

Cooperative Connections



Electricity in the classroom

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People behind the power

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Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.

BOARD ACCOUNTABILITY

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on December 15, 2020 pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Larry Bowar kept minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Tom Thorpe, Paula Petersen, Larry Bowar, Eric Odenbach, General Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Line Superintendent Rob Vetch and Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer.

President Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Dan Feldhaus.

Motion by Larry Bowar, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve administrative business.

Changes to the agenda: Add Alex Zirkmund and East River Energize Forum.

Minutes from November 17, 2020 meeting: none

Next Meeting Date: After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, January 19, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to acknowledge manager, staff and electrical department report.

Resolutions, Nominations, and Contracts: The board acknowledged receiving Notice of SDREA Annual Meeting. The board acknowledged Ross Sperry, Oahe director, to represent the District on the SDREA legislative committee.

Larry Bowar nominated Gary Bachman as SDREA Voting Delegate and Eric Odenbach as Alternate Voting Delegate; motion seconded by Eric Odenbach and unanimous ballot was cast.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Larry Bowar to approve the following committee appointments.

2021 FEM Scholarship Committee: Crystal Thorson, Valette Horst, Perry Ptacek, Justin Larson, Angie Sieh

2021 Grievance Committee: Carol Schaffner, Dan Feldhaus, Ryan Holien

2021 Safety Committee: Valette Horst, Barb Schaefer, Justin Larson, Josh Weigel, Jesse Brown, Rob Vetch

At 9:15, management and the board called Alex Zirkmund of Zirkmund Consulting to discuss a Natural Gas Pipeline Project within FEM Electric territory. After reviewing all costs and financial obligation, it was determined at this time the project would not be feasible.

Membership Business: The board acknowledged the following membership business as presented:

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:
Disconnects: Sandra Coleman, Omaha, NE, Active Farm; Nanette Storch, Mina, Active Farm; Roth Family Farm, Aber-



At the December Board Meeting, discussion was held on the 2021 Budget and Work Plan.

deen, Active Farm; Philip Sporer, Ipswich, Active Farm; KH Inc., Roscoe, Active Farm;

Reconnects: Tonia & Justin McGeorge, Ipswich, Active Farm; Taylor Loken, Mina, Active Farm; James Finley, Chelsea, Active Farm; James Sporer, Ipswich, Active Farm; Tammy Lunders, Bowdle, Active Farm;

Contracts: Spring Creek Colony, Forbes, ND, Hog Barn;

Retired: Paul Malsom, Mina, Grain Bin; Sonia Ernst, Roscoe, Trailer House on Active Farm;

Estates – December 2020: One estate = \$322.04;

73 & Older – December 2020: One early retirement = \$641.99.

Motion by Larry Bowar, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve 2021 Market Rate for Agtegra Bowdle.

There are no 2020 bad debt write offs and currently there are no accounts at the collection agency.

Motion by Paula Petersen, seconded by Larry Bowar and carried to approve 2021 Budget and Work Plan.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve director and attorney fees.

Tom Boyko, East River CEO, Bob Sahr, East River General Council, and Dustin Zubke, East River CFO joined the meeting at 10:30 to discuss several items. Market rates, Dakota Energy law suit against East River Electric, along with the poor performance of Dakota Gasification Company and the unrest within the Basin Electric membership.

Legal Update: None

Meeting Report: East River board update was given by Gary Bachman. Tom Thorpe and Gary Bachman discussed SDREA leadership course. Gary Bachman reviewed Mid-West Annual meeting.

The board acknowledged the receipt of the November 19, 2020 Safety Meeting minutes, along with near misses, accident reports and investigations. They also acknowledged receipt of the December 2nd Employee Meeting minutes.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

FEM Electric Association

Cooperative Connections



(USPS 189-720)



Board of Directors

Gary Bachman, President
Tom Thorpe, Vice President
Larry Bowar, Secretary
Paula Petersen, Treasurer
Eric Odenbach, Asst. Sec./Treasurer
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore
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Management Staff

Rob Vetch, Line Superintendent
Rhonda Tuscherer, Director of
Finance and Benefits

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FEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., 800 5th Ave., Ipswich, SD 57451. FEM Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880
Office Hours:
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m



Scott Moore

General Manager

The year 2020 I would not say was a bad year, but a year of uncertainty. If you are a very structured individual, you may have found the year somewhat difficult to operate in. There were some sad moments as we had friends that lost loved ones in the past twelve months due to COVID-19. Our elderly have spent the past ten months in isolation; making for a long and lonely 2020. Employers and employees have had to adapt to keep businesses open and to get needed work completed. I do believe most everyone has stepped up. In rural South Dakota you have two choices, lay down and quit, or stand up and move forward and in 2020 we stood up and pushed forward.

