

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Old Spink New Spink

**SD restaurants roll
with the changes**
Page 8

**Dealing with
drought**
Page 12

Joyce Schermer,
Karisma Tripp and Brad
and Lori Johannsen are
shown at Spink Family
Restaurant in Elk Point

BOARD REPORT



A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on July 20, 2021, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Tom Thorpe, Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, General Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Line Superintendent Rob Vetch, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, and Linemen Ryan Holien and Jesse Brown. President Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Lineman Josh Weigel.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve administrative business.

Changes to the agenda: add 3. C. iv. - WO Inventory #568, 6. F. - Basin District 1 Caucus, 11. B. - SDREA Meeting Report.

Changes/Additions to Minutes from June 14, 2021 meeting: none

Next Meeting Date: After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, August 24, 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 approve June 29, 2021, Reorganizational Meeting Minutes.

Motion by Paula Petersen, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to acknowledge manager, staff and electrical department reports, along with WO Inventory #568 in the amount of \$12,844.48.

The June East River Cyber Security Report was acknowledged.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to enter into executive session at 11:19 to review NRECA wage compensation study.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to come out of executive session at 11:42.

Resolutions, Nominations, and Contracts: Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve review of policies 513-Underground Service Policy, 516-Load Management-Water Heater Control, 518-Marketing, 523-Line Extension Policy, 527-Policy on Privacy, Confidentiality, Identity Theft, 531-Merchandising and Miscellaneous Service Charges.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Paula Petersen to set June 28, 2022 as FEM Electric 74th annual meeting date.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to nominate Gary Bachman to represent FEM Electric on East River board of directors.

Paula Petersen nominated Tom Thorpe as NRECA Voting Delegate and Gary Bachman as Alternate Voting Delegate; motion seconded by Eric Odenbach and unanimous ballot was cast.

The board acknowledged receipt of the East River Resolution Committee.

Kelly Melius nominated Gary Bachman as Basin District 1 Voting Delegate and Tom Thorpe as Alternate Voting Delegate; motion seconded by Eric Odenbach and unanimous ballot was cast.

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

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Richard Anderson, Long Lake, vacant farm; O'Dell Hinders, Rothsay, MN, active farm; Alton & Ramona Jung, Aberdeen, active farm; Nathan Rohrbach, Bowdle, active farm; Dianne Hannigan, Ipswich, vacant farm

Reconnects: Greg Schumacher, Anchorage, AK, vacant farm; Harrell Bros., Miller, active farm; Dale & Sherry Jung, Roscoe, active farm; Andrew & Lacey Rohrbach, Bowdle, active farm; Country Pride Bison, Ipswich, vacant farm

Contracts: Robert Hahler, Mansfield, house; Steve Schauer, Ashley, ND, pasture pump; Richard Anderson, Long Lake, house

Retired locations: none

Board report continued pg 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

(USPS 189-720)

Board of Directors

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

CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore
info@femelectric.coop

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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Scott Moore
Gen Mgr/CEO

Believe it or not, FEM Electric's 74th 2022 annual meeting date is set for June 28, 2022. At the request of some of our member-owners, we will be making a change. At the 2022 annual meeting we will be offering the food trucks, along with another choice of a roast beef meal served with potatoes and a vegetable. We appreciate the suggestions, and we are happy to make changes to increase member participation. The annual meeting, along with member participation, is critical to a true cooperative business model. Please mark your calendars and if there are any suggestions to improve the meeting, please let us know. This is your cooperative.

Since the 1970's we have been working to rid America of reliance on foreign oil and around each curve have been some intense fought battles. Usually behind each battle is who is going to get the larger bank account or control in the end. It isn't always about what is best for the American people or rural America. It started with policies for better fuel milage and moved to policies for flex fuel vehicles. Now the government is moving rapidly into electric vehicles and carbon capture. I believe many of these changes come with good intent, but there are always

consequences or a domino effect. There will once again be winners and losers.

As part of North Star Energy, a propane subsidiary FEM Electric once owned, we placed a propane conversion kit on one of our gas vehicles. This unit is the pickup I use for company trips and through experience, it takes work and planning to burn propane and many times not at a savings. The problem is a lack of infrastructure to refuel.

