

Cooperative Connections

A person wearing a straw hat, a colorful patterned vest, and blue jeans is riding a brown horse with white markings. They are in a grassy field with a large herd of bison in the background. Some trees with yellow autumn leaves are scattered throughout the landscape.

The Annual Buffalo Round Up at Custer State Park is one of many activities of interest for visitors to South Dakota

**SD Tourism
continues
steady pace**

Page 8-9

**Anglers in hot
pursuit of cold
fish**

Pages 12-13

Board of Directors Approved COVID Relief Credit



Stephanie Horst

horst@byelectric.com

At the November 18, 2020 board meeting, the Board of Directors approved a COVID Relief Credit and it was applied to eligible members on their December 1, 2020 billing statement.

Some may say Santa came early this year to Bon Homme Yankton Electric members. At the November 18, 2020 board meeting, the Board of Directors approved a COVID Relief Credit, and it was applied to eligible members on their December 1, 2020 billing statement. Some questions come to mind that I would like to address.

How in the world can this be possible?

Well, simply put, we have more margins or profits than was budgeted for 2020. The pandemic stopped most of our normal activity which reduced our expenses plus we saw increased sales.

Aren't margins a good thing?

Yes, and we budget each year for some margins to keep rates stable and to ride out unforeseen things that can cause sudden expenses like weather events or the loss of a large load. 2020's unpredictable pandemic is doing the opposite with decreased expenses and increased sales. The COVID Relief Credit is to return excess unbudgeted margins.

I thought Bon Homme Yankton Electric returned margins with capital credit retirements.

That is correct, we do. Bon Homme Yankton Electric's capital credit retirement is on a twenty-year rotation. Your Board recognized that these unbudgeted margins should be returned this year and not be held for twenty years because of the unique situation surrounding the margins.

This is the beauty of being a cooperative; the member-owners get the profits returned to them. If we were a for-profit utility, our consumers would not be owners and would not be getting the profits. They would go to the stakeholders.

But you, as a member-owner, are not just a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric, you are also a member of East River Electric Power Cooperative and Basin Electric Cooperative which are your generation and transmission cooperatives.

This cooperative three-tiered network that we, along with other electric cooperatives, created is what keeps us strong, reliable, and stable. On page 3 of this issue, I have included a letter to you explaining a challenge East River Electric is facing with another South Dakota cooperative and our stance on this. This issue ultimately affects each one of us as an East River Electric member. We will most likely be paying for the implications through rates. If you have any questions about this issue or anything else, you can reach me at horst@byelectric.com or at the office (605) 463-2507.

As a reminder of how beneficial it is to be an electric cooperative and to be part of a strong cooperative network, enjoy this COVID Relief Credit as it lightens your financial burden in some way this Holiday Season.

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

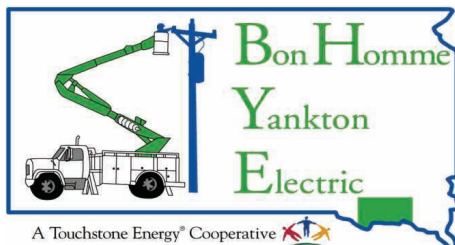
To report an outage, call:
Local call from Tabor, Tyndall and
Yankton:
605-463-2507
Toll Free in South Dakota:
1-800-925-2929

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

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Letter to our Members

Dear Members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association,

You may have heard that Dakota Energy Cooperative, headquartered in Huron, SD serving Beadle, Hand, and Hyde counties, is attempting to break its contract with our wholesale power provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative. I, along with our board of directors, want to provide details on this issue and discuss our stance on the matter, including its impact on you, our member-owners.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association along with Dakota Energy and 22 other distribution electric co-ops and one municipal electric system in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota receive our power supply from East River Electric. Our family of distribution co-ops created East River about 70 years ago when we all came together to sign long-term contracts. Rural residents in our region could not get electric service, so they formed our cooperative. Since our co-ops could not get a fair deal from the for-profit power companies of the time, they formed East River. These contracts have been continually updated over the years to ensure our cooperative network can access capital to sustain operations and build infrastructure. The decision to sign this contract was a promise between neighbors and cooperatives to work together in the best interest of all consumers. All East River's members freely signed our current power contract in April 2015. On Nov. 6, 2020, Dakota Energy filed a legal complaint against East River to break the contract and withdraw from their membership in the cooperative. Dakota Energy requested an exit fee in their effort to break its power contract.

