

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Your Electric Cooperative



Melissa Maher
Manager

Having gone through a series of outages created by heavy frost load coming off the lines during the week of Jan. 22, I felt the need to describe your electrical system, including some statistical data to provide a better understanding of how the electric distribution system works within our service area.

Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative has 3,853 miles of line located throughout Corson, Dewey and Ziebach Counties.

Our service territory encompasses 6,950 square miles. The make-up is 210 miles of transmission line feeding 15 substations, 3,195 miles of overhead distribution line and 446 miles of underground distribution line. We serve 3,893 members with over 7,000 meters. Each year, our lender compiles a report consisting of numerous ratios – one being the kilowatt-hour usage per meter comparison. To be noted, Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative is listed each year in this report compiled by our lender, by having the least amount of usage per meter in the state of South Dakota, in fact we typically are half of the state average. This means we need to provide the same service for half the amount of revenue per mile of line as the other electric cooperatives in the state.

The entire electrical system is very complex – requiring much coordination to work properly. We have 294 oil circuit reclosers (OCR) also referred to as breakers - located through our massive service area. These devices are strategically located. They serve as a safety precaution – when the line senses a fault the OCR will operate (or open) thus stopping power from traveling down the line. Most of our OCR's are set on 3-shot. If, for example, an object comes in the path but then leaves – the OCR will operate once – then close back in (doing this three-times) resuming operation. If the object stays in the line – then the OCR will open and stay open, ceasing operation until blockage is resolved.

So – back to the week in January – our system saw several days of heavy frost. This frost stuck to the lines, trees, and fences. When the sun started to finally shine – the frost began to fall off the lines – typically the neutral or bottom wire comes off first – leaving the top

wire still heavily laden with frost. In many cases – creating a short in the line by coming in contact with the neutral. In some cases – when these conductors touch – they will burn off the phase wire or even wrap around the neutral or pole in the process thus creating a dead short on this line (OCR opens) thus no power running down the line. When this is happening system-wide (as previously mentioned there are 294 units within our system) – it becomes quite a scheduling dilemma to get to all these open OCR's in a timely manner. In some cases, if the frost is not completely cleared from the line, the OCR will re-open once again after we have manually closed it and moved on to the next area. I jokingly said that we may have made it to almost every OCR we have in the system during this event – some even more than once!

At this point, I might predict what you are thinking, Why doesn't Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative have more underground lines that wouldn't be affected by ice/frost load? My answer is it's all about the money. A misnomer that many have is that we operate on grant funding. This is NOT so. The only exception to this is when we have experienced a major ice storm – FEMA has come in and provided grant funding at a percent of our cost to put our line back to pre-existing conditions. Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative has borrowed money since day one of operation – with the first loan dating back to 1947. My estimated calculation of total accumulative loans now surpasses \$80 million. All these loans are paid back with interest. Our current total gross utility plant (after accumulated depreciation) is over \$68 million at year-end 2023 with our total debt service over \$35 million. The cost to build a mile of new underground line is \$66,100 / mile – whereas the cost to build a mile of new overhead line is \$53,300 / mile. Like so much in life – it comes down to money. How we re-pay these loan funds – is through the rate structure paid by you, the member on your monthly bills. It all must make financial sense. Our O&M (Operations and Maintenance Expense) alone for 2023 was over \$1.9 million.

Having said all of this, for the past several years – we have been

Continued on next page.



Photo credit: Merretta Anderson

COMPARATIVE REPORT	Current (Dec 2023)	1 year ago (Dec 2022)	10 Years Ago (Dec 2013)	% Change in 10 years
Number of Meters	7,156	7,133	6,827	5%
Kilowatt Hours Sold	9,675,361	12,262,402	13,358,422	-28%
Cost of Purchased Power	\$572,827	\$762,761	\$688,518	-17%
Overall Ave. Rate / kWh Per Member	0.1226	0.1200	0.1104	11%

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-951)

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Design assistance by SDREA

working on replacing some overhead lines with underground lines. It is a work in progress – with some areas simply not feasible to put in underground when the usage is so low.