As I travel across the United States, in many of these small communities there is one or no gas station. In many of these small communities federal or state regulations were requiring upgrades to the storage tanks and many operators decided to close their doors or just quit providing gas and fuel. The new disruptor will be electric vehicles (EV) and how the state, local and federal governments change. Today our highways and many other programs rely on the gas/fuel tax usually between \$.50 and \$.60 per gallon, depending on what state you are replenishing your fuel supply in. Fuel stops and customers will need to change their travel habits. Instead of a five or ten-minute gas stop, you will have a half hour to hour and a half wait to get recharged, that is if a charger is available and not being used. As of now, the price

Manager's report continued page 6

Statement Mailing Dates

Aug. 26, 2021 for Aug.'s energy
Sept. 29, 2021 for Sept.'s energy

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

Be aware of overhead power lines on farms

Powerlines pose a major hazard for South Dakota farmers. Lines over roads and rural areas have a minimum clearance of 18 feet but just 12.5 feet over residential private property.

Before working in a field or around shops or grain bins, always take the time to note the location of your cooperative's power lines so that you can make sure to remain a safe distance from them and stay free from harm. To stay safe around overhead power lines, farm operators and workers must:

- Always use a spotter when operating large machinery near utility power lines.
- Use extra caution when raising augers or grain truck beds around co-op power lines.
- Keep equipment at least 10 feet from power lines - at all times, and in all directions.
- Inspect the height of farm equipment to determine the proper clearance.
- Always lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving loads.
- Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it to get added clearance.
- Call your electric cooperative immediately if a power line is sagging or is

hanging too low.

- If contact is made with a power line, remember that it is almost always safest to stay on the equipment. Make sure to warn others to stay away and call the cooperative immediately.

- The only reason to decide to make an exit is if the equipment is on fire. If this is the case, then remember to jump off the equipment with both of your feet together, avoiding touching the ground and vehicle at the same time.

Then, still keeping your feet together, "bunny hop" away from the vehicle until you reach a safe distance.

If you see someone else's equipment that has come in contact with a power line in your area, the best help you can give will be from a safe distance.

Make sure to yell out to, signal or call the equipment operator to make sure he or she remains in the vehicle, and notify your local cooperative immediately.

Please remember to follow these tips to avoid accidents during the harvest season.

TIPS FOR A SAFE HARVEST



The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center offers this useful checklist for farm safety called Stop-Think-Act. Take these steps to minimize injury risks during harvest season.

Stop

- What could go wrong?
- How bad could it be?
- Has anything changed?

Think

- Do I clearly understand the task?
- Am I physically and mentally ready?

- Do I have the right equipment and tools for the job?

Act

- Make it safe.
- Use the right tools.
- Follow proper procedures.
- Reduce risks.
- Stop the task if it cannot be done safely.



You put the 'pow' in power!

Madilyn Gaikowski

Madilyn sends out a special note of appreciation for line workers across the state of South Dakota. She is the daughter of Gene and Loree Gaikowski. Gene serves as the Wessington Springs line foreman at Central Electric in Mitchell.

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.

CROCKPOT CRAVINGS

CROCKPOT APPLE BUTTER

Ingredients:

4 cups of sugar (more or less depending on sweetness of apples)
 4 tsp. cinnamon
 ¼ tsp. cloves
 ¼ tsp. salt

METHOD

Fill a 5 quart crockpot full of chopped apples (quartered or smaller), no need to peel, but do remove seeds. Tart apples are best. Top with the ingredients above. Lid won't fit at first but settles down as apples cook. Begin cooking on high and when bubbling, put heat on low and cook all night, or until thick and dark color. Stir occasionally. If need be, blend a few seconds to soften peels. Pour into jars and seal.

Cherie Leibel, Timber Lake

SLOW COOKER BEEF STEW

Ingredients:

3 cups water
 1 package McCormick® Classic Beef Stew Seasoning Mix Packet
 2 lbs beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch pieces
 1/4 cup flour
 2 cups potato chunks
 1 1/4 cups carrot chunks
 1 medium onion, cut into thin wedges
 1/2 cup sliced celery

METHOD

Mix vegetables, water and Beef Stew Seasoning Mix in slow cooker. Coat beef with flour. Stir into ingredients in slow cooker. Cover. Cook 8 hours on low or 5 hours on high until beef is tender.

mccormick.com

CROCKPOT BUTTERNUT SQUASH WITH APPLES

Ingredients:

1 ½ to 2 lbs. butternut squash, peeled and chopped (about 5 cups)
 2 to 3 tart apples, chopped (about 2 cups)
 ¼ c. dried cherries or cranberries
 1 ½ tsp. grated fresh ginger
 ½ tsp. salt
 1/8 tsp. pepper
 ½ tsp. cinnamon
 ¼ tsp. nutmeg
 ½ c. apple cider
 ¼ tsp. salt

METHOD

Combine all ingredients in your slow cooker and stir together. Cover and cook on low 3-4 hours or until squash is tender, then turn to warm until serving. Can also be baked in conventional oven at 325 degrees until fork tender. Sweet potatoes can be used instead of butternut squash if desired.

