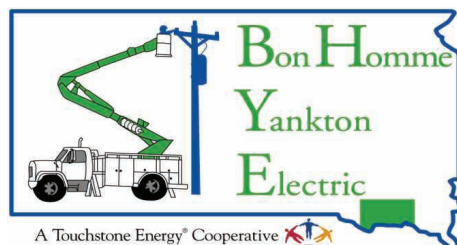
To report an outage, call:
Local call from Tabor, Tyndall and Yankton:
605-463-2507
Toll Free in South Dakota:
1-800-925-2929

NOTICE: Electric bills must be paid by 10:00am on the 20th of each month to avoid a \$10 late fee.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections is published monthly by Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Inc., PO Box 158, 134 S. Lidice St., Tabor, SD 57063-0158 for its members. Families subscribe to Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connection's purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living. Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote \$6.00 from their electric payments annually for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Tabor, SD 57063 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections, Bon Homme Yankton Electric, PO Box 158, Tabor, S.D. 57063 TELEPHONE (605)463-2507: FAX (605) 463-2419.

Design assistance by TDG Communications, Deadwood, S.D.



Interested in Solar? Contact the Co-op!

Bon Homme Yankton Electric encourages any member considering solar power to contact our office at (605) 463-2507 before purchasing or installing a system. There are several steps to take to ensure the system is installed properly and members are receiving the most value from their system.

Find more information and FAQs about residential solar on our website at byelectric.coop/residential-solar.

If you are interested in renewable energy, Bon Homme Yankton Electric offers Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). Members can purchase RECs from Bon Homme Yankton Electric to offset their electric use with 100% renewable energy. RECs are generated by renewable resources that are owned by the cooperative.



Steps to Take Before Installing Solar



As your energy experts, we are here to offer advice and help you set up your system safely.

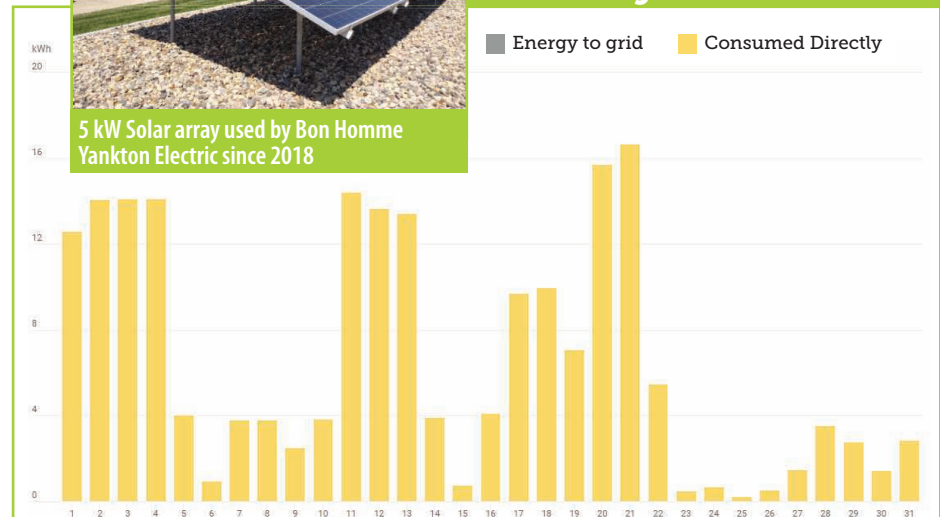
- ☒ Contact a qualified solar contractor
- ☒ Contact Bon Homme Yankton Electric before purchasing or installing a system
- ☒ Complete our Distributed Generation Application
- ☒ Complete our Battery Storage Application if relevant
- ☒ Complete an Interconnection Agreement
- ☒ Complete inspections and other requirements according to