I trust this gives you a better picture of your electrical system and what it takes to keep it running. I wish to close by praising your employees. When duty calls, your employees are second to none – from the linemen working on the outages in the field, to the office staff answering phone calls, and keeping you informed. It takes team effort – and you have a great team working for you!

Until next month.... Think spring and green grass and may God continue to Bless our Cooperative.

Help Us Find These Missing Members

The following list of people have capital credit checks that were undeliverable in December 2023. If you know of the current address of anyone listed here, please let us know by calling 1-800-952-3158, emailing mge@mge.coop or going to the update page at www.mge.coop.

ALBERS, TRAVIS A.
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BORNONG, MARIJO ESTATE
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CONDER, WARNER W.
CONDON, WILLIAM SR.
CONICA, GERRILYN J
COOK, DALE
CORTES, MARILYN
CREES, BONNYE K.
CUDMORE, LEIGH A.
DEMERY, ANGELIC
DIFFERENT HORSE, JERRY SR. ESTATE
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FISH, CDR IRWIN W.
FOOTE, EVELYN ESTATE
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HOON, DANIEL L.
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IRON HAWK, DESTRY
IRON HAWK, GERMAINE ESTATE
IRON HAWK, MARGO
IRON LIGHTNING, ROBIN A
IRON WING, ROBBIE ESTATE
ISBURG, ANNA
JACOBS, TIM B.
JAMERSON, JOSEPH C. ESTATE
KINKEAD, WANDA
KNIGHT, LACEY A.
LA PLANTE, REBECCA L
LE BEAU, BRUCE
LEE, VELMA ESTATE
LITTLE BEAR, MELVIN N. ESTATE
LITTLE DOG, ASHLEY
LITTLE DOG, JACQUELINE
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LONE EAGLE, VIOLET ESTATE
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SCHUH, DORIS ESTATE
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SIMMONDS, SCOTT
SMITH, CHARLES B.
STADEL, MARTY ESTATE
STADEL, SHAWN
STEINMEYER, WILLIAM
STOESER, KATHRYN
STRICKER, JESSE
SWIMMER, RANDY
TAKEN ALIVE, MAYNARD ESTATE
TAKES THE GUN, VELMA
TAKES THE KNIFE, MARTY
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THOMAS, MARIE ESTATE
TOMAC, EMIL ESTATE
TROTTI, JIM
TWO CROW, KRISTAL G.
VARLAND, DEZARAY D
VEIT, BRENDA B. ESTATE
VIVIER, TINA L.
VOSSLER, PRESTON
WALKING EAGLE, GRACE ESTATE
WARD, ROBERT P.
WASHBURN, AMANDA R.
WEERTS, TAWNA
WHITE TWIN, LOLITA ESTATE
WHITE, BRAD
WIDOW, TONIA L. ESTATE
YANKTON, RHONDA
YARDLEY, JULIE D.
YELLS EAGLE, GEORGETTE M.

Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

It may come as a surprise that the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death is falls. In 2021, 44,686 people died in falls at home and at work, according to Injury Facts®. For working adults, depending on the industry, falls can be the leading cause of death.

Falls are 100% Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project:

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned above
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment

We tend to think we're always safe on flat ground, but the thousands of injuries each year tell us otherwise.

- Falls are the #1 cause of death for older adults; fall-proof your home
- Keep floors and surfaces clear of clutter
- Keep file cabinets and desk drawers closed
- Keep electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on stairways
- Wear sensible footwear
- Never stand on chairs, tables or any surface with wheels
- Properly arrange furniture to create open pathways
- Maintain good lighting indoors and out

More than 6.9 million people were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries in 2021. A fall can end in death or disability in a split second, but with a few simple precautions, you'll be sure stay safe at home and at work.

Source: National Safety Council



Trim Your Trees

Brace Tapio, Age 8

Brace Tapio cautions readers to trim their trees to prevent power line damage. Brace's parents are Nate and Elsa Tapio from Armour, S.D., members of Douglas 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.