Linda Sherry, Sioux Falls

Please send your favorite dairy 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, phone number and cooperative name.



Managers report continued from page 3

you pay will be determined by the time of day you are charging. I hope nobody believes I'm against EVs, but everyone needs to be a realist and be willing to change their travel and daily habits to make the conversion to EVs work. I'm sure EVs will work commuting to and from work and school, it is the long cross-country trips that will take some planning and patience.

Carbon Capture is no new concept, as Basin Electric's Dakota Gasification Company has been capturing CO² for about twenty years and piping to oil wells for increased oil recovery. This is a topic in climate change and a big driver in renewable energy and EV automobiles. There has been and are multiple studies and projects on carbon capture as we move to reduce man made CO² from our atmosphere. Increasing a cleaner environment should be a priority to all humans and all countries. I don't know if rural America needs policies and mandates from Washington DC to protect the environment, as most rural Americans understand the value of our natural resources.

My biggest concern isn't EVs or carbon capture, but governmental mandates and policies, along with Presidential executive orders. We are at a place in American history where picking the correct fork in the road to travel is hard to choose, as with a stroke of a pen we could be headed in a completely different direction. There is no doubt that rural America can get it done and be successful, we just need to know what set of rules to play by.

If you are planning any additional electric load, please contact Rob Vetch or Ryan Holien. FEM has electricians available for your farm and home wiring needs.

Board report continued from pg 2:

Capital Credits: Estates – July 2021 – one estate = \$0 (forfeiting Basin and East River only)

73 & Older – July 2021 - None

A preliminary discussion on possibly creating a FEM Economic Development Patronage Loan program was discussed and will be brought back to September board meeting for further discussion.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: Check register for the month of June 2021 contained information on checks #31645 through #31734, capital credits and all automatic payments/withdrawals for June 2021 totaling \$1,084,195.11.

June 2021 financials were reviewed.

Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer reviewed the 2nd quarter Budget Projection and Financial Ratios, and RUS/CFC Loan Summaries.

The RUS Special Construction Transfer to Money Market account for \$400,000 on 06/29/2021 was presented for board review and signatures.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve director and attorney fees.

Legal Update: none

Meeting Report: East River board update was given by Gary Bachman. SDREA Director Tom Thorpe discussed SDREA board meeting.

The board acknowledged the receipt of the Safety Meeting Minutes and Safety Committee minutes from June 21, 2021. The board also acknowledged employee/training meeting from June 4th, 14th, 18th, and 30th.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

REZA BURNS

Brookings native and rising magician puts SD on the entertainment map

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

While most of his peers at Brookings High School were playing sports, hunting and entering rodeo events, Reza Borchardt was venturing off in a completely different direction.

He was pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a magician and master illusionist in the style of his idol David Copperfield. From the time Reza (pronounced ray-zuh) got his first magic kit, he was determined to make a life and a living in the world of entertainment.

Today, Reza is on the tail end of a 140-day stretch captivating audiences at Branson's Famous Theater and making a big name for himself across the globe. In addition to touring extensively to more than 30 countries, Reza has made appearances on A&E's popular Duck Dynasty show and the CW network's Penn & Teller: Fool Us.

It all began for Reza in elementary school when he was asked to go on stage during a magic act. When he saw the response the magician was getting from the audience, that's when he caught the bug. By the age of 14, Reza was performing magic acts of his own and was inspired after meeting Copperfield in person on several occasions during his youth. By the time he was in college at SDSU, Reza was already touring across the region performing at corporate events and concert halls.

"When I got asked to go on stage and the guy was doing a simple trick with rings, it seemed like a really big deal. The kids were into it," Reza remembered. "That laid the groundwork for me. My parents bought me a magic kit and took me to see professional shows in Branson. I started building props and putting together an act in a warehouse in Brookings and started traveling and having some success."

When he was able to sell 200,000 tickets over 40 shows at a theater in Acapulco, that's when he had a hunch he could make it as a pro.

But Reza is savvy enough to know that the key to sustaining success in the business is reinventing his act and conceiving new ways to keep and hold the attention of audience members. That's how Copperfield was able to reach legendary status, he said.