Dakota Energy intends to seek their wholesale power supply from a for-profit, Denver-based company called Guzman Energy, a power broker, with no infrastructure or investment in South Dakota or Minnesota. Guzman has made attempts in other states to lure cooperatives away from their local wholesale power supply cooperatives. Now, unfortunately, Guzman is attempting to make profits off South Dakota's co-op member-owners.

We stand with East River Electric because, collectively, we are East River Electric. We Formed East River. We Own East River. We Are East River. We want to keep our co-op family whole. We understand that every cooperative faces unique challenges, but that's why for 70 years we have all worked together to solve problems and face the future together. Our proven long-term strategy is better than a short-term gamble with an entity like Guzman.

East River's board has representatives from the member systems they serve. Paul Voigt currently serves as Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association's representative on East River's board. Through our representation on the board, we help set our power supplier's direction and collectively agree on our wholesale rates. That is the power of our co-op network – we have a voice. Our cooperative network is not beholden to investors. No one's profits come before our members. We are here for you and East River is here for you.

In 2021, East River forecasts a third consecutive year with flat rates. Our co-op network is cost-based, which means that any excess funds are returned to the member. In the past 10 years East River has returned almost \$27.5 million to their member systems. A for-profit company does not return its profits to its customers. That is just one of the values of being a part of the cooperative network.

Again, we stand with East River to keep our cooperatives local, reliable, and out of the hands of for-profit investors. As always, feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns. Thank you for the trust that you have in our co-op family to provide you with safe, affordable, and reliable power.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Horst, General Manager

National Cut Your Energy Costs Day

If you resolved to spend less and save more in 2021, cutting back on a few regular expenses is a good place to start. Sunday, Jan. 10, is National Cut Your Energy Costs Day, so we've rounded up a few tips to help you trim your utility bills without making major lifestyle changes.

- **Cut heating and cooling costs.** We spend a great deal of energy heating our homes in the winter and keeping them cool in the summer, but are we really doing our best to minimize the cost of our comfort? A programmable thermostat can allow you to adjust the temperature when you're out of the house or sleeping. There's no reason to blast the heat when everyone is at work, and it's doubtful you need to sleep with the heat on high. So program your schedule into your thermostat, and it'll do all the work for you.
- **Watch out for energy draining appliances.** Big appliances like refrigerators, washers and dryers consume a lot of energy, so the next time you replace one of these appliances, upgrade to an energy-efficient Energy Star-certified model. These are designed to use much less energy than their older counterparts and often end up paying for themselves in savings over time. Keep these appliances clean and well maintained to ensure optimal performance and efficiency.
- **Pull the plug.** As we continue to be more and more "plugged in," it should come as no surprise that a greater proportion of our energy goes toward keeping our devices charged. To keep costs reasonable, plug electronics into a power strip and turn it off when they're not in use. This cuts off "phantom" usage and can save you a bundle. Some newer power strips even include an automatic shut-off feature.
- **Hit the lights.** As always, turn off the lights when leaving a room. You can also swap out light bulbs to increase your home's energy efficiency. Replace incandescent bulbs with LED versions for an easy and affordable way to save on electricity. Not only do LEDs last significantly longer, they also require much less energy.
- **Start with a simple home assessment.** Interested to know how your home's energy use compares to similar homes? Check out Energy Star's Home Energy Yardstick at energystar.gov to learn how much of your home's energy use is related to heating and cooling versus other appliance use, lighting and hot water.

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



"Watch Out for Downed Power Lines!"

Gracie Richter, 9 years old

Gracie is a resident of Buffalo, S.D., and is the daughter of Jody Richter. They are members of Grand Electric Cooperative.

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.



Warm and Cozy Soups

Tomato-Tortellini Soup

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2 - 14 ounce cans
reduced-sodium chicken
broth | cheese spread with chive
and onion |
| 1 - 9 ounce package of
refrigerated tortellini | 1 - can tomato soup |
| 1 - 8 ounce tub cream | Fresh chives (optional) |

In a medium sauce pan bring broth to a boil. Add tortellini then reduce heat to simmer uncovered for 5 minutes. In a bowl whisk 1/3 cup of hot broth into the cream cheese spread. Whisk until smooth. Pour contents into sauce pan. Stir in tomato soup and heat through. Serve with fresh chives, if desired.