In 2020, FEM Electric was no different than other businesses. We had to go outside the policy manual to keep our employees and members safe. We had some employees work from home, some employees stay home for several days to get an all-clear and some employees that needed to quarantine for the fourteen days. The secret was getting some good accurate information on the COVID virus, which we received from our local medical clinic, and not the news stations. Our goal was to keep the doors open and keep the power flowing to our members operations, while staying safe at work and home. Everyone needs to accept the challenges; adapt to some changes to keep South Dakota's economy strong and healthy.

FEM Electric has had a great year in many areas. In operations, we have completed work that has been on the back burner for several years; but do not worry, there is always more to do. Members will see the service trucks after January 1, 2021, patrolling the electric lines and doing an annual meter reading. Crews will also be installing red and white candy cane markers on all underground equipment. This project will help members identify a hazard when mowing in tall grass or moving snow. Material for the 2021 work schedule has been ordered, but once again, we will need to be flexible. The supply chains have been interrupted in 2020 and it will take some time for manufacturers to catch up with back orders. In the first quarter of 2021, we plan to replace all existing Cannon AMR meters served by the Leola substation, with Verizon meters that send data over the cellular system.

Financially, FEM Electric should finish 2020 strong. Kilowatt hour sales are down in November and December due to the warm fall and reduced crop drying, but we went into the fall with strong margins. After the fall of 2019 and first quarter of 2020, our members needed a break. It was nice to see our members get good yields and low moisture, along with increased commodity prices.

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Remember to attend the Annual Pancake Breakfast on Feb. 5, from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Also, this year we are requesting you bring paper products instead of food items for the area Food Pantries. See you there!

Statement Mailing Dates

Jan. 28, 2021 for January's energy.

Feb. 25, 2021 for February's energy.

Regardless of the statement mail out date payments are due in the office by the 9th of the following month.

Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

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



"The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"

Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, members of Southeastern 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.

Recipes to Power Up Your Day

Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD

Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD

Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

culinary.net

Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite seafood 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.

Mgr. article con't from page 2

The office also had a great year with completing work. We started in December 2019 with a computer conversion, which turned into many virtual training courses and working with NISC to get converted. The office had their daily, weekly, and monthly duties to keep caught up on the old system while learning the new system. Computer conversions can get stressful and overwhelming for employees, if not organized and managed. My hats off to all FEM Electric employees for stepping up, working as a team, and staying focused to get this project completed under uncertain times.

I would like to welcome Levi John Christiansen to FEM Electric family. Levi was born December 16, his parents are Sean and Jessica (Rappe) Christiansen. Sean is a journeyman lineman and electrician for FEM Electric. Young families will keep our rural economy and schools strong now, and in the future.

Please call early if you are planning to add any electrical load in 2021 and please remember that FEM Electric has electricians to complete your residential and farm wiring needs.

With some luck from Mother Nature and good planning, we should have a good and safe 2021.

Email of appreciation

Thank you and your crew, Ryan being the lead, for the excellent electrical work done at my farm this summer. Knowledgeable, with a good eye for planning, is what I would call it. Then even as the work progressed and some changes to the original plan became obvious, they were flexible enough to make those changes. Also, I cannot say enough about the quality of their workmanship. My family knows me to be a very fussy electrician, be it on a vehicle or simply replacing an outlet or switch, so they wondered what I would say about the FEM crews workmanship. And I did and will always say that they did a 110% excellent job. As I said earlier, Ryan was the lead, and I did not learn the names of the other members of the crew, but please commend them for me.

I would also like to thank FEM for the new line that was built along 324 Ave. and the underground along Hiway 10 that were done a few years ago. Power bumps are almost a thing of the past now.

Sincerely,
Donald Gill
Hill Crest Farm Inc.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Are you a high school graduate heading to college or trade school next fall? Could you use some financial help?

If yes, please stop by the high school counselor's office for an application for a chance to win a scholarship from FEM Electric.

