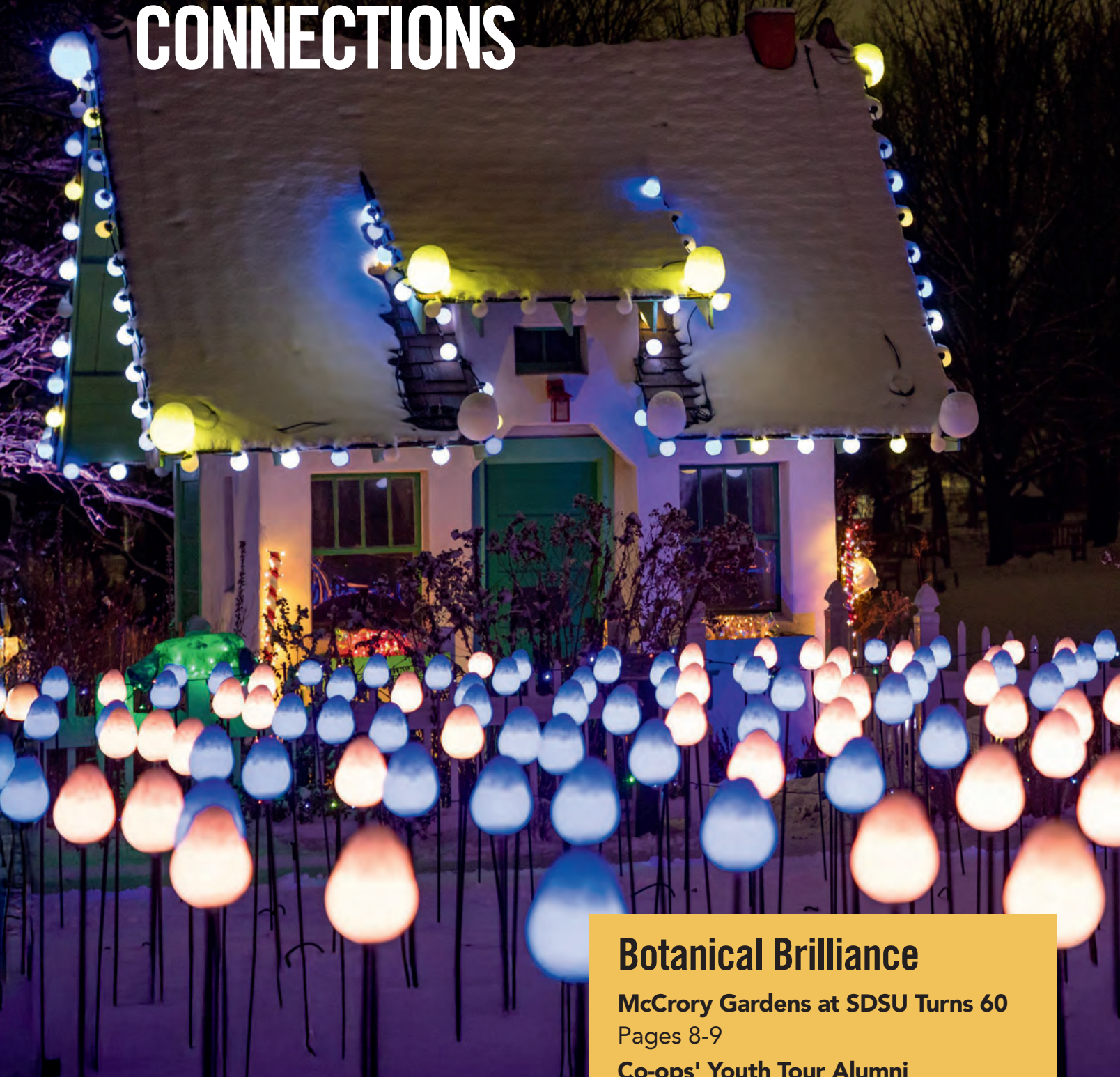


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Botanical Brilliance

McCrory Gardens at SDSU Turns 60

Pages 8-9

Co-ops' Youth Tour Alumni

Pages 12-13

The annual Garden Glow celebration at SDSU's McCrory Gardens turns the space into a winter wonderland with festive lights and decorations.

Photo by McCrory Gardens



The Board of Directors meet with FEM staff at the October meeting.

October 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 October 21, 2025, 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 the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Paula Petersen, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, Kelly Melius. Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, and CEO Scott Moore.

Guest Employee: Sonje Oban

Changes to the agenda: add 12 D. Basin monthly meeting report – Gary Bachman

Changes/Additions to Minutes from September 16, 2025, meeting: add "committee" to nominating committee fee

Next Meeting Date: After a review of the calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by

Tom Thorpe and carried to approve administrative business.

The board and staff watched NRECA Governance Video titled "The Business Judgement Rule".

Motion by Kelly Melius was seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to acknowledge the manager and staff reports along with East River Electric load management report and Electrical Department Quarterly Financial Report.

A discussion was held on replacing the Hillsvie and Newtown East River Electric substations and power reliability issues to FEM Electric members.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve the following work Order Inventories:

WO INV. 622	\$63,948.76
WO INV. 623	\$11,608.43
WO INV. 624	