SEAFOOD SPECIALS

CAJUN SHRIMP

Ingredients:

1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2-3 tsps. cajun seasoning
2 tbsps. butter

Method

Coat shrimp with seasoning. Melt butter in large skillet on medium heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir three minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Serve over cooked rice, if desired.

McCormick.com

CRAB SALAD SPREAD

Ingredients:

8-12 oz. imitation crab meat, flake style, tear into small pieces
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup (approx.) shredded Cheddar cheese
1 small can black olives, sliced
Mayo (must be Mayo), to get correct texture, less is better than too much
1/4 to 1/2 pepper, cracked

Method

Mix by hand. Serve with Club or Ritz crackers.

Linda Hubbard
Rapid City, S.D.

CREAMY SHRIMP LINGUINE

Ingredients:

8 oz. linguine
1 tbsp. butter
1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cup heavy cream
1 package garlic butter shrimp scampi
2 tbsps. white wine

Method

Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well.

Melt butter in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Add cooked pasta, Seasoning Mix, cream and wine. Reduce heat to medium; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

McCormick.com

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Spring Cleaning Tips to Maximize Efficiency



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: What are some energy-saving tasks I can add to my spring cleaning list?

A: Spring is a great time to refresh, clean and enhance energy efficiency at home. By adopting simple yet effective energy-saving strategies during our spring-cleaning routines, we can create an efficient living environment that may also lower our utility bills and extend the life of our heavily used appliances.

Be sure to include these spring cleaning tips to add some energy savings to the job.

Even though it's out of sight, don't leave it out of mind. Check the filter in your HVAC system. Your furnace worked hard during the winter. Ensuring your system has a clean filter is a low-cost and easy way to protect your equipment and maximize efficiency. A dirty furnace filter can cause your system to work harder than necessary, decreasing efficiency and shortening the system's life.

While the filter is easy to replace yourself, you should have your air conditioning serviced and professionally cleaned. Both the indoor and outdoor units should be cleaned. Dirty refrigerant coils reduce efficiency. This also applies to heat pumps and ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-split systems. The technician can check refrigerant levels and refill or repair if necessary.

HVAC contractors get busy responding to calls for repairs during the summer heat. Scheduling cleaning services for your air conditioning in the spring – before the heat of the summer – can ensure the work gets done before the rush and even save you money. Some HVAC contractors offer special discounts for cleaning services in the milder months, which helps fill their schedules and keep their technicians working.

Window AC units can get dirty, too. They can be cleaned with the proper tools, cleaning agents and know-how. Always unplug before

cleaning, and wait until completely dry to plug it back in again. Take the time to clean it properly in the spring before you need it in the summer.

Cleaning light fixtures and fixture covers can brighten your space by removing dust and grime collected during the winter. While you are at it, be sure to check your bulbs and replace any incandescent or compact fluorescent with energy-saving LEDs. Although they tend to cost a little more, LEDs last longer and use less energy.

Good-quality LED light bulbs are expected to last 30,000 to 50,000 hours, according to the Department of Energy. A typical incandescent lamp lasts about 1,000 hours, and a comparable CFL lasts 8,000 to 10,000 hours. To put this into everyday use, if you have an LED light on for 10 hours per day, it can last 13 years compared to only about three months for incandescent bulbs and about two-and-a-half years for CFLs.

Don't forget the oven. A clean oven heats more evenly and quickly, providing better results and lower energy use. A clean oven window allows you to see the food and how it's cooking without opening the oven door, which wastes energy.

If cleaning windows is on the list, check the seals and sash locks to ensure they close tightly. Check for any areas that need caulking or sealing to reduce drafts. Sealing around windows contributes to year-round comfort in your home. Clean windows also allow more light into the home, reducing the need to turn on lamps and overhead fixtures.

Spring is the ideal time to declutter, deep clean and implement practices that not only tidy our homes but also reduce energy consumption, contributing positively to our homes' energy efficiency and saving money on energy use.