"You have to find a way to keep making your brand relevant and keep your show exciting. People have so much sensory overload and the ways we receive information is moving so fast. So, I'm constantly updating the show and elevating the art form," he said. "I still film every show and watch it and critique it and look for ways to improve."

On stage, Reza carves out time to mention his South Dakota background and share stories of growing up in Brookings on the "cornfield side of the state." In some ways, he sees himself as an ambassador for South Dakota.

"I want to always remember my humble beginnings and how excited I was to be that kid who had dreams and plans," he said. "It's a vision that I saw happening, and now it has come true. And to think it all started in South Dakota...that's insane."





Rhonda Otten, along with her husband and three sons, has worked to keep Spink Family Restaurant open for business.
 Photos by Billy Gibson

Spink restaurant emerges strong from hardships brought by fire and pandemic

Billy Gibson
 billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Old Spink. New Spink.
 That’s how Rhonda Otten variously refers to her restaurant, depending on whether she’s alluding to the Spink Café that burned down in 2019 or the Spink Family restaurant that was throttled by the pandemic but is thriving today.

For more than 20 years, the Spink Café was a big draw in the township located in Union County. The eatery was known for its Friday night fish fries during Lent, Sunday dinners and its famous Spinkburger. The 80-year-old structure had recently been re-decorated with a 50s theme, featuring old LPs, vinyl album covers on the wall and pictures of Elvis Presley.

But life for Otten and her husband Sam changed in November of 2019 when the area’s most

popular attraction was totally consumed by fire.

The way the Ottens saw it, there was no option but to rebuild. But the planned resurrection of the business wouldn’t occur in the confines of Spink. The new iteration, renamed Spink Family Restaurant, would be located in the old American Legion hall in downtown Elk Point.

By all accounts, the “new Spink” wasn’t so easy to bring forth from the ashes. Two weeks after working hard to get the new facility ready for business in Elk Point, the pandemic hit and threatened to dash the Ottens’ hopes for good.

“The fire was in November, we made the decision to keep going in December, and we re-opened in March. We were open for two weeks when the pandemic hit, Rhonda said. “Those two weeks were very, very busy. It was a madhouse in

here. We had a lot more space and we were finally getting in the groove.”

Facing the same problems as just about every restaurant owner in the state and nation, the Ottens were forced to hit the pause button and try to figure out the next step to take. They closed for a month, regrouped, and then returned to offer carry-out service only.

Members of the community rallied to support the restaurant, including employees at Union County Electric located just two blocks away.

According to Union County Electric General Manager Matt Klein, the cooperative always strives to support other local businesses that help the community thrive.

“At lunchtime you’re likely to see some of our guys eating there,” Klein said. “When they had carry-out, we ordered food for meetings and just did what we could to help – just like we do with other members of the community. We help whenever and wherever we can.”



Server Karisma Tripp tends to another satisfied customer at Spink Family Restaurant in Elk Point.

Rhonda said it was inspiring to see the town pull together to face the impact of the pandemic, and also to help the business survive after the back-to-back calamities.

area from Sedona, Ariz., and always make a point to stop at Spink, preferring the hot beef sandwich and the prime rib sandwich. “It’s always good every time you come,” said Schermer, a resident of Akron who opted for her go-to French Dip. “You’re never disappointed in the food or the service. It’s wonderful.”



Cody Olson, center, enjoys lunch with his co-workers from Valley Ag Supply.

“The community really supported us and we’re very grateful for that,” she said. “But we’ve seen this many times before; people watching out for each other and helping when there’s a need. That’s what really pushed us through.”

One regular patron who is happy to see the new Spink succeeding is Joyce Schermer. She occupied a table in the restaurant one recent lunch hour along with her son Brad Johannsen and his wife Lori. The Johannsens are regular visitors to the

Also enjoying a lunchtime meal were several employees of Valley Ag Supply. The company is located a half mile from the old Spink building that was destroyed by fire. “We used to go there all the time and we were disappointed when it burned down. You could see our fertilizer plant from there,” said Cody Olson while noshing on the French Dip. “Now there’s no place to go. So, we just drive into town because it’s so good. It’s great that they came back and are still operating.”