Bon Homme Yankton Electric policies



5 kW Solar array used by Bon Homme Yankton Electric since 2018

January Solar Stats



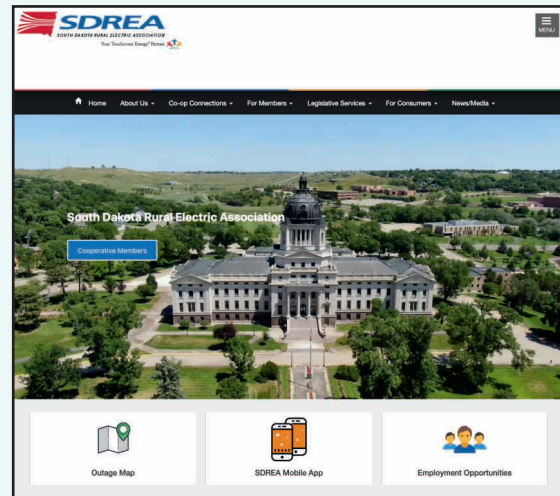
Five Electrical Dangers in Your Home

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. 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

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.

Letterbox: Thank You Notes

At our November and December board meetings, the Board of Directors approved bill credits to offset the budget surplus in 2020 due to increased sales and lower expenses. Eligible members felt this decision in their pocketbooks and celebrated lower bills for their November and December usage.

This is just one benefit of being part of a cooperative. Members get profits returned to them instead of sending profits to stakeholders.

We loved receiving thank you notes and messages from members expressing their gratitude for these bill credits.

Thank-you so much -
I really appreciate this!

Karen Aune

12-7-20

By Electric -

What a nice surprise - The Covid Relief Credit! That makes a very nice Christmas gift.

Hope all of your workers stay free of the Covid-Virus.

Merry Christmas to you all,
Darlene Hoising

12-7-20

BY Electric Folks,

Thank you for
the Covid Credit.
We appreciate it!

Johi Marten

Thanks!

Bar Homme Yankton Electric,

Thank you for the relief Credit
Applied on my bill.

Your Kindness is greatly appreciated.

Merry Christmas,
Mike & Kim Beens

Thank you Board of
Directors of BY Electric
for the Relief Credit.
It is much appreciated
Sincerely
Edith Nelson

Wow!

What a nice

\$78.00 Christmas
Present

Mae

BY Electric:

What an amazing
Christmas present -
Thank you!!

John &
Marilyn Dappenbergs

We would like to thank
the BEA for the Covid
Discount we received.
It was very much
appreciated.

Thank you
John & family

Thank you so much for the
COVID Relief Credit! Know that
we keep all of your staff in our
prayers.
Mike & Kris Sees family

Thank you for the relief
Credit. It's greatly
appreciated!
The Schaeffers

January Board Meeting Highlights

The January board meeting was held on January 20, at 8am via Zoom. All board members were present. Others present were Attorney Sheila Woodward, General Manager Stephanie Horst, Office Manager Nicole Einrem, and Operations Manager Ken Carda.

The Board Reviewed and Approved

- Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- Capital Credits to Estates in the amount of \$8,198.41
- New Members & Cancellations
- Special Equipment purchases in the amount of \$7,762.48

The Board Reviewed and Approved Reports

- East River Cyber Security/IT Report
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their departments.

- Office: Monthly Financial Report & Check Register
- Member Service/Communications Report
- Operations Report
- Safety Report
- General Manager's Report
- Reports from board members
 - South Dakota Rural Electric
 - East River Electric Power Cooperative
 - Attorney Report
- 2020 Q4/YTD Director Expenses
- 2021 City of Tyndall Service Contract
- 2021 Berndt Tree Service Contract
- NRECA Voting Delegate/Alternate
- Next meeting date set for Wed., Feb. 17, at 8 am.

