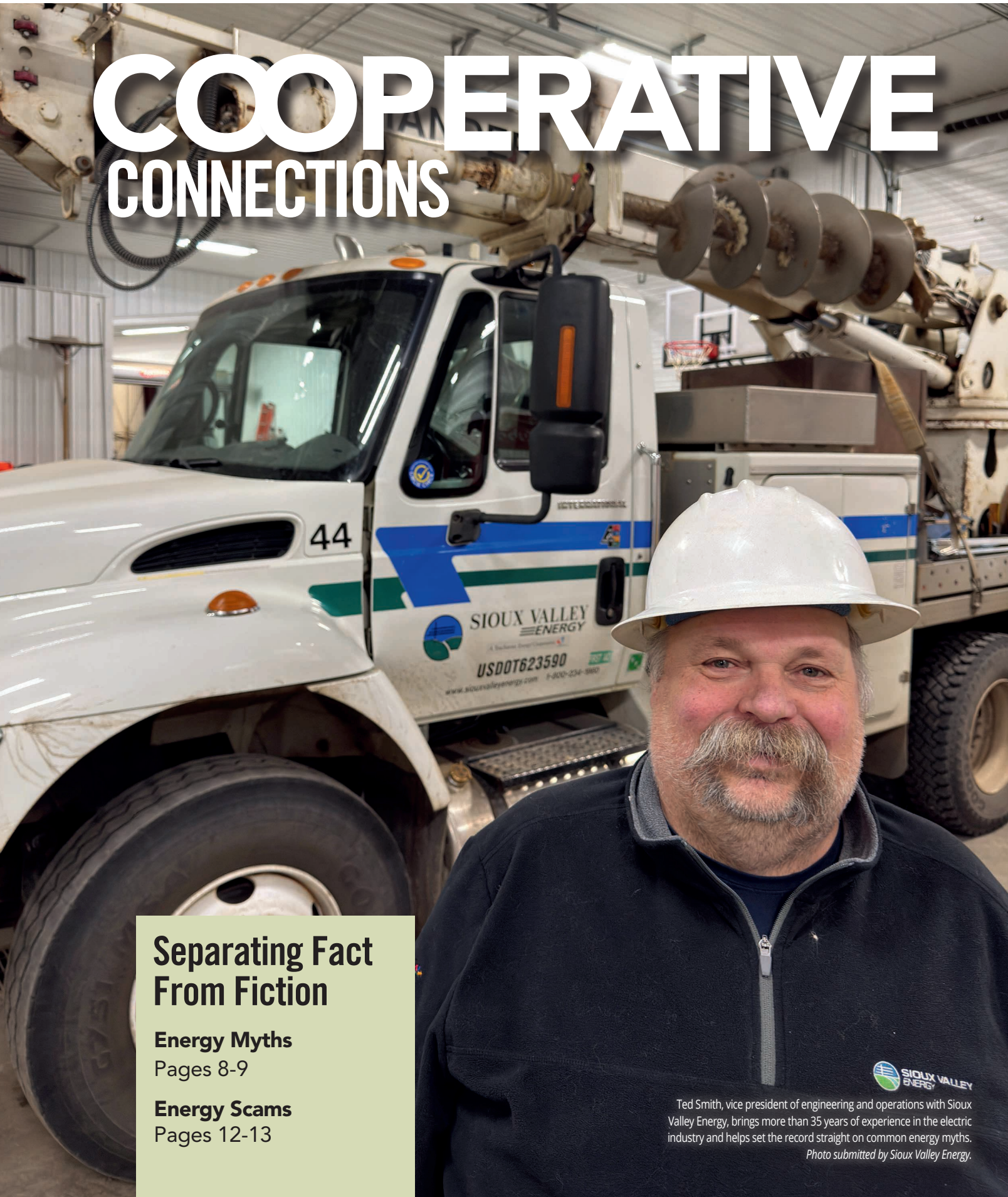


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Separating Fact From Fiction

Energy Myths
Pages 8-9

Energy Scams
Pages 12-13



Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.
Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.

READY WHEN IT MATTERS MOST



Stephanie Horst
horst@byelectric.com

One of the greatest privileges I have as General Manager of B-Y Electric is watching our team step up when it matters most. April gives me a special opportunity to recognize two groups of employees who serve our members faithfully every single day — our lineworkers and our office professionals.