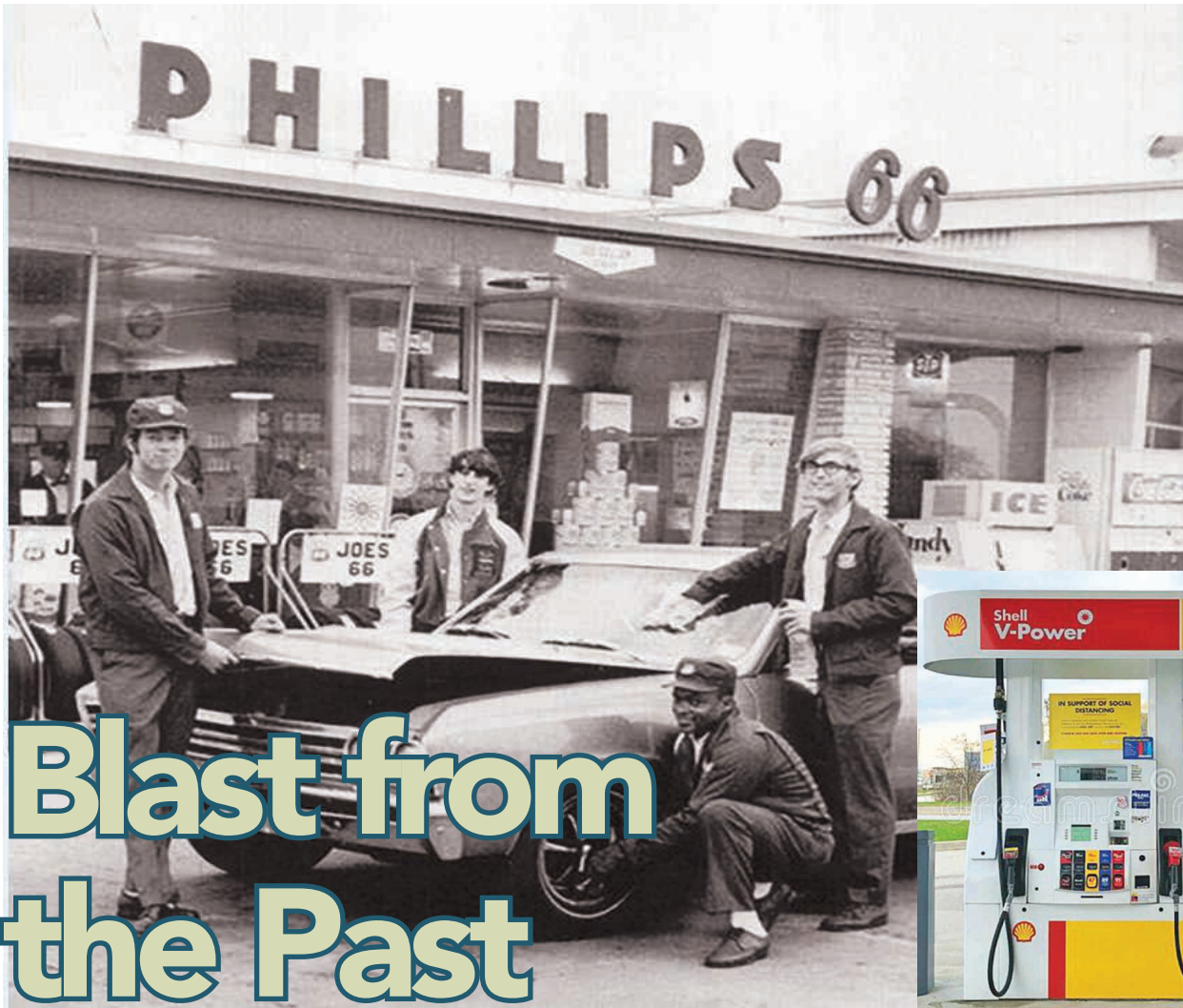
As for “old Spink,” the Ottens are still trying to figure out what to do with the heap left in the wake of the conflagration. The building had an upstairs apartment where several members of the family lived at



various times through the years. “It’s going to have to be torn down eventually, but we just don’t want to let it go,” Rhonda said. “There are so many memories attached to that place; both of our parents were such a big part of it.”

She emphasized that while the restaurant is in a new location, the food is the same as before. The Ottens, who have always used family recipes, depend on all three of their sons – ages 17 through 23 – to handle the cooking to maintain consistency on a daily basis.

“The secret to our success is that the five of us do all the cooking here. We use time-proven family recipes that have been popular for decades,” Rhonda said.



Blast from the Past



Full-service vs Self-service Gas Stations

Scott Moore

FEM Electric Manager/CEO

Pre 1980's: At full-service gas stations the attendant would come to the gas pumps and start filling your vehicle. They would wash your windows, and at the request of the driver they would check your oil and tire pressure. They would take your payment inside and make change, write a receipt, and deliver them back to you in the vehicle. The attendant was the local GPS answering travelers' questions on directions and local activities. To the locals, he/she discussed rain fall, temperatures, or weekend activities about one hundred times a day. Usually a positive human interaction.