Käsemeister Creamery

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Spink Colony's Käsemeister Creamery continues to perfect the art of cheese making while continuously looking for more ways to increase its economic footprint.

The creamery is located at a Hutterite colony about nine miles south of Frankfort, which produces over 150 types of cheese, which are sold in stores throughout the state and into North Dakota and Minnesota.

The creamery's manager, Jeremy Wipf, said the business also gets online orders regularly that go throughout the United States.

"We're always trying to get into more stores," Wipf said, which isn't easy in the competitive world of cheese and dairy products.

"The bigger creameries are our biggest competition," Wipf said. "But we're coming along. We're still growing slowly. We're only using half of our milk right now, so we will have the other half to use up. We've got room for expansion if



we could get in with a new distributor that isn't in South Dakota. There's plenty of cheese around. There's always competition."

The idea for the creamery came about in 2016. After securing a business loan, the Spink Colony bought the equipment necessary to start the business in 2018.

In fall of 2018, the creamery officially opened for business.

Käsemeister Creamery employs five full-time and 12 part-time employees from Spink Colony. "When we need more help, like when we make the cheese, we have extra help. It gets a little more difficult at times, such as harvest. During those times, we just have to do what we can and work harder and longer," Wipf said.

The creamery source 100% of the milk used to make the cheese from the colony's dairy operation, which milks around 100 cows. The cows are a three-way cross of Montbeliarde, Swedish Red, and Holstein.

"The idea behind it is a smaller cow that takes less feed but has more body fat, more protein – which at the end of the day is what pays the bills," Wipf explained.

The creamery is hoping to break into the whey industry, which would allow them to sell a byproduct from making the cheese.

"We basically have to throw away the whey right now," Wipf said.

For every 10 pounds of milk, you get one pound of cheese and nine pounds of whey, according to Wipf.

A separate facility would be needed to process the whey byproduct into whey protein, a product currently in high demand.

"But we're too small to invest in equipment for a facility. You've got to have a separate facility for processing whey. There's a lot of demand for it, but you have to have a lot for it to be feasible," Wipf said.

Creamery's current processing facility is comprised of all stainless steel machinery, which was put together by workers from the colony. A 14,700 square foot facility hosts both the processing area and retail store front.

Check out the cheeses and other products offered by Käsemeister Creamery online at www.kasemeister.com.





Rural Artist Michelle Weber has illustrated 11 children books in addition to showcasing her art nationwide and internationally.

Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sarea.coop

During her upbringing in Windom, Minn., Michelle Weber discovered her passion for art at a young age. She was the kid who was always doodling, often paying more attention to her drawings than to the class. Holding on to her passion, Weber took her first art class in high school with her art

teacher, Mark Nass. Although the class had a rocky start, Nass recognized her potential and helped fuel a passion that would ultimately lead Weber to becoming a prominent rural artist.

“I was a junior in high school when I enrolled in my first real art class, and to be honest, I kind of hated it,” said Weber. “That first week, I was mortified that I wasn’t any good.”

Initially contemplating dropping the class, Weber sought a signature from her art teacher to change her art class to a study hall instead. Despite her request, Nass refused to let her drop the class and encouraged her to try give the class another chance.

“After a few weeks, everything just clicked,” said Weber. “I fell in love with painting and began living in the school’s art room.”

In less than a year, Weber made substantial progress in her artistic abilities. Enough so, that her teacher encouraged her to apply for the Congressional Art Competition. She applied,

and her painting not only won in her district but also earned a spot in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C., where it was showcased for an entire year.

Weber's success in the Congressional Art Competition foreshadowed what was to come. Drawing inspiration from her upbringing on a farm and involvement in 4-H, Weber began primarily painting livestock. In 2011, Weber's friend from Mitchell, S.D., Amanda Radke, approached her with a request to illustrate a children's book featuring livestock and rural agriculture, a perfect fit for Weber's artwork. This opportunity led to the creation of "A World With Cows," marking Weber's first foray into a full-time career as an artist.