On April 18, we celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day. When storms roll in and the lights go out, most people see inconvenience. Our lineworkers see responsibility. I've watched them leave family meals, ballgames and warm homes to head into the cold, the wind or the dark — not because it's easy, but because it's needed.

Their readiness doesn't happen by chance. It comes from training, experience and pride in their work. But more than that, it comes from something personal. They aren't just restoring power to "a system." They're restoring power to their neighbors. To their own communities. To the farms, businesses, schools and emergency services that depend on us. That means something.

When major storms hit beyond our territory, our crews also answer the call through mutual aid. Whether it's helping a neighboring

cooperative close to home or traveling across state lines, they represent B-Y Electric with professionalism and heart. That cooperative spirit — neighbors helping neighbors — is alive and well in our line crews.

But reliable service doesn't happen in the field alone.

On April 22, we recognize Administrative Professionals Day, and I want to take just as intentional a moment to thank our office team. They are often the first voice our members hear and the steady presence that keeps our daily operations moving forward.

They answer questions, process service orders, manage billing concerns, coordinate communication and keep the details straight so the rest of us can do our jobs effectively. During outages, while crews are in the field, our office professionals are managing calls, updating members and supporting logistics behind the scenes.

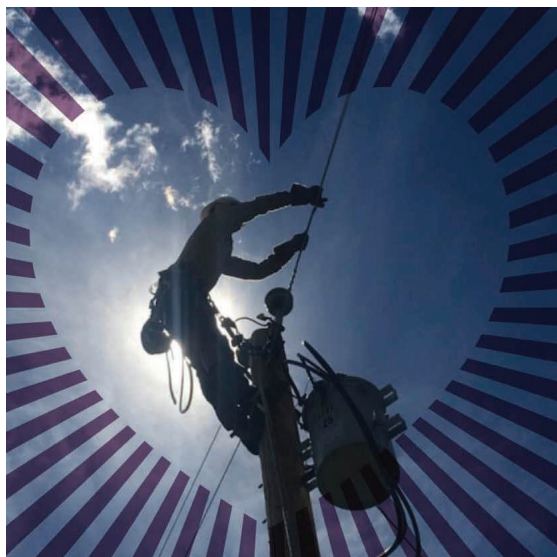
It takes patience, organization and professionalism — and they bring that every day.

In a cooperative our size, every role matters. There isn't anyone who can say, "That's not my job." It truly takes all of us working together to serve our membership well.

I am proud of this team — not just for the work they do, but for how they do it.

With humility. With commitment. And with a clear understanding that what we provide isn't just electricity — it's reliability, security and peace of mind for the communities we call home.

To our lineworkers (Travis Z, Nathan, Tyler, Travis G, Gunnar, Alex, Kevin, Anthony, Joe, Aaron, and Ken) and our administrative professionals (Kara, Jenn, Angie, Chantelle, Jessica, and Nicole): thank you. Your dedication does not go unnoticed. B-Y Electric is stronger because of you, and I am grateful to serve alongside you.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS
BON HOMME YANKTON ELECTRIC

(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 - 4:00pm

Pay by Phone, call:
 1-855-941-3507

To report an outage, call:
Local call from Tabor, Tyndall, and Yankton:
 605-463-2507

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

Board President: Dave Sykora
Board of Directors
 Rick Cheloha - Vice President
 Brian Brandt - Secretary
 Robert Ruppelt - Treasurer
 Paul Voigt
 Tom Boyko

General Manager: Stephanie Horst
Operations Manager: Ken Carda
Office Manager: Nicole Einrem
Members Service Advisor: Aaron Melichar
Editor: Chantelle Jungemann

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, Inc, PO Box 158, 134 S. Lidice St., Tabor, SD 57063-0158. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living. Subscription information: Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Tabor, SD 57063.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 158, Tabor, SD 57063; telephone (605) 463-2507. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING

The February board meeting was held on February 18, 2026 at 8:00 am. Directors present were Dave Sykora, Robert Ruppelt, Paul Voigt, Tom Boyko and Brian Brandt. Others present were the attorney, management staff and guest employee.