There are three scholarships available and only one application needs to be submitted for a chance to win one of the three scholarships below:

- \$1,000 Basin Electric Power Cooperative
- \$500 FEM Electric Cooperative
- \$500 FEM Electric Cooperative

You may also pick up an application at the FEM Electric office in Ipswich, or find it on the FEM website. Applications must be returned to FEM Electric by February 12, 2021.



Legendary Performer Gary Mule Deer - and His Pompadour - are Still Going Strong

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Just like his trademark pompadour, Gary Mule Deer is still standing tall and proud after all these years. Thanks to the wondrous super holding power of Kenra 25, Mule Deer is still taking the stage with his skyscraper hairdo and delivering the sharp wit and old-school country music that have made him a South Dakota entertainment icon.

Going strong at 81, Mule Deer is one of the first to be amazed that he continues to have the stamina to do hundreds of shows a year (pre-pandemic) after six decades in the business. Not that he's prone to just let himself go. Despite some age-related medical issues, he works hard to keep his physical and spiritual energy up.

"I try to stay as fit as I can," Mule Deer said from his home in Spearfish. "I'm careful about what I eat, and I always pay attention to what I watch on TV or see on the internet. I try to keep things light and stay away from the dark. Tuning into the news any more than necessary can really bring your spirits down."

Mule Deer was part of a 40-show tour with Marty Stuart and The Steve Miller Band – including 24 scheduled appearances at the Grand Ole Opry – when the pandemic brought the tour to a halt. He managed to perform at the Opry last November and returned in January. But it wasn't anything like pre-pandemic days.

"A lot of the fun of doing the Opry is hanging out backstage," he said. "Now you can't just hang out. You have to wear a mask up to the microphone, then you can take it off. After you do your show you have to put the mask back on, go to your locker and grab your stuff and leave."

Mule Deer said he is happy to comply with the rules to help contain the virus. He recently lost one of his long-time friends and fellow country music stars, Charlie Pride, to the disease.

"Charlie was a real legend. We had just

done the Opry together last February. My wife Nita and I were great friends with him and his wife, Rozene. He could not have been a nicer guy and a true gentleman," Mule Deer said. "This disease is scary, but the scariest thing to me is that some people still think it's all a hoax."

Mule Deer also stays busy helping his son, Shawn Michael Bitz, promote the budding novelist's new book, *The Slim Chance*

"I always thought 'adult humor' wasn't very grown up," he said. "You can tell what kind of laughter comes out of people who respond to clean humor and 'blue' humor. When you're entertaining to make people happy and not just shock them, you can hear the difference. My type of humor brings a healthier kind of laughter. It comes from the gut and the spirit, where all the good stuff is."



Legendary performer Gary Mule Deer is still going strong entertaining audiences all over the country. Photo courtesy of Jill Jarrett.

Tour: *Stories in the Key of G-Whiz*. Bitz is also author of *Butterfly Pit Crew*. Both books are available on Amazon.

Apart from his 350 TV appearances and sharing the stage with every notable performer from Frank Sinatra to Willie Nelson, he said there are two things he is most proud of: working clean and working for charity.

Audiences can always count on a clean, upbeat show from Mule Deer.

He has also been a solid supporter of a great number of charities. Many of them have been projects also supported by fellow performers such as Pride, Vince Gill, Bing Crosby, and a long list of sports celebrities. The Make-A-Wish Foundation honored Mule Deer with a Walk of Fame star for his fundraising efforts.

Mule Deer signs off with a joke: "I saw a woman the other day riding a bike in Spearfish. I yelled out to her, 'Cow!' She flipped me off. Then she hit the cow."



Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@srea.coop

Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

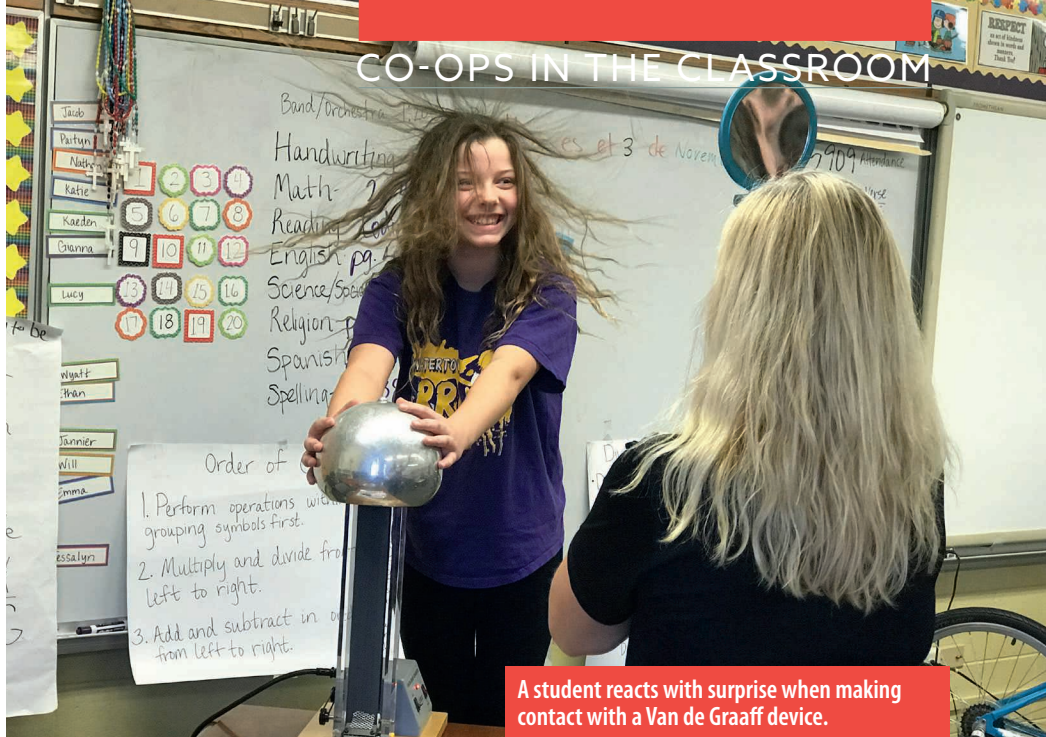
The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.



“These are things they’re going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It’s a lot to pack into an hour, but it’s important information.”
 - Jennifer Gross



A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.

just provide electrical power. We’re here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we’re always here for them if they have questions about electricity.”

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

“It’s something that’s always around them and they deal with all the time,” Heinrich

said. “It’s good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents’ cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, ‘So, this is a bad idea.’ It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices.”

South Dakota’s electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unhar- nessed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s.

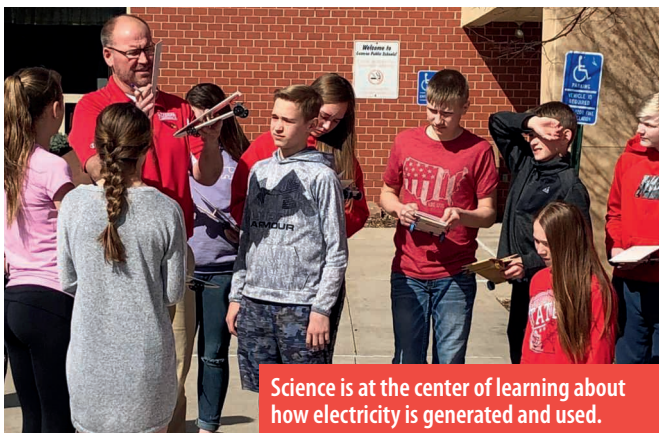
Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country’s rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite’s economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: “Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call ‘Neon Leon,’ and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, ‘I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year’s demonstration, my husband is alive.’ That really shows how important it is.”



Science is at the center of learning about how electricity is generated and used.

Natural Gas

FEM Electric Members:

In December of 2019, FEM Electric started to evaluate if a small natural gas pipeline would be feasible transporting natural gas north to Leola and south to Faulkton while hooking up gas loads along the route. FEM met with some of our members along the proposed route and surveyed the residents in both Leola and Faulkton.

The project needed to have a reasonable payback on the investment.

Over the past twelve months, we have also reached out and worked with two engineering firms; one from Colorado and one from Wisconsin that specialize in engineering gas pipelines to get a cost on constructing the project. We also

worked with World Kinect Energy Services on the marketing plan to purchase gas, CoBank on financing the project, and finally we had Zikmund Consulting from Saint Paul, Minnesota, help establish a proforma to determine the feasibility of the project.

At FEM Electric's December 15, 2020 board meeting, the information was presented to the board and at this time FEM Electric will not move forward with a natural gas pipeline. Our numbers showed we would need to increase gas capacity by over double our projections, just to break even, paying operation, maintenance, interest, and principal.