Family Features/Better Homes and Gardens

Slow Cooker Split Pea Soup

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1 lb. dried green split peas
(rinsed) | 2 cloves garlic, minced |
| 1 cup sliced carrots | 1 bay leaf |
| 2 stalks celery, diced, plus
leaves | 1/4 cup chopped parsley |
| 2 cups chopped onion | 6 cups chicken broth |
| | salt and pepper, to taste |

Layer ingredients in slow cooker in order given, adding broth last. DO NOT stir ingredients. Cover and cook on high for 4-5 hours or low for 8-10 hours until peas are very soft.

Gail Lyngstad, Pierre, SD

Baked Potato Soup

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2/3 cup butter | 6 slices of bacon, cooked
and crumbled |
| 2/3 cup flour | 1-1/2 cups shredded sharp
cheddar cheese |
| 7 cups milk | 1 cup sour cream |
| 4 to 6 baked potatoes,
peeled and cooled | 3/4 teaspoon salt |
| 4 green onions chopped | 1/2 teaspoon pepper |

Melt butter, add flour and stir until smooth. Add milk and stir. Add potatoes and onion. Cook until mixture comes to a boil. Turn to low heat immediately and add bacon, cheese, sour cream, salt and pepper. Stir well. Makes 1 crockpot full.

Terri Halstead, Sioux Falls, SD

Clam Chowder

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 4 slices thick bacon cut and
fried | 4 cans 6.5 oz. minced clams
(save juice) |
| 1 onion | 1 15-oz. can chicken broth |
| 1 cup celery | 2 potatoes |
| 1/3 cup flour | 2 cups cream |
| 1 tsp. pepper | 1 bay leaf |

Cut and fry bacon. Add diced onion and celery and cook about five minutes. Stir in 1/3 cup flour using the drained clam juice until slightly thick. Add 1 teaspoon pepper, one can broth, 4 cans clams, 2 diced potatoes and one bay leaf. Cook until potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Add cream. Enjoy!

Sharon Waltner, Freeman, SD

My Mother's Tomato Soup

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 2 cups tomato juice or
pureed canned tomatoes | 1 qt. milk |
| 1/2 tsp. soda | salt to taste |
| | 1 tbsp. butter |

Combine tomatoes or juice with soda in a saucepan. Let froth up. Add milk, salt and butter. Heat and serve.

Doris Ekberg, Hamill, SD

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

For the holidays, we will be closed December 24-25 for Christmas and January 1 for New Year's Day.

Happy Holidays!



WELCOME MEMBERS

Mission Hill

Shane Knutson

Springfield

Triple B Ranch
Sande Brosonski

Tabor

Jeanne Scheffler
Loving Hands Creations
Kenneth Vanecek Family Trust

Tripp

Christian Cap
William & Teresa Church

Utica

Michael Shelhamer

Viborg

Matthew & Krystina Conway

Volin

Aune Farms

Yankton

Kneifl Properties
Michael & Linda Abel
Douglas & Karen Ekeren
Jenna & Christian Nohr
Dndub LLC
John Goracke
Daniel Conde & Katherine Aby
Tahlia Nelson
Terry & Amy Kathol

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.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON

OCTOBER	2019	2020	2020 YTD
Number of Meters	3,867	3,898	
Total Revenue	\$771,056	\$840,561	\$9,161,970
Cost of Power	\$405,060	\$501,475	\$5,312,713
Total Cost of Service	\$704,889	\$801,514	\$8,424,362
kWhs Purchased	6,460,848	7,314,808	82,089,155
kWhs Sold	6,144,060	6,981,707	78,491,358
Line Loss %	4.63%	4.29%	4.14%
Residential Average kWh	1,279	1,372	
Residential Average Bill	\$162	\$169	

BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

November 2020

The November board meeting was held on October 21, at 8am via Zoom. All board members were present except John Lillevoid. Others present were Attorney Sheila Woodward, General Manager Stephanie Horst, Office Manager Nicole Einrem, Operations Manager Ken Carda, and Communications/Marketing Coordinator Jaclyn Arens.