THE BOARD APPROVED THE CONSENT AGENDA:

- January 2026 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- Capital Credits to Estates - None
- Review New Members & Cancellations
- Review Closed Work Order - None
- Review Special Equipment Purchases - None

THE BOARD REVIEWED AND ACCEPTED FOLLOWING REPORTS:

- Member Service Report
- Operations & Safety Report
- Office & Financial Reports
- General Manager Report
- East River Cyber Security/IT Report
- SDREA Report

- East River Report
- Co-op at the Capital Report

OTHER GOVERNANCE

- Discussed Annual Meeting Logistics
- Recognition of Paul Voigt BLC Requirements Completed
- Reviewed/Approved 2026 Tyndall Retainer Contract
- Reviewed/Approved 2026 Berndt's Tree Service Contract
- Reviewed/Approved 2026 Ivan's Boring LLC Contract
- Reviewed/Approved 2026 Larson's Digging Inc. Contract
- Enter/Exit Executive Session
- Next Meeting date set for Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 8:00 am.

FINANCIAL REPORT	JANUARY		YTD
	2025	2026	2026
TOTAL ELECTRIC REVENUE	\$1,296,358	\$1,354,478	\$1,354,478
COST OF POWER	\$676,198	\$859,962	\$859,962
TOTAL COST OF SERVICE	\$1,115,667	\$1,378,918	\$1,378,918
KWHS PURCHASED	11,775,635	11,482,964	11,482,964
RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE KWH	2,432	2,339	
RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE BILL	\$261	\$287	

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Tabor

Nathan Meyer
Avon
Kelly & Kellie Pickner
Scott Wormsbecher
Shereen Griffith

Yankton

Chad Soulek
Jared & Candace Hazen
Jordan & Angela Wendell
Mathew & Tracy Kleinschmit

Randy Kinnman
Stacy Miron
Steve & Jessica Freeling
Yalilys Diaz Fleitas

STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling “do not disturb” modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

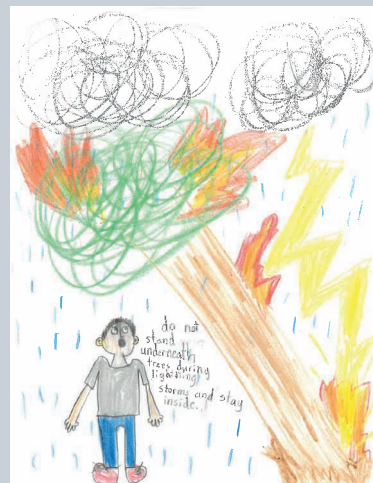
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.



"Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."



**Ramsey Faini,
Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, S.D.

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.

MAIN DISHES

HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles
Oil
1 pkg. bacon
3 cups whole milk
1/2 cup butter (melted)
5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk
16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)
1 tsp. salt
Guda cheese
Parsley (to taste)
1 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. black pepper

Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

Cindi Foster
Codington-Clark Electric

CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped
3/4 cup celery, chopped
1/4 cup butter
5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed
3 cups water
3 cups milk, divided
4 tps. chicken bouillon granules
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 cup flour
4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split
1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)
12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)
6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)
Sauce
1/2 cup butter
1/4 tsp. onion powder
2 tbsps. brown sugar
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
2 tps. poppy seeds
1 1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 tsp. garlic powder

Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

Sauce

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

Jerald & Virginia Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

SCHOLAR OF THE WEEK: JENNY STARK

Senior Jenny has been named our Scholar of the Week, earning a \$250 scholarship from the Bon Homme Yankton Electric, a proud member of the Touchstone Energy Cooperative. This recognition highlights her academic achievements, leadership, and impressive involvement in a wide range of activities.

Jenny is a well-rounded student, balancing a busy schedule that includes participation in FFA, serving as student council president, cheerleading, volleyball, attending American Legion Auxiliary Girls State, and holding a part-time job.

This fall, Jenny plans to attend South Dakota State University to begin her journey toward becoming a doctor. Her dedication, leadership, and commitment to her community make her a deserving recipient of this honor, and the scholarship supports her bright future ahead.