"The book was a huge stepping stone for both of us," said Weber.

The children's book marked not only the beginning of a career but also established Weber's niche – capturing the focal point of rural life on canvas: livestock, horses, buffalo, and more. Weber has since illustrated 10 additional children's books and successfully sold her artwork both nationwide and internationally.

Traditionally, her oil paintings have been rooted in a realism, capturing every detail of the depicted animals. More recently, Weber has expanded her art to include a more whimsical and abstract representation of the rural lifestyle.

"My niche market is the producer, so it's important that my art reflects an authentic rural lifestyle," said Weber. "I want these paintings to have a touch of who I am, but also have the integrity of this lifestyle retained on canvas too."

Today, Weber resides just outside Lake Benton, Minn., a town just outside the South Dakota border. From her small town, Michelle Weber also maintains a website, michelleweberstudio.com, where she showcases a wide range of products

featuring her artwork, including prints, notecards, children's books, and even cake pans. In addition to her website, Weber recently opened a studio named, "The Studio by Michelle Weber" in the center Lake Benton.

"The Studio is a space located right in the heart of Lake Benton," said Weber. "Some people look at Lake Benton with a population of less than 700 or less and ask, 'Why would you open your studio there?' But I stand behind supporting these small. They are the heartbeat of this country, so it only seemed fitting to bring it home."



A Weber painting, titled "Side Eye."



Weber is widely known for her oil paintings that capture the essence of an authentic rural lifestyle on canvas.

Continuity of Service

The Cooperative shall use reasonable diligence to provide a constant and uninterrupted supply of electric power and energy.

If the supply of electric power and energy shall fail, be interrupted, or become defective through an act of God, government authority, action of the elements, public enemy, accident, strikes, labor trouble, required maintenance work, premature obsolescence of equipment or any other cause beyond the reasonable control of the Cooperative, the Cooperative shall not be liable therefore or for damages caused thereby.

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To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202)690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.



When you flip on a light switch, electricity travels in an instant to your home and the bulb glows – that’s called demand. When all of us turn on lights, heaters, run a hot bath or any of the other appliances at the same time, it increases the demand load system wide.

We offer a one-time incentive of \$50 to our members that install a Demand Response Unit (DRU) on water heaters and central air conditioning units. After a licensed electrician (hired by Moreau-Grand Electric) installs the DRU, we begin managing your energy consumption – on average, four to eight days out of the month. If you would like to join the over 550 other members of Moreau-Grand Electric in the Demand Response Program, you can contact Member Services at 800-952-3158 to set up a time to have a DRU installed. *14648 248TH AVE

Water Heater Rebate Program (water heaters 40 gallons or more)

Is that old water heater leaking a bit or takes a long time to recover? Are you building a new home? Give us a call, we can help with a rebate on that new water heater.

- \$75 when replacing an existing electric water heater with a new electric water heater
- \$200 when replacing an existing gas or oil water heater with a new electric water heater
- \$200 on new construction

(All rebates are subject to a maximum amount of \$500 per member, per year).

Jan. 15, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes and Nov. 2023 Financial Information

The January 15, 2024, board of directors’ meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Bartlett, Clark, Hahne, Hieb, Keckler, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Walker and Wall, and others present: Manager Maher and Finance Officer Lemburg (Delegated Recorder of Minutes).

The Large Power Users monthly report was given by Stephanie Bartlett, which included topics on large power usage and payments.

The Member Services report was given by JJ Martin, which included analyzing heat meter data and rectifying the issues, becoming familiar with the MGEC mapping system, digitizing old photos, Rushmore Electric will purchase five new firewalls for the MGEC substations, purchased a drone and ordered four new computers.

The Operations report was given by Kent Larson, which included recent outages, December ice storm outages, Truck 14 bucket mechanism broke during the extreme cold and should be covered by warranty, year-end inventory went well, held a safety committee meeting, and SD DOT plans to re-do Highway 63 South.