The board reviewed and approved:

- Minutes of the Previous Meeting
- New Members & Cancellations
- Capital Credits to Estates in the amount of \$5,663.48
- Closed Work Order Inventory totaling \$236,713.92
- Special Equipment purchases totaling \$9,185.00
- Midwest Consumers Virtual Annual Meeting Notice

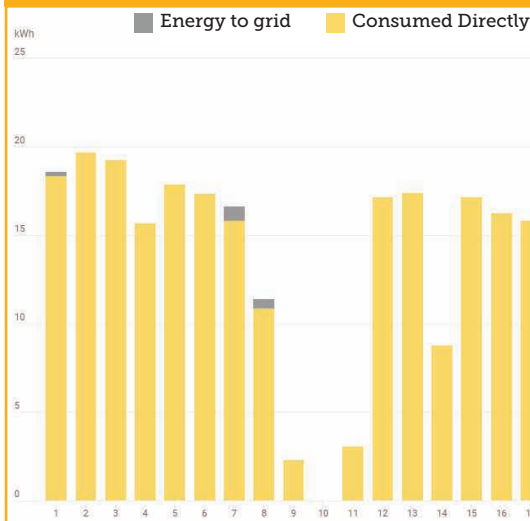
The board reviewed and approved reports:

- East River Cyber Security/IT Report
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their departments.
 - Office: Monthly Financial Report, 2020 Updated and 2021 Capital Budget, & COVID Relief
 - 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
- SDREA Voting Delegate

The board reviewed:

- Executive Session
- Next meeting date set for Wed., Dec. 23, at 8 am.

November Solar Stats



RECIPES NEEDED FOR THE COUNTRY COOKIN' COOKBOOK

Your recipe could be featured in the 37th volume of East River Electric's Country Cookin' cookbook!

Help us create another great cookbook by submitting your favorite recipes.

Submit recipes via email to ahall@eastriver.coop, fax to 605-256-8057, or contact your local cooperative for more information.

Submission deadline is January 12, 2021.

Tourism in South Dakota has remained robust despite the impact of the global pandemic.
Photos courtesy of the SD Tourism Department.

SD TOURISM GOING STRONG

Tired of Being Shut In: Visitors Flock to South Dakota

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Probably the last time a member of the Hustead family was worried about going broke, it was back in the 1930s.

Ted and Dorothy Hustead had just purchased a small drug store in Wall and were having a hard time getting the business to grow in the middle of a severe drought and the Great Depression.

The business that went on to become known as Wall Drug has been named one of the busiest tourist attractions in the northern part of the country. The prospects of the Husteads going broke have been very slim since the store hit its stride.

That is until last March.

Third-generation owner Rick Hustead won't lie: he was downright worried that Wall Drug might bite the dust when COVID-19 prompted lockdowns and travel restrictions.

The entire operation – the stores, the restaurants, the galleries and even the free ice water – came grinding to a stop for 71 days just as the travel season was about to kick into gear.

"I was afraid we might go broke and we might not make it. They're projecting that half of the restaurants out there are going to close down permanently," Hustead said. "We were closed that whole time and had to cut back on our employees because we felt that trying to 'flatten the curve' was the right thing to do."

The business reported losses through the summer, but returned to the black in August due in part to traffic from the Sturgis motorcycle rally. Hustead reported that September and October also showed considerable increases over 2019 numbers.

"People just got tired of being shut in and they got in their cars and on their motorcycles and their RVs and came to South Dakota," he said, noting that even President Trump made his way to Mount Rushmore for a Fourth of July gathering.