Time evaluating this project was well spent as we now have a good understanding what would need to be done if a project or business wanted to locate in our service territory and would request natural gas service. The goal to this project was to see if FEM Electric could provide a service that saved residents and businesses money and would promote economic development. The project needed to have a reasonable payback on the investment.

We would like to thank everyone for their time, phone calls, and completing surveys. The information will be kept in case a project develops in the future.

Thank You,

Scott Moore
FEM Electric Manager/CEO



Space heating and cooling account for a large portion of the average home's energy use. A programmable or smart thermostat can help you control the temperature of your home and save energy.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source: www.energy.gov





FEM Electric's Annual

Pancake & Sausage Breakfast! Friday, February 5th

FEM North shop building

7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

The Food Pantries are in need of paper products and cleaning supplies. In lieu of food items, please bring napkins, cups, plates, paper towels, kleenex, toilet tissue, shampoo, bodywash and laundry soap. They are also in need of diapers.



Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

The People Behind the Power

Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power

of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

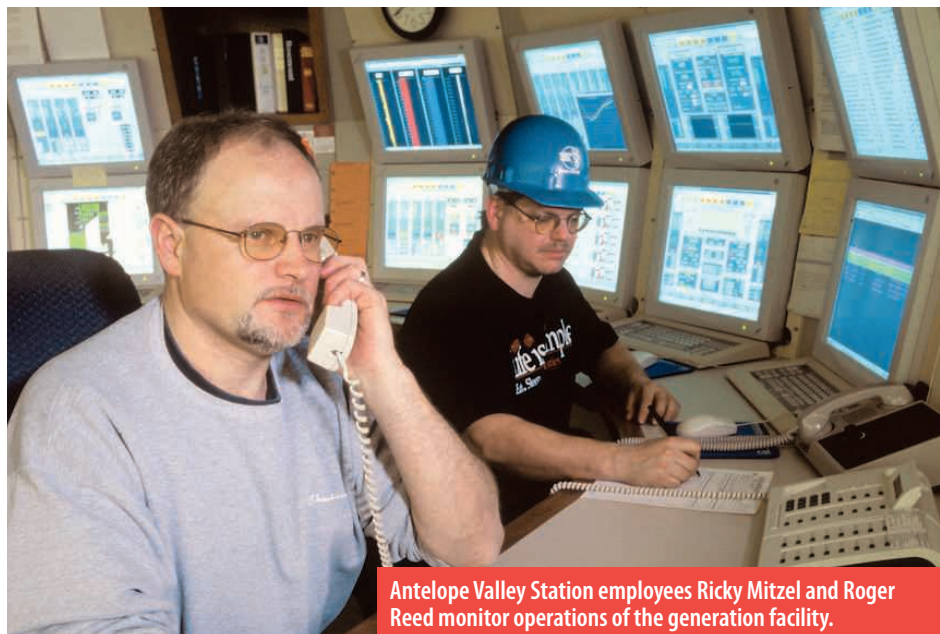
"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."



Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

DE-STRESSING

Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."

Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration

down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.

- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

“When you achieve food freedom, you don’t have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet.” Ching said. “Stress can

lead to overeating. If you’re under stress, don’t reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion.”

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

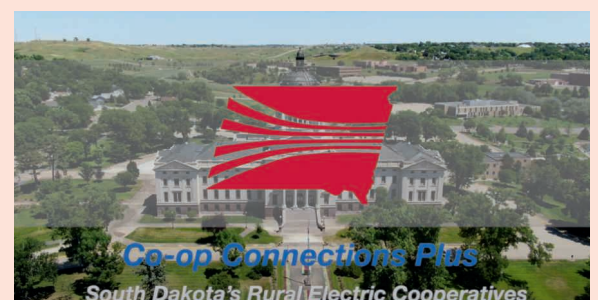
“Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere,” she said. “I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!”

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes.

Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



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

January 18-25

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD
605-717-9294

January 21-24

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

January 23

Treasured Lives Presents:
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD
1-800-468-6463

January 29-30

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

January 29-February 6

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

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 12-13

SD High School State
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

February 18

The Q's High Line to
Deadwood – A 130-year
Retrospective, Homestake
Adams Research and Cultural
Center, Deadwood, SD
605-722-4800

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

February 25

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

March 5-6

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

March 12-13

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

March 13

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

March 13

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

March 13-14

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

March 19-20

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

March 23-24

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

March 25

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

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.