Manager Maher gave the Manager’s report, which included anticipated high demand charges for January, presented KW and KWH history, upcoming Cooperative Connections article regarding reliability, update on WAPA Substation upgrade, new headquarters facility update, 2023 statistical information, 2023 wheeling data, inventory adjustment history, all employees are using the new Connect Financials program for time sheets, vehicle analysis for 2023, and salary breakdown history.

The Board discussed and registered for the SDREA Rural Electric Co-op Day at the Capitol in Pierre scheduled for February 20, 2024.

Manager Maher provided an update on the Cost-of-Service Study, which included data requests,

no preliminary information available yet, and PSE representatives plan to present the findings to the Board at the February meeting.

Director Hahne plans to attend NRECA CCD Courses 2600- Director Duties and 2610- Understanding the Electric Business, which are being offered in Pierre.

Manager Maher and all Directors who attended the Legislative Forum in Faith gave a report on the event, which included several legislators and lobbyists in attendance, discussed reliability, electric vehicles, and eminent domain.

Directors Clark and McLellan gave the SDREA Board meeting report, which included reliability, security concerns, and proposed legislative bills.

Director Hieb gave the SDREA annual meeting report, which included unemployment statistics, electric vehicles, Federated Insurance claims and the importance of using safety equipment, Federal issues, grid reliability, Basin Electric’s potential large growth, and SPP considering extending further west.

Board approved the following: the agenda, the minutes from the December meeting, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, set the annual limit for estate retirements, contractor storm bids for 2024, set the Policy Committee meeting for March 27, 2024, Special Equipment Summaries #455-457 in the amount of \$47,230.38, and outside union contract.

The next board meeting was scheduled for February 19, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

NOV. 2023 FINANCIAL INFORMATION			
	NOV. '23	NOV. '22	YTD 2023
Operating Revenues	\$1,154,097	\$1,115,553	\$11,866,220
Cost Of Power	\$574,352	\$629,173	\$5,703,175
Cost Of Electric Service	\$1,094,346	\$1,113,970	\$11,599,330
Margins	\$82,460	\$16,882	\$ 532,833
Kwh Purchased	10,155,845	10,860,120	100,359,825
Kwh Sold	9,346,996	9,165,890	92,941,915



Sacred Hoops Coach Tuffy Morrison is just one of many volunteer coaches who make Sacred Hoops Basketball a reality for rural athletes.

SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

Sacred Hoops Basketball Scores Big with Rural Youth

Frank Turner

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Sacred Hoops Basketball, a nonprofit organization unique to South Dakota, has been changing the game for youth basketball across the state for more than six years. Using basketball as a tool for youth development, the program organizes teams, trains coaches, and hosts tournaments and workshops for young individuals in all communities – both big and small.

Since the program's conception, the emphasis has centered on rural engagement. Allan Bertram, the owner and operator of Sacred Hoops, co-founded the program alongside Jordan Long and a few other movers and shakers as a way to bring quality basketball instruction to students who would otherwise need to travel hundreds of miles to participate. Their goal was to make basketball accessible to all athletes across the state, not only improving their basketball skills but

also their life skills.

"We wanted to bridge the gap for kids in rural areas, particularly our athletes in low socio-economic areas who may not have been able to play basketball otherwise," said Bertram. "We want to ensure that every kid who wants to play can."

Beyond hosting tournaments and teams, Bertram and the organization's other volunteers have found other ways to make changes on and off the basketball court. In addition to hosting more than 120 high school instruction programs across the state, Sacred Hoops Basketball annually distributes more than \$70,000 in scholarships that aid athletes from low-income families to play ball. The organization was also the driving force behind a recent initiative that placed 2,000 new pairs of shoes in the hands of children from select, rural



Sacred Hoops Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier draws up a play for the the Sacred Hoops West River Youth Team.

elementary schools in South Dakota. “We’ve seen so many kids grow and fulfill their passion,” said Bertram. “In today’s world, our youth sometimes don’t understand what their purpose or passion is, and that’s why so many of our youth are struggling. It doesn’t matter what a kid is passionate about – it could be music, sports, gaming, or whatever – but it’s our job to help feed that passion because that is what gives those kids a purpose.”