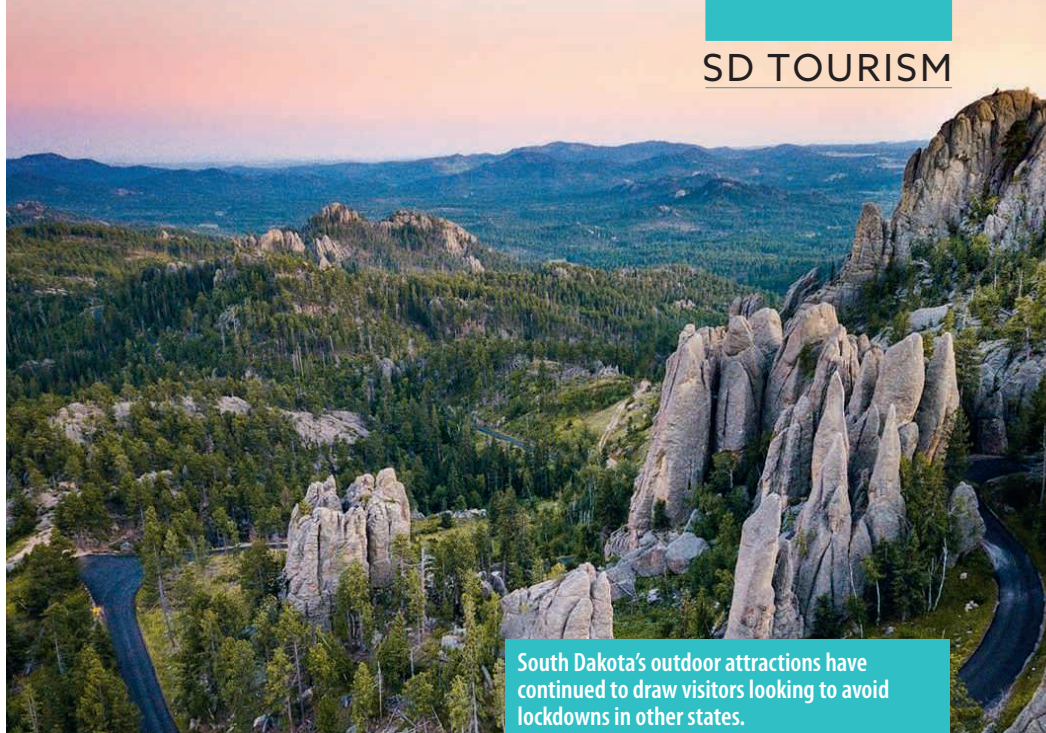


The annual Buffalo Round Up at Custer State Park continues to attract visitors from throughout the country.

The Thing I Love Most about Living in South Dakota is...

What do you love most about living in South Dakota? Share your thoughts with us (200 words or less) and you could win a \$25 gift card!

Send your response to editor@sdrea.coop by Jan. 4, and don't forget to include your contact information.



Hustead said he took public safety measures such as installing Plexiglas barriers, posting hand-sanitizer stations and requiring that employees wear masks. He said no employees have been known to contract the coronavirus. The bottom line also received a boost from some federal relief money.

Once the financial fog lifted, Hustead called his mother Marjorie – who is in a care facility in Rapid City but is “still involved in the business” – and told her he felt Wall Drug was going to make it through the crisis after all.

“I told her, ‘Mom, I think we’re going to make it.’ And that made her happy,” Hustead said.

He was quick to heap praise on the South Dakota Office of Tourism and leader Jim Hagen.

In assessing the state of tourism in South Dakota, officials paint a picture similar to Hustead. While many annual events have been canceled or postponed to a later date, outdoor events and activities such as Sturgis, walleye fishing, pheasant hunting and the many outdoor tourist attractions have led to a healthy industry performance and outlook.

Hagen’s office has also taken the initiative to develop innovative programs to ensure that South Dakota stays top-of-mind when people throughout the region and nation make their travel plans.

The department recently launched an on-line learning program for children and their families to learn more about South Dakota and experience the attractions of the state from the comfort of their homes or in a classroom setting. There are eight virtual pages that allow site visitors to learn more about the icons, wildlife, people and history of the state, each featuring games and activities for the entire family to explore.

“These online lessons provide an opportunity to educate children and adults alike about our state’s Great Faces and Great Places,” said Gov. Kristi Noem. “We hope that they are used as a tool to engage families

and inspire them to explore our great state.”

The department also partnered with Badlands National Park to promote its virtual Junior Ranger program. Once the virtual exploration is complete, kids can become official Badlands National Park Junior Rangers.

Last summer, the department teamed up with tourism officials in Wyoming to develop a program called “Black to Yellow” to entice travelers to explore scenic routes that wind from the Badlands National Park to Wyoming’s iconic Yellowstone National Park.

To help travelers plan their trip, the states put together itineraries that explore their most well-known attractions and lesser-known gems. From taking in roadside stops, like Wall Drug and Wyoming’s Devils Tower, to exploring the scenery of Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Badlands National Park, travelers were encouraged to explore the beauty of the states’ wide open spaces, unparalleled wildlife and the freedom of the open road.

State tourism leaders will meet in Pierre on Jan. 20-21 for the 2021 Governor’s Conference on Tourism. There will be limited in-person engagement as well as an online attendance option. The theme for this year’s meeting is, “Onward!” While 2020 could have been worse, leaders are hoping that travel will continue to be a significant economic driver in the state.



CLASSIFIEDS

February Issue Deadline: January 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.

NEW-Chrome Grill for 2005 Jeep Grand Cherokee, paid \$300 will sell for \$200. **NEW-4 Douglas M&S 215/60R17 tires**, paid \$280 will sell for \$210. 605-665-3441.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Energy bills can increase during winter for a variety of reasons, like houseguests, more time spent at home, and shorter days and longer nights. Small actions, like turning down your thermostat, replacing old bulbs with LEDs and washing clothes in cold water can help you save.