Self service stations started in the 1970's. You would pump your own fuel, wash your own windows, check air pressure only if tire looked low and maybe checked the oil. You went inside to stand in line to pay for your gas and get a receipt. You would get frustrated because someone is buying microwave sandwiches, chips, and drinks for a family of six and only one cashier. Long line; so much for the quick stop. Credit cards were placed on a machine with three paper copies and carbon paper. You pulled a handle across the machine that imprinted all the credit card information onto the paper receipts. No cyber security to worry about, just needed to make sure carbon copies got destroyed.

Today's self-service: place credit/debit card in pump; fill your tank. If dash lights are not on no reason to check oil or tire pressure. When finished, grab receipt from pump, if it is working, and leave. May check your cell phone to make sure your debit or credit card was charged the proper amount.

If you happen to see me at the local C-store and I'm having a conversation with the gas pump, don't be alarmed unless the gas pump is answering my questions. Second thought, I see people asking cell phones questions all the time, so maybe gas pumps will be next.

How we evolve and will continue to evolve.



Connect Con

Megan Nash

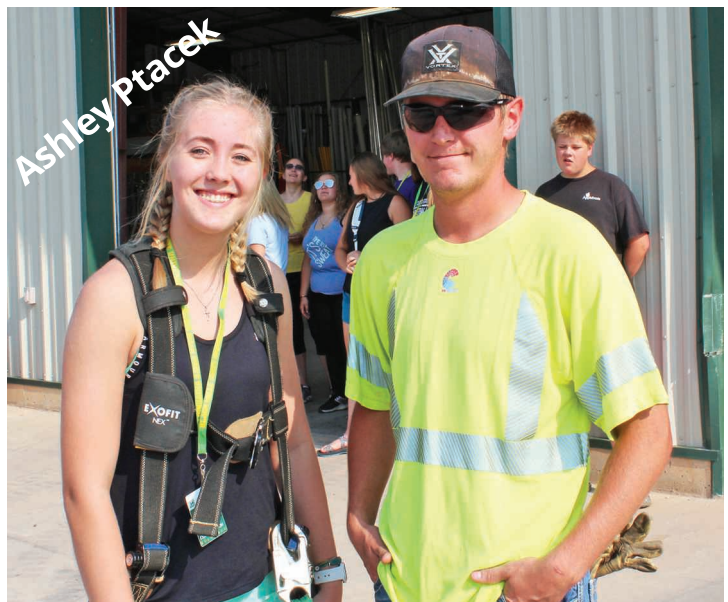
A Youth Leadership Experience in Spearfish, SD

Twenty-six high school students from across South Dakota participated in Connect Con: A Youth Leadership Experience in Spearfish the week of July 26-29.

Connect Con was this year's in-state Youth Tour that focuses on developing leadership skills in future community leaders. Energy production and the co-operative model were also highlighted throughout the event.

Students that participated from the FEM Electric area were Ashley Ptacek of Ipswich and Megan Nash of Mansfield.

The original Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., was canceled this year due to COVID-19.



LEARNING FROM ADVERSITY

The Dakota Lakes Research Farm produces information helpful to farmers and ranchers dealing with drought. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

SDSU agriculture researcher Dwayne Beck looks for better ways to gain higher yields through crop rotations and other techniques

Billy Gibson

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The drought conditions that gripped the state through the summer months caused difficulty for farmers and ranchers. The drought in 2012 also made it difficult to grow and harvest a productive crop.

But it's the drought that occurred in 1988 that Dwayne Beck remembers most. Beck, 70, is a researcher with SDSU who runs the Dakota Lakes research farm near Canning.

According to the National Integrated Drought Information System, as of June 23 more than 97 percent of South Dakota and all of Minnesota were categorized as "abnormally dry."

As someone who considers himself a seasoned investigator and problem solver, Beck looks at the current drought conditions as an

opportunity to learn.

So, what exactly did the farming and ranching community learn in 1988 when adverse weather conditions caused an estimated \$60 billion in agricultural damage across the U.S.?

"We learned not to do tillage," Beck responds without hesitation. "This drought is about the worse I've seen since 1988, and we learned then that in this part of the country if you till, you're screwed. No-till gives you a chance to have a decent crop and run a viable farming operation."