DIRECTOR OBTAINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

B-Y Electric Co-op Director Achieves Credential in Today's Electric Utility Competencies

Paul Voigt recently received the Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The NRECA Board Leadership Certificate recognized individuals who continue their professional development after becoming a Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD). Directors who have attained the BLC have completed 10 credits in advanced, issues-orientated courses.

An ever-changing business environment has imposed new demands on electric cooperative directors, requiring increased knowledge of changes in the electric utility business, new governance skills and a solid knowledge of the cooperative principles and business model. Electric co-ops in South Dakota have a committed to work through NRECA to sharpen this body of knowledge for the benefit of their electric cooperative member-owners.

Board President, David Sykora, presented Paul Voigt with his certificate of achievement at the February board meeting.





Butte Electric Cooperative employees and other volunteers with Betty Krause after painting her house in Belle Fourche. Photo submitted by Clint Haffner

Co-ops in the Community

Butte Electric Volunteers Bring Fresh Paint and a Smile to Retired Nurse

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Concern for community is the seventh cooperative principle, and when Butte Electric Cooperative CEO Matt Sleep was approached to help with a nearby volunteer project, he knew it was his co-op's time to act.

•••

In Belle Fourche, about 25 miles southwest of Butte Electric's headquarters in Newell, City Code Enforcement Officer Clint Haffner keeps a busy schedule. When he's not on the clock for the city handling code enforcement and animal control matters, he's helping lead the local United Way chapter, where he organizes volunteering projects aiming to make Belle Fourche shine a little brighter.

"When I started the job [with the city], I'd come across situations where people are just physically unable to shovel a sidewalk or take care of things," Haffner said. "Some are simply too old. That's kind of how our group began – there just wasn't anyone helping the people who can't do it."

When Butte Electric reached out

to Haffner about potential volunteer opportunities, it didn't take him long to think of a project. Betty Krause, a 97-year-old retired nurse had spent 45 years of her life from 1950 to 1995 taking care of the Belle Fourche community. Haffner figured it was time the community gave something back to her.

Haffner approached Butte Electric about painting Betty's house, garage and shed. After all, who would be better than linemen with experience on ladders and working with their hands?

CEO Matt Sleep enthusiastically accepted, and a few weeks later on a warm September morning, volunteers from Butte Electric, Monument Health and the Belle Fourche United Way arrived at Betty's house to begin the work.

"We descended on the property with ladders, scrapers, paint buckets, paint brushes, a paint sprayer, weed eaters, tree trimmers, etc. and got busy," Sleep recalled.

The Butte Electric employees split into four teams; two would tackle the house, one the shed, and the other the garage. They made quick work of the project as Haffner kept everyone fed and hydrated.

"The Butte Electric guys are wonderful," Haffner said. "They're hard workers, handy, crafty, good on ladders. The paint job at Betty's place was smooth and efficient work."

It took about a day of work between the setup, scraping and painting of the three

buildings – Betty was awestruck when she went outside to see the finished job.

"It was pretty wonderful, and I've had many compliments," she said of the result. "It shows it's a caring community. It's just awesome and amazing that they'd do it for one person."

While Betty's house received a coat of fresh paint, Sleep said the volunteers also took something back with them.

"When the painting was done, I think Betty's appreciation and thankfulness brought a great feeling of joy and accomplishment to all of us there – maybe even a tear or two," Sleep said. "A project like this just adds a little bit of goodness back into a community. And, we all need a little bit of goodness in our lives."



Butte Electric Cooperative employees paint a house in Belle Fourche in Sept. 2025. Photo submitted by Clint Haffner



From left, in the Sioux Valley Energy shop: Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations; Chad Williams, manager of operations; journey lineworker Jager Rus; and journey lineworker Paul Schamber. Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electricity powers nearly every part of daily life, yet most people only think about it when the lights flicker or a bill arrives. Because the system works quietly in the background, assumptions about how it operates tend to fill the gaps.

To sort through several common misconceptions, Cooperative Connections spoke with Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy, the cooperative serving South Dakota counties of Brookings, Lake, Moody, Kingsbury, and Minnehaha and Minnesota counties of Rock and Pipestone. Smith has worked in the electric industry for 35 years, including 20 years at Sioux Valley, where he

oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

Here are several claims he regularly hears from members and how he responds.