FREE Classified Ad Service

Members can submit classified ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent, and Wanted Ads. All ads must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's issue. Ads will run one time unless resubmitted. Bon Homme Yankton Electric reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Email ads to [Jacyln Arens at jarens@byelectric.com](mailto:jarens@byelectric.com).



Bon Homme Yankton Electric's Float

Lighting up the Holidays

With Covid-19 precautions in place, Yankton and Tabor held their annual parades of lights this December. Yankton held their Holiday Festival of Lights on December 3rd at 6:00pm along an extended route in downtown Yankton. Tabor held their Parade of Lights on December 5th at 6:00pm through Tabor.

The theme for the Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights was Santa's Workshop. There were 47 floats in the parade and a route full of people to see the lights. The parade was also broadcast live on the Holiday Festival of Lights Facebook page.

Yankton parade organizer Brittany LaCroix said, "2020 has been a challenging year for many. We are thankful that we are still able to host this event in a safe way."

2020 was only the second year of the Tabor Parade of Lights. This year's parade was full of holiday spirit but with added safety measures. Spectators were encouraged to watch the parade from their vehicles or social distance outside. There were approximately 25 floats in the Tabor Parade of Lights.

Organizer Ed Sedlacek said he wanted to hold the 2020 Parade of Lights because of the pandemic, not despite it. "We still need Christmas during COVID," he said. "With the parade, we're looking for positive attitudes during Christmas. We can have fun and enjoy ourselves while we stay safe."

Sedlacek is already making plans for the 2021 Tabor Parade of Lights. You can tentatively mark for calendars for the first Saturday in December.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric constructed a gingerbread house that was hooked up to a candy cane power pole for both parades.





Deadline: February 12, 2021,
4:30pm



Applications Online at
byelectric.coop/scholarships



Applications available at
your school's guidance office



For More Information Call:
605-463-2507



Mail Complete Application And
All Supporting Documentation
To:

Bon Homme
Yankton Electric
PO Box 158
Tabor, SD 57063

Or Email To:

Jaclyn Arens at
jarens@byelectric.com

Contact Marketing and
Communications Coordinator
Jaclyn Arens for more information
at 605-463-2507 or email: jarens@byelectric.com



2021 Scholarships

Bon Homme Yankton Electric is now taking applications for one \$1,000 and two \$500 academic scholarships for the 2021-2022 school year.

The Basin Electric Power Cooperative Scholarship is in its 31st consecutive year and is funded by Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, ND.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric is offering the two additional \$500 scholarships.

These scholarships are designed to recognize and encourage the academic and community achievements of the students in our area.

Applicants must be a dependent of an active electric member and must be students enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate or graduate course of study at an accredited, two-year or four-year college, university or vocational-technical school.

For more information and for a scholarship application form, contact Bon Homme Yankton Electric, your school's guidance counselor or visit our website: www.byelectric.coop/scholarships. Applications must be returned to Bon Homme Yankton Electric, PO Box 158, Tabor, SD 57063 by 4:30pm, February 12, 2021.

2020 Scholarship Winners

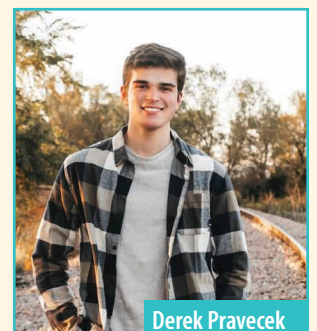
- \$1,000 Basin Electric Scholarship: Austin Jerke, South Dakota School of Mines
- \$500 Bon Homme Yankton Electric Scholarship: Alysandra Fedde, Yankton High School
- \$500 Bon Homme Yankton Electric Scholarship: Derek Pravecek, Scotland High School



Austin Jerke



Alysandra Fedde



Derek Pravecek



Ice fishing is a pursuit that's enjoyed each winter by South Dakotans of every stripe.

Guys, Gals and Castles on Ice

South Dakotans Stay in Hot Pursuit of Cold Fish

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

What happens if you hold an ice fishing tournament and it turns out there's no ice?

You improvise.

That's what organizers of the annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament had to do 10 years ago when Mother Nature refused to cooperate and left them scrambling to come up with a Plan B.

At that time, the tournament was just gaining traction as a main winter attraction for Mobridge. No one dreamed that what started as just a handful of anglers vying to win an ice auger has grown into a field that's capped at 525 two-person teams arriving from 16 different states.