Today, the program has expanded to encompass more than 50 dedicated volunteers and 600 athletes across 60 teams in their summer season, with athletes spanning from third grade to high school. These numbers, said Bertram, have added up to a real impact for athletes across the state. Within Sacred Hoops Basketball, more than 75 athletes have gone on to play college-level basketball.

“It gives us a great sense of pride because those kids are not only getting a post-secondary degree but also get to continue their passion by playing at the next level,” said Bertram. “Many of these kids come from rural areas or

locations.” Sacred Hoops Basketball Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier also emphasized the impact that the nonprofit has had on West River athletes. Standing Soldier regularly works with athletes from several rural

West River communities, including Pine Ridge, Belle Fourche, Kadoka, and more.

“We have athletes from all over come to play on one team, and it’s changing the game for these kids. We have seen several of our athletes start making junior varsity and varsity teams as middle schoolers,” said Standing Soldier. “These are kids we want to help reach their full potential, both on and off the court.”

Reflecting on his upbringing, Standing Soldier said that basketball played a significant role in his early life, ultimately leading to college scholarships that allowed him to play basketball for Platte Community College in Nebraska and later the University of Mary in North Dakota. Those opportunities, he said, are ones that he wants to share with other youth in South Dakota.

“Basketball has been a part of my entire life,” he said. “I developed a love for the game. God has used it to impact my entire life, and now I’m using it to impact others.”



The Sacred Hoops Basketball AAU West Coast National Championship Team.



Ali Van Sambeek's one-year-old smiles while feeding the chickens.

Keeping Chickens

Shannon Marvel

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During summertime mornings, Ali Van Sambeek will send her five-year-old out into the backyard to retrieve what's needed to cook that morning's breakfast.

"He's learned how to fry an egg on the stove, so in the summer he'll go out to the coop, bring back an egg and cook himself breakfast. Or I'll tell kids we need some tomatoes and eggs for breakfast, and they'll go out to get them in the backyard," Van Sambeek said.

Nestled in the Black Hills between Hermosa and Keystone, Ali and her husband raise four children, all under the age of seven, and a couple dozen chickens.

The chickens were added to the Van Sambeek family about a year ago.

"We wanted our kids to have more chores. We both grew up ranching and farming. We don't personally do that

anymore and we wanted our kids to have a taste of that life," Van Sambeek said.

"We haven't had to buy a store-bought egg since we started," she gleamed.

To begin, Van Sambeek started asking friends who raised their own chickens in their backyards a lot of questions.

Around that time and by chance, Van Sambeek learned of a friend that was looking to get rid of a couple hens and a coop for free.

So Van Sambeek took advantage of the opportunity and gave the hens a home in her backyard.

"We started with four, and were up to 20 at one point. And now we're down a little bit after an unfortunate situation with a hawk. That was our kids' first experience with losing animals. But this spring we'll get chicks again," Van Sambeek said.

The Van Sambeeks started off with Dominique brown layer chickens, but expanded the number of breeds in their

coop to get a more colorful plethora of eggs.

"I really wanted the green, dark brown and blue eggs. We pretty much have all the colors now. They've stopped laying throughout the winter, in the summer we'll get about eight or nine eggs a day," Van Sambeek said.

With her children being at the ages of 7, 5, 3 and 1, raising chickens has been



Ali Van Sambeek's son refills the water jug for the family's chickens.

a great way to teach them that their food doesn't just come from the store.

"Somebody has to put work into it – it's kind of cool when it's your own work. That's been one of the biggest things. We also have a pretty big garden. We feed the scraps from the garden back to the chickens. It's so much fun for the kids to see that process," Van Sambeek said.

Over in the eastern part of the state near Brandon, Stephanie Peterson has taken her love of raising backyard chickens and her expertise in doing so to new levels.