And the key to succeeding without tilling is proper crop rotation. That's what keeps Beck and other researchers busy.

On a recent afternoon, Melanie Caffe and her assistant Nick Paul were operating a small combine to gather their test crops laid out in strips measuring five feet wide by 20

feet long. Caffe, a native of France, is an ag professor at SDSU, while Paul is a local farmer and research technician.

The two-member team moved from section to section, cleaning out the collection bin as they went to keep the samples from being contaminated and corrupting the research data. The samples were



Dwayne Beck runs the Dakota Farms research facility near Canning.



Melanie Caffe and Nick Paul collect samples from a field at the Dakota Farms Research Station near Canning.

bagged and taken into the lab where Caffe and Paul planned to perform fertility experiments with the goal of developing varieties with higher yield, higher quality and stronger drought resistance.

Much of the research centers around maximizing yields through effective crop rotations. Beck has spent much of his career considering the ways farming was conducted 100 or more years ago and how it can be improved.

“The Natives grew crops before the Spaniards came and brought horses. They were all no-tillers because they didn’t have cows and horses to pull the plows. They grew 13 different kinds of corn, beans, squash and sunflowers. They were very successful. The settlers never asked anyone how to grow crops here, they just got out their plow and started turning over the soil.”

Beck has seen the wonders of crop rotation in his research. Some of his fields are rotated five ways.

“Good rotations can produce a lack of disturbance in places where you don’t have a lot of water. Our research shows 99 percent of resistance issues could be solved with better crop rotations. There are fields where we haven’t used insecticides for 18 years.”

Beck said his methods aren’t always adopted by industry but he continues to gather data and push out the information obtained through research.

“The nice about being a research guy is you always have more things to learn,” he said. “The more you research, the more you don’t know, but we’re always looking for answers.”

HOPS GROWERS NAVIGATING THEIR WAY THROUGH CHANGING INDUSTRY

Billy Gibson

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In many ways, Ryan Heine is like the average South Dakota farmer. He frets about the weather, plans for the future, worries about finances, watches the markets and is constantly trying to find a buyer for the crop he hopes will make.

But his crop is unlike most of the others that emerge from the South Dakota soil. Heine is owner of 6th Meridian Hop Farm near Yankton. His is one of six such farms left in the state growing hops for brewers to transform into craft beer.

Heine also sees his work as different compared to most farmers – he relies on his nose a lot.

“There’s a lot of experimenting with different aromas.

There are so many flavor profiles and varieties of hops that are used in creating craft beer,” he said. “There’s a vast palette of different aromas, and the market will dictate what consumers prefer.”

Ryan and his wife Michelle launched their hop operation in 2014, leaving Omaha and returning to the small family farm near Yankton in pursuit of a more grounded lifestyle for their five children.

“We wanted to get out of the city and back to our farming roots,” said Ryan, who works remotely as an electrical engineer for a company out of Minneapolis.

Ryan’s interest in growing the essential elements of craft beer began when he was a student at Parks College in St. Louis, Mo. He went out with his friends and found most of what was offered at bars, pubs and restaurants was bland and uninspiring. He knew he liked the flavor of beer and he knew he liked the simplicity of the farming lifestyle.

“So I started doing some home brewing and found that it was a fun hobby to pursue. Now we have one of the biggest operations in the state,” he said.

Heine’s time on the farm is spent fussing over flavor and aroma profiles, acid levels, yeast growth, oil content, insect invasions, disease infections and more. He and Michelle do all the growing, harvesting, processing, drying, pulverizing, preserving, pressing and packaging.

He finds markets by visiting with brewers, forging relationships across the region and even keeping in touch with his college buddies.

“There are some college roommates I’ve kept in touch with who are brewers and we’re always talking about how to improve our products,” he said. “Hops growers are down to just a handful in the state, but for those who have survived, I think the outlook is good.”



BULLISH ON BEES

Beekeeping industry struggles with drought and other obstacles along with overall agriculture sector

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Becoming a beekeeper wasn't something Chad Holbrook dreamed about back when he worked as a farm loan officer in Texas.

But he decided it might be an interesting hobby, so about 10 years ago he bought himself a hive just for the fun of it.

As things sometimes tend to go, one hive led to two, two hives led to four and before he knew it, Holbrook was giving his day job the boot. Goodbye business suit, hello beekeeping suit.

These days, Holbrook manages about 3,000 hives out of his main headquarters in Fairfax, MN, although he still has some hives back in Texas. A member of Renville-

Sibley Co-op Power, he ships his hives for pollination purposes all across the Midwest and to other regions as well to help growers gain higher crop yields.