Jeff Jackson is owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge and one of the founders of the tournament marking its 20th anniversary this year. He remembers a bit of panic setting in when hundreds of fishermen were scheduled to descend on Mobridge and the ice on the Missouri River wasn't thick enough to ensure the safety of competitors. Fortunately, the organizing committee had scheduled enough attractions and activities around the one-day tournament that there was plenty for the eager visitors to do.

"We got the word out that the competition was canceled, but 420 out of the 450 teams that were registered showed up anyway," Jackson recalls. "They wanted to come and have a good time."

Those non-angling activities included raffles and prize drawings, an expo featuring all the latest fishing gear, gizmos and gadgets, and according to Jackson, lots of libations.

"People keep coming back year after year," Jackson said, noting that the town's population doubles in the second week of each January. "We've had to limit the number of participants so we have an Ebay auction for three spots that can go as high as \$3,000, and we have another lottery drawing for 26 spots where we usually have up to 800 names."

Instead of a simple ice auger as a grand prize, today the tournament gives away roughly \$225,000 in prizes, including Ice



Hundreds were in attendance at the Dakota Anglers Fishing Expo in Sioux Falls. Photo provided by Dakota Angler.



Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, \$5,000 worth of Scheel's gear, \$3,000 in Runnings gear, clam shacks and more.

The tournament is a boon for Mobridge, bringing an economic impact of \$500,000. According to Jesse Konold, chairman of the town's tourism committee, over the past four years proceeds paid for South Dakota's first climate-controlled indoor fish cleaning station, ADA compliant bathrooms, improvements to the town's rodeo grounds and more than \$100,000 in donations to local non-profits. This year's tournament will be held Jan. 7-9 at the Sherr-Howe Center in Mobridge.

Not Everyone is Hooked

Among the state's population of electric cooperative linemen, there are many who look forward to chasing walleye in winter. In Josh Lemburg's case, the term "chasing" walleye would be close to accurate.

Lemburg, operations foreman at Moreau-Grand Electric who lives in Timber Lake, prefers to stay on the move when he fishes on the ice. Eschewing the "ice castle" approach that calls for staking out a spot and staying put for the weekend, Lemburg uses a portable flip-over shack and keeps his auger close at hand.

"Ice castles are fun, but I'm not afraid to move around and dig holes," he said. "If I'm not catching fish in an hour, I'll 'run-and-gun' til I find them."

Even with his "move-and-groove" approach, Lemburg has failed to get his entire family sold on the merits of ice fishing. Even hooking a lunker walleye didn't

convince his son to swear a life-long oath to ice fishing.

Several years ago, Lemburg took his dad and his elementary-age kids, Landon and Kendal, out on the ice. His dad and daughter were in one shack and he and Landon were in the other. After a few hours, just as Landon was getting bored and ready to call it a day, a walleye snatched his bait.

"Landon had his line in the water and I saw a big mark on my Vexilar," Lemburg recalls. "I told him he had a big fish on the line but he just gave me his pole and said he wasn't interested. I kept trying to get him to reel it in, but he kept giving me the pole back. Finally, I got the fish to the surface I looked in the hole and there was nothing but fish. My dad reached down in the water to his armpits and it was a 12-pound walleye."

Brent Reilley is an electrician at Selby-based Cam Wal Electric, which serves the Mobridge area. Over the past 20 years, he has only missed the tournament twice - once when he had to decide between ice fishing and a week in Cancun.

He and his wife, Tandy, have actually both claimed titles at the prestigious Mobridge tournament. One particular year the husband-and-wife duo were on separate teams. Brent was on the first-place team and Tandy and her partner placed second. But Tandy believes she has her



Above, hundreds attend the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year. Below, "ice castles" bring comfort and convenience to the sport.



husband beat: her second-place finish was clinched by reeling in a 25-inch walleye while she was six months pregnant.

The two have always had pretty good luck with the raffles and random prize drawings as well. Tandy won a side-by-side one year and a family friend has won two four-wheelers.

"We just love being outdoors in the winter when there's nothing else to do," Reilley said. "You can get outside and enjoy the fresh air. It gets cold, but it beats sitting inside and it's something great to do with the family. My son is addicted. He'd love it if all he could do is fish all day."

Home Heating Help Available for Winter

Low Income Assistance and Crisis Intervention Program

South Dakotans who need help paying their heating bills this winter can request energy assistance from the Department of Social Services (DSS). Energy Assistance can help low-income families pay for heating costs; however, the assistance does not cover all costs associated with heating. Funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) are distributed on a first come basis for meter readings from October 1 - May 15.