The Board Reviewed

- Co-op Day at the Capitol Feb. 16th
- Executive Session: None

Welcome New Members

Avon

Kevin & Ann Eden

Irene

Daniel Dangel

Scotland

Steve Pruner

Springfield

Michele Bares

Will & Shannon Yule

Tabor

Just Kidding Farms LLC
Lion's Pride Land Holding, LLC

Tyndall

Ryan Brandt & Rebecca Meyer

Yankton

Keith & Constance Mielke
Scott Luken Sculpture, LLC

Jorge Arcaya

Nicholas & Lori Dorcey

Robert Steele

John Halsted

Matthew & Heather Siebert

Marshall & Teri Zastrow

Nathan & Audrey Bringgold

Brandon Soesbe

Andrea Lanning

Mazing Acres Pumpkin Patch

STATISTICAL COMPARISON			
DECEMBER	2019	2020	2020 YTD
Number of Meters	3,870	3,909	
Total Revenue	\$993,512	\$713,579	\$10,366,235
Cost of Power	\$528,575	\$573,327	\$6,332,846
Total Cost of Service	\$850,167	\$870,843	\$10,060,509
kWhs Purchased	9,903,277	9,384,078	98,938,052
kWhs Sold	9,420,522	9,040,536	94,661,944
Line Loss %	4.50%	3.28%	4.06%
Residential Average kWh	2,198	2,018	
Residential Average Bill	\$226	\$162	



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@sdrea.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.

CLASSIFIEDS

April Issue Deadline: March 1, 2020.
Email your classified ad to: jarens@byelectric.com. Members can post one free ad per year. Repeats or longer ads are \$1/column inch.

FOR RENT: 1 bedroom apartment. Tabor Manor. Contact Gary at 605-463-2209 or Ron at 605-463-2256.

Beseda Hall, Tabor, SD for rent for any special occasion such as weddings, anniversaries, graduation or birthdays! For more information contact Linda Bares at 605-661-6220 or snlbare@gmail.com.

FOR RENT: Tabor Self Storage. Call 605-660-0274 or 605-660-3497.



Statement of non-discrimination

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

Gunnar Dally Earns Journeyman Certification

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Lineman Gunnar Dally recently completed the Lineworker Certification Program through the Northwest Lineman College. Completion of the program certifies Dally as a journeyman lineworker.

A major component of finishing the program is time. Dally had to complete 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. He also had to pass 40 different tests as part of the apprenticeship. The tests cover a variety of topics including safety, transformer connections, mapping, and other topics like line construction and line work.

Dally says that his favorite aspect of his job is being outside, and “with linework you do a lot of different types of work so you are not doing the same thing all year round.”

Dally began working for Bon Homme Yankton Electric in 2016. Previously, he worked for an electrical contractor at Ft. Randall Dam. He grew up in Armour, SD and went to line school at Mitchell Tech. In his free time, Gunnar enjoys hunting and cooking.

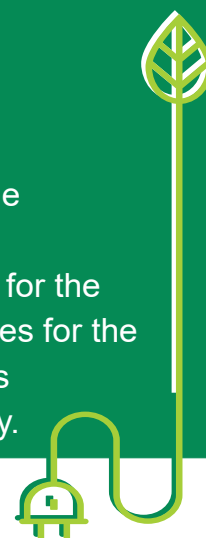


From left to right: General Manager Stephanie Horst, Gunnar Dally, and Operations Manager Ken Carda

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator too cold. The Department of Energy recommends a temperature setting of 35 to 38 degrees for the fresh food compartment and zero degrees for the freezer. Make sure the refrigerator doors are sealed airtight to maximize efficiency.

Source: www.energy.gov



Welcome to Co-op Connections.

The free membership program that gives you incredible discounts on everyday expenses.

Businesses interested in joining the program, please contact Jaclyn Arens at jarens@byelectric.com or call (605) 463-2507.

New Member Benefit:

Co-op Connections Card Program

Bon Homme Yankton Electric is offering an exciting new program for our members. We have joined the Co-op Connections Card Program which is a free member benefit program that gives Bon Homme Yankton Electric members access to thousands of discounts.

We are proud to present you with this money saving opportunity through your cooperative membership!

The Co-op Connections Card Program is a national, Touchstone Energy affiliated program with participation from over 500 co-ops in 45 states.