Myth: If the lights go out, it must be a local problem.
Smith: That's definitely a myth.

An outage can begin anywhere from inside your home all the way back to a generating station two states away. The electric grid is highly interconnected. A disruption in one area can ripple outward across transmission lines that serve multiple utilities.

There have been large historical outages, especially in the eastern United States, where a single event such as a tree contacting a transmission line triggered a cascading failure across multiple states. Entire cities lost power

because one initiating fault spread across the network.

Closer to home, severe weather in one region can affect transmission lines feeding a much broader footprint. If a major transmission line trips offline, and another line is already out for maintenance, service interruptions can extend far beyond the original storm area.

“Just because your lights go out doesn't mean the problem started down the road, close to home” Smith said. “It could be much farther upstream.”

Myth: The grid can be powered entirely by renewable energy.
Smith: At times, yes. Around the clock, no.

Smith pointed to hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River as renewable generation that run continuously, but other renewable resources, such as wind and solar, simply aren't reliable sources of energy and only contribute

significantly when conditions allow.

“Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn’t always blow in South Dakota,” Smith said. “And solar only produces during daylight hours.”

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.

Smith: That’s not how it works.

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member’s own service.

“When crews see it’s a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member,” Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.

Smith: No.

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service

notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

“With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage,” Smith said. “Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations.”

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

“One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down,” he said. “When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage.”

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.

Smith: The fuel is free, but that’s the only thing that’s free.

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.

Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

“The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line,” Smith said. “We don’t have a printing press in the basement.”

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it’s financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member’s share of the cooperative’s financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around \$220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative’s power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.



CO-OP IN THE CLASSROOM

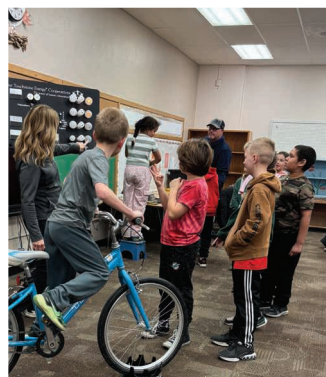
Jennifer Gross, East River's Education and Outreach Coordinator and Aaron Melichar, B-Y Electric's Member Service Advisor recently visited Beadle Elementary students.

Co-op in the Classroom program teaches the importance of respecting electricity, where electricity comes from, and hands-on demonstrations to engage students.

Nearly seventy five Beadle 3rd grade students took part in learning the ways we produce electricity and where it comes from. A Van de Graaff generator demonstrated the movement of electrons with some hair raising results. Another device that invokes a lot of excitement is the Pedal Power Bicycle generator. Students were asked to become power plants as they proved

the energy that produces electricity for LED, CFL and Incandescent light bulbs. By learning these concepts from an early age, kids will be better prepared to make wise energy decisions now and be conscientious consumers of energy in the future.

Co-op in the Classroom is available to schools and organizations within East River's service territory. To request a presentation for your school or community organization, please contact Chantelle Jungemann, Member Service Representative at 605-463-2507.



People • Power • Purpose



South Dakota Rural Electric – – – – – **YOUTH EXCURSION** – – – – – July 20-22, 2026

DEPENDANTS OF B-Y ELECTRIC MEMBERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO APPLY FOR THE SOUTH DAKOTA RURAL ELECTRIC YOUTH EXCURSION.

Calling all high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors! Is your parent or guardian an active member-owner of Bon Homme Yankton Electric? If so, you're eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion 2026!

If chosen, you will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 20-22, participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from.

Once participants arrive on the campus, they can look forward to building friendships, taking in the sights of North Dakota's capital and learning "The Story Behind the Light Switch." During their stay, students will get to

hear from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. Students will be given the opportunity to tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where

South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, visit local attractions and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers.

To be eligible for Youth Excursion, students must be in high school and their parent or guardian must be an active member-owner of Bon Homme Yankton Electric.

Deadline for the 2026 Youth Excursion application is Friday, May 8th at 4:00 pm.

If you have any questions please contact Aaron Melichar or Chantelle Jungemann at 605-463-2507.

ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers

or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.