To be eligible for the South Dakota DSS Low Income Energy Assistance Program households must:

Complete the DSS Low Income Energy Assistance Application

The total gross income of the household must not exceed maximum income guidelines. (See chart to the right)

The applicant must be responsible for paying the home heating costs.

DSS also has an Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) that is available from October 1 - March 31. This program offers income-eligible households emergency assistance if they have a disconnection notice for their heat source or an eviction notice if the heat bill is included with rent. For more information - or to be obtain an application for LIEAP - contact DSS:

- Website: <https://dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energyassistance/lowincome.aspx>
- Phone: 1-800-233-8503

Weatherization Assistance

The weatherization assistance program is designed to help low-income South Dakota households make their homes more energy-efficient. This program is also based on household income. You must qualify for the energy assistance program to be eligible for the weatherization program. With this program, funds are limited, so you may be placed on a waiting list. Priority is given to the elderly and handicapped individuals and to families with small children. This program is operated by community agencies.

- Website: <https://dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energyassistance/weatherization.aspx>
- Phone: 1-800-233-8503

Rural Office of Community Services (ROCS)

ROCS Inc. has offices in Lake Andes, Wagner, Mitchell, Yankton, and Chamberlain. The Outreach Providers take applications and assist clients with emergency needs including food pantries,

shelter assistance, utility assistance, rental assistance, and the garden project.

The Outreach Providers also distribute information on federal, state, or local programs.

- Website: <https://www.rocsinc.org/community-services>
- Yankton Outreach Office (605) 481-0006
- Lake Andes Office (605) 487-7634

Yankton Contact Center

Mission Statement: The Contact Center is dedicated to meeting the emergency needs of people in Yankton who are experiencing a crisis. This is done by providing them a continuum of care to help them stabilize their lives while maintaining their dignity. They provide emergency assistance including utility assistance.

- Phone: (605) 260-4400 Ex. 2
- Address: 321 W. 3rd St, Yankton, SD 57078

Sacred Heart Monastery

Sacred Heart Monastery also provides emergency assistance that includes utility assistance. They require applicants to seek help from the Yankton Contact Center first.

- Phone: (605) 668-6000


2020-2021 Heating Season LIEAP Income Limits

Household Size	Maximum 3-Month Income
1 Person	\$6,380
2 Person	\$8,620
3 Person	\$10,860
4 Person	\$12,969
5 Person	\$15,044
6 Person	\$17,119
7 Person	\$17,508
8 Person	\$17,898
9 Person	\$18,287
10 Person	\$19,905

Source: South Dakota Department of Social Services

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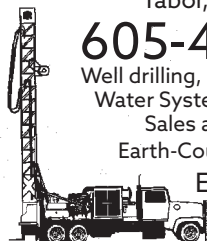


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W-2018522 09/16

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

November 27-December 27

Trees and Trains at the South Dakota Railroad Museum, Weekends, Contact the Museum for Days and Times. Hill City, SD
605-574-9000

December 4-25

Fort Sisseton Drive Thru Christmas Light Display, Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD
605-448-5474

December 5-January 1

Custer State Park Festival of Trees, Custer, SD
605-255-4515

December 5-January 6

Garden Glow, McCrory Gardens Education & Visitor Center, Evenings From 5-8 p.m., Brookings, SD
605-688-6707

December 16-19

Lakota Nation Invitational, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

December 17-20, 27

Twilight Flights, Strawbale Winery, Renner, SD,
605-543-5071

December 19

Cirque Dream Story, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

January 9

Dakota Ridgetop Toy Show, Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD
712-261-0316



Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo, Jan. 29-Feb. 6, 2021

January 14-17, 21-24

Elf The Musical, Area Community Theatre, Mitchell, SD
605-996-9137

January 15-17

BH Rapid Winter Classic Indoor Soccer Tournament, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-394-4115

January 16

Annual Burning Beetle Festival, 5 p.m., Pageant Hill, Custer, SD
605-673-2244

January 18-25

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD
605-717-9294

January 29-February 6

Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
605-335-3861

January 29-30

Pro Snocross Races, Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

January 29-31

Winterfest, Lead, SD
605-335-3861

February 5-6

Mardi Gras Weekend, Main Street, Deadwood, SD
605-578-1976

February 10-13

Watertown Winter Farm Show, Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD
605-886-5814

February 18-25

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

February 20-27

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

March 13-14

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

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.