Peterson grew up in Lemmon and Rapid City before moving to Washington, D.C., to work on Capitol Hill for U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle.

During her time in Washington, D.C., Peterson raised four backyard chickens. Nine years ago, Peterson and her family moved back to South Dakota and bought a small acreage just outside of Brandon.

She purchased 15 hens and one rooster in the process and immensely enjoyed caring for the chickens and was entertained by their antics.

That developed into a full-fledged business for Peterson, named Fruit of the Coop.

"I heard that the backyard chicken keeping classes instructor for Sioux Falls Community Education was no longer available to teach, and I stepped right into the opening. I've been teaching classes since 2015. I also help small communities draft and pass backyard chicken ordinances for their towns, in addition to offering private consultations for folks who want personalized help getting started with backyard chickens," Peterson said.

She even offers advanced classes on veterinary care for flocks and is a distributor of non-GMO, organic chicken feed grown and milled by a local family farm.

"I started my egg business in 2016, working directly with chefs and restaurant owners to provide pasture-raised eggs to Sioux Falls restaurants. I also offer farm tours and field trips, and operate a farm stay AirBnb here at Fruit of the Coop," Peterson said.

What drives Peterson's passion for chicken and eggs is how interesting of an animal she's found chickens to be, with what she described as "unique biological makeup and also fun personalities."

Over the years, Peterson has seen the number of people raising their own chickens increase.

According to the American Pet Product Association's survey, ownership of backyard chickens increased from 8% in 2018 to 13% in 2020.

"And since COVID-19, the numbers have skyrocketed. The pandemic allowed for folks to have the time to pursue their backyard chicken hobby. But more importantly, many people began to focus on where their food was coming from and how to eat more locally," Peterson said.

"Raising your own chickens for eggs is an easy way to take control of a small part of the food system we all participate in. It

is now estimated that 12 million people in the U.S. own backyard chickens."

Things you need to know when considering backyard chickens:

- Hatching a Plan (local laws, cost, choosing a breed, where to buy)
- Chicken Little (setting up a brooder, food and water, heat, socializing)
- Feather Your Nest (coops and runs, predator proofing, cleaning, nest boxes, ventilation, space needed, seasonal care)
- Chicken Scratch (feeders and waterers, nutrient-dense feed, oyster shell, grit, treats)
- Ruling the Roost (free range, dust baths, molting, pecking order, injuries and diseases)
- Eggs/The Fruit of Your Coop (laying age, the "bloom," winter laying)



The Van Sambeek kids inspect the chicks that will be added to their coop.



MARCH 1-3, 2024
National Pheasant
Fest & Quail Classic
 1201 N West Ave.
 Sioux Falls, SD

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 2
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 7
Elevate Rapid City Economic Summit
 8 a.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed & Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
SunCatcher Therapeutic Riding Academy & 3rd Annual Shamrock Gala
 5 p.m.
 Alex Johnson Ballroom
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 11-15
Black Hills Institute's 50th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 14-16
Spring Rummage Fundraiser
 Spearfish Senior Center
 Spearfish, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWF 31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 15-16
Badlands Quilter Weekend Getaway
 5:30 p.m. Friday, all day Saturday
 Wall Community Center
 Wall, SD

MARCH 16
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 16
South Dakota Poetry Society Poetry on the Road & Open Mic
 1 p.m.
 Tri-State Museum
 Belle Fourche, SD

MARCH 16-17
Hill City Antiques, Railroad & Collectibles Show & Sale
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 17
St. Patrick's Day Green Pancakes and Sausage
 8:30 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

MARCH 20-23
Hill City Restaurant Week
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Hill City Children's Easter Egg Hunt
 Visitor Info Center
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 24
Ham Dinner & Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric Ribbon Cutting & Open House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play: Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 12-14
The Farmer's Daughter 19th Anniversary Celebration
 Hill City, SD

APRIL 14
Hill City Senior Sunday Breakfast
 8 a.m.
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

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