SIGNS OF AN

ENERGY SCAM

High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.





2026 ADMIN APPRECIATION DAY

Administrative professionals are the essential, often unsung backbone of an organization, keeping things organized, efficient, and running smoothly.

April 22, Administrative Professionals Day is a special occasion dedicated to recognizing the hard work and dedication of office managers, administrative assistants, receptionists, and other support staff who keep organizations running smoothly. Recognized annually on the Wednesday of the last full week in April.

This day acknowledges the vital role administrative professionals play in the workplace. Day to day of managing schedules and coordinating meetings to handling communications and solving unexpected challenges, they are part of all daily operations. Their attention to detail, organization, and professionalism ensure that teams stay connected and productive.

On Administrative Professionals Day, employers often show appreciation. More than just a gesture, it's an opportunity to highlight the respect and value these professionals deserve year-round.

Taking time to recognize administrative professionals reminds us that behind every successful organization is a dedicated team ensuring everything stays on track.



2026 LINEMEN APPRECIATION DAY

April 18, co-ops and communities recognize Lineman Appreciation Day. A day to take the time to recognize the dedicated men and women who keep our power on and our lives running smoothly. Established in 2013 by the U.S. Senate, this day highlights the essential role that electrical lineworkers play in maintaining and restoring the energy infrastructure.

Lineworkers, often work in some of the most challenging and dangerous conditions. Whether climbing

utility poles, repairing lines after severe storms, or responding to emergencies in the middle of the night, they are the first to step forward when communities need them most. Their job demands not only technical skill and physical strength but also deep commitment to public service.

From wind storms and ice storms to everyday maintenance and upgrades, because of linemen homes stay warm, hospitals remain operational, and businesses continue

to serve their customers. Their efforts often go unnoticed, that is until the lights go out. Lineman Appreciation Day is an opportunity to change that by recognizing their hard work and dedication.

On this day take time to say “thank you.” Simple words of gratitude to lineworkers reminds them how much we rely on their profession.

As you flip a switch and see the lights come on, thank a linemen.



Linemen know the meaning of service, its the dedication that powers the co-op!



APRIL 9-11
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Festival of
 Tasting
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237
 www.schmeckfest.com

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

MARCH 27-APRIL 4
The Passion and the Cross
 Orpheum Theatre
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000
 www.ThePassionMusical.com

APRIL 3
**Bachelors of Broadway:
 Gentlemen of the Theatre**
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 5
Easter Sunrise Service
 7 a.m.
 Mount Rushmore

APRIL 9
**McCrossan Wildest Banquet
 Auction in the Midwest**
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers
 Sioux Falls, SD
 www.mccrossan.org

APRIL 9-11
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237
 www.schmeckfest.com

APRIL 11
Women VetsConnect Retreat
 A Wellness Retreat for
 Women Veterans and Military
 Spouses
 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church
 909 W. 33rd St.
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 11
**Minnehaha County Pheasants
 Forever Annual Banquet**
 5:30 p.m.-10 p.m.
 Blue Haven Atrium
 46594 268th St.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-214-1415

APRIL 11-12
The Black Market
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-6004

APRIL 18
Brookings Quilt Show XII
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Admission: \$10
 Dakota Bank Center
 Brookings, SD
 605-690-3246

APRIL 18
**Tri-Valley Chorus
 75th Annual Show**
 4 p.m.
 Centerville, SD
 605-201-9398

APRIL 20
The Bronx Wanderers
 7 p.m.
 Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 25
**Screams by Night
 Halfway to Halloween Con**
 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
 The Social
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 28
American Legion Bingo
 5-6 p.m. Social
 6-6:30 p.m. Meal
 6:45 p.m. Bingo
 American Legion Post 15
 1600 W. Russell
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-682-1222

MAY 2-10
**Rustic Designs & More Spring
 Show, Flea Market**
 41450 264th St.
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

MAY 2
Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
 2-8 p.m.
 Milbank, SD
 605-432-6656

JUNE 13
Journey Into Historic Pickstown
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Ft. Randall Town & Museum
 Pickstown, SD
 605-487-7299

JUNE 26-27
Buckhorn Rodeo
 Britton, SD
 605-880-5077

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.