Is the program really free?

Each co-op member will receive a free Co-op Connections Card. There's no sign-up. No annual fees. You will get your Co-op Connections Card simply because you're a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric!

How do I receive discounts with the Co-op Connections program?

You are able to start saving immediately if you have access to a computer or smartphone.

- First, visit www.connections.coop to create a free account to have access to thousands of deals right at your fingertips.
- Next, simply download the free Co-op Connections app from the Google Play or Apple App Store to your smartphone and log in to your account to start saving today!

When you receive your plastic Co-op Connections Card, you can simply show it at local participating businesses.

When will I receive my card?

All Bon Homme Yankton Electric members will receive a card in the mail at the end of March 2021.

What are some features of the Co-op Connections program?

The program allows you to see participating businesses through the mobile app and use coupons straight from your phone. Receive discounts while on the go at hotels, restaurants and more! We also have deals at theme parks, movie theaters, shows and events.

Where can I see a list of participating businesses?

Visit the Co-op Connections app to see all of the local and national deals and to shop online.

You can also see a complete listing at connections.coop, and you can find a list of local participating businesses at our website byelectric.coop/co-op-connections-card

There will be more information on this program in our April Cooperative Connections issue. You can also follow our Facebook and Instagram profiles to get updates on the program!

If you have any questions about this program or you are a local business owner who would like to participate in this program, please contact our Marketing and Communications Coordinator Jaclyn Arens at jarens@byelectric.com or (605) 463-2507.





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

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.”

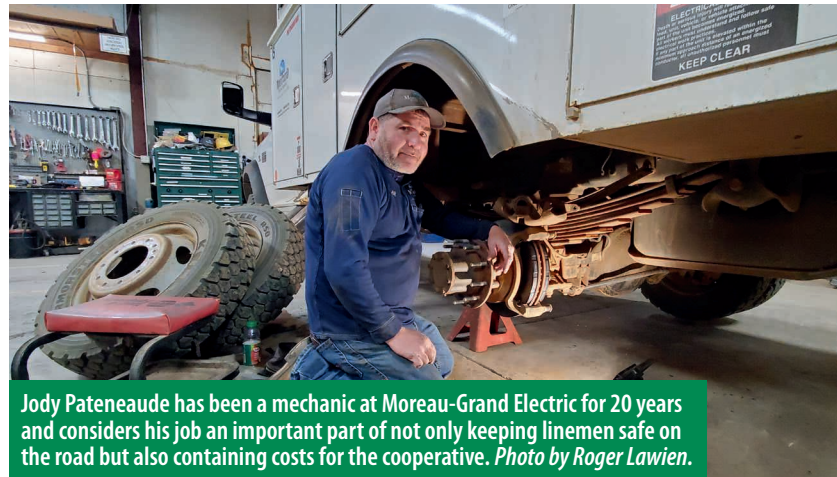
One of those mechanics who remembers the “old days” is Jody Pateneau, who has kept watch over the vehicle fleet at Moreau-Grand Electric for the past 20 years. Pateneau, who notes that linemen are required to carry a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) and that he has one himself, said fleet maintenance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





Quin and Tom Brunner (foreground, center) are strong supporters of home schooling. They home schooled each of their seven children. Brunner is a former state legislator who served as an advocate for alternative education options for South Dakota families.

HOME SCHOOLING

Learning from Home Provides Flexibility for Families

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

If home schooling were a common stock and you jumped into the market 10 years ago, you'd be on Easy Street right now.

Statistics show that since 2010, the number of families home schooling their children in South Dakota has increased 125 percent. And with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the numbers continue to climb steadily. According to state records, there were 5,109 home schoolers in 2019. Last year that number increased 27 percent to 6,698.

Once seen as somewhat of a fringe movement, home schooling is getting a fresh look from families all across the country.