"After I got my first bee hive I just really enjoyed doing it, and it snowballed and just kept increasing every year," Holbrook said. "I finally quit my day job to run the business in January of 2017, which is something I never thought I'd do."

That's a move that took some courage because Holbrook knew from his brief experience that while bees can be tough buggers, they also have plenty of obstacles threatening their place in nature and their very existence.

After all, some of the boxes, frames, pallets and extraction equipment he purchased to start

his own operation were acquired from beekeepers making a bee-line straight out of the business.

The list of real and potential apiary antagonists is long. Apiculturists are constantly trying to protect their colonies from various types of threats including several species of mites, insecticides, pesticides, extreme weather and destruction of their habitat.

One pitfall not often discussed in the public discourse is the attrition that takes place from merely moving colonies from one patch of farmland to the next, and in some cases, moving hives from one spot to another to protect them during the inclement non-pollinating months.

Holbrook figures the attrition rate can be up to 10 percent anytime hives are loaded onto a truck and hauled to different locations. It's a significant loss considering an estimated one-third of the world's food supply depends on the pollination work performed by



Honey bees pollinate roughly one-third of the world's agriculture crops.

honey bees. Since 2010, beekeepers in South Dakota, Minnesota and across the country have experienced historically high colony loss rates of nearly 30 percent a year impacting roughly 90 different agricultural crops ranging from almonds and apples on the West Coast to cotton and cranberries in the East.

“Keeping them alive is the hardest thing,” Holbrook said. “There are substances farmers use to manage vegetation and help their crops, but it’s causing a reduction in the forage area for bees. But everybody has to make a living and I don’t fault the farmers...if I were them I’d probably be doing the same thing. But we can all look for ways to be more environmentally friendly because we’re all making a living off nature.”

Holbrook, who describes himself as a migratory commercial beekeeper, typically transports bees to California every January to pollinate that state’s almond crop and then heads to his facility in Texas to extract honey. July is the slowest month of the year, then there’s a short fall season before the bees head to an indoor storage facility in Idaho for protection against the cold.

Despite the drought conditions that have caused stress for farmers, ranchers and apiculturists across the region, Holbrook is bullish on the beekeeping industry. He noted that the city of Sioux Falls recently approved an ordinance that allows residents to maintain hives on their property. Would-be beekeepers must

apply for a permit, take an online class, inform their neighbors of their intentions and adhere to other prescribed guidelines.

Holbrook reports that through the spring and summer seasons - and despite the drought - honey prices have seen an upward shift. For instance, he said the price for honey in the region last year was about \$1.70 per pound but has climbed to more than \$2.25. The international market is expected to expand from \$9.2 billion to \$19 billion by 2028.

“We were fortunate that we’ve had some timely rains and the hot, dry weather hasn’t caused problems for my business. It has been an average crop for me. But you don’t ever really know for sure until the honey is extracted,” he said.



According to owner Kiah Crowley, Sunrise Hives in Spearfish maintains about 400 bee colonies. *Photo by Sunrise Hives*

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AUGUST 27-29
Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival
Hot Springs Municipal Airport, Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

AUGUST 28
McCrossan Boys Ranch Xtreme Event Rodeo
McCrossan Boys Ranch Campus, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-339-1203

SEPTEMBER 2-6
South Dakota State Fair
State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD, 605-353-7340

SEPTEMBER 9-12
SD State Senior Games
Watertown, SD, Contact Howard at 605-491-0635 for more information

SEPTEMBER 10
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Rochford Trailhead, Hill City, SD, register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mickelson-star-trail-night-tickets-140121383831>

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SEPTEMBER 11-12
Fall Harvest Festival
Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792

SEPTEMBER 12
Annual Antique Car & Tractor Parade
Main Street, Farmer, SD, 605-239-4498

SEPTEMBER 17-18
Deadwood Jam
Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

SEPTEMBER 18
Health Connect Fair
Sanford Pentagon, Sioux Falls, SD, 888-761-5437

SEPTEMBER 18-19
Northeast South Dakota Celtic Faire and Games
37925 Youth Camp Road, Aberdeen, SD, 605-380-5828

SEPTEMBER 23-25
Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival
13329 US Highway 16A, Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

SEPTEMBER 25
Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival
526 Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

SEPTEMBER 25-26
Menno Pioneer Power Show
Menno, SD, contact Daniel at mennopowershow@yahoo.com for more details

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