And that's just fine with Tom Brunner, a board member at Butte Electric Cooperative in Newell and a member of the state Legislature for 14 years. Brunner and his wife, Quin, have taught each of their seven children from home. Today those children are grown up and pursuing a variety of career tracks, an occupation list that includes earth science, welding, legal counseling, music instruction and more.

While Brunner no longer serves in the statehouse, he recalls being a vocal advocate for alternative education options for South Dakota families.

"I was grateful to receive a lot of cooperation from my fellow lawmakers and people at the Department of Education because I think everyone understood that the department is responsible for overseeing the education of all of the students in our state, not just those attending public schools," he said.

Looking back on his legislative career, Brunner said he is proud of the work he did to make sure parents and families had choices, but that those families also needed to be held accountable for adhering to certain guidelines. For example, parents must comply with state law by submitting a Notification for Public School Exemption Certificate to the local superintendent each year.

While home school instructors aren't required to attain certification, they cannot instruct more than 22 students and must conduct nationally standardized testing in grades four, eight and 11. Local officials are allowed to monitor those tests while the state is entitled to inspect the records of alternative education programs if there is probable cause of non-compliance.

It's also the local district's responsibility to track the student's progress using the Student Information Management System (Infinite Campus System) to make sure certain educational



How to Begin Home Schooling in South Dakota

To home school in South Dakota, parents must complete the following steps:

- Every year, complete and file a notification for Public School Exemption.
- Return the completed exemption form to the public school district office where you reside.
- Choose the best home school curriculum that includes required subjects of language arts and math.
- Participate in standardized tests in grades 4, 8 and 11.
- Keep good records.
- Have fun learning together!

standards are being met and students aren't "slipping through the cracks."

"I've always felt families have the right to do what's best for the education of their children, but as a state we also have a duty to make sure our children are being taught what they need to know to be successful in life," Brunner said. "There's a fear that kids who aren't in public schools might be used as laborers or just sitting around the house and not being supervised. I've never seen a case where that fear is a reality."

The good news for home school parents and those searching for options is that in addition to the state DOE, there are many resources available. South Dakota is home to roughly 15 associations, alliances, cooperatives and other groups created to help families achieve their educational goals.

There is also the Home School Legal Defense Association based in Purcellville, Va., a non-profit organization whose mission is to "defend and advance the constitutional right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children

and to protect family freedoms."

Like many aspects of society, home schooling was given a second blush after the pandemic struck. Community schools were among the first public gathering places to be shut down once the virus began spreading across the country. When it became clear the virus wouldn't be disappearing soon, parents became accustomed to juggling the responsibilities of work while dealing with their children receiving instruction remotely.

While some parents struggled with the new reality, others gave consideration to adopting the home school platform on a permanent basis. Observers with the U.S. DOE predict the increased interest in home schooling will be sustained long after the pandemic has passed. The National Federation of Children conducted a poll that indicated 40 percent of U.S. families are more likely to home school or enroll their children in a virtual school after the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, the reason most

parents gave for choosing home schooling for their children was a "concern about the school environment, such as safety, drugs, or negative peer pressure." Other top reasons were a desire to provide more moral and religious instruction, a dissatisfaction with public school instruction and the ability to take a "non-traditional" approach to education.

Brunner said he has explored and discussed many different sides of the issue and is fully aware that when it comes to matters of public policy, public funding and personal choice, people can have strong feelings.

"In our state, we place a high value on our rights and freedoms," he said. "I've been in many meetings with those who have very strong opinions, but we've always had very civil discussions. And while our opinions might differ, there's always been a clear understanding that we all want the same outcome: making sure all of our children get the education and preparation they need to live a fulfilling life and have an opportunity to raise a family of their own."

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

February 18-25

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

February 20

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

February 20-27

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

February 25

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

February 27

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

March 5-6

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

March 5-7

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

March 11-14

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

March 12-13

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



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

March 13

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

March 13

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

March 13-14

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

March 19-20

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

March 23-24

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

March 25

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

March 27

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

April 8

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

April 9-10

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

April 9-18

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

April 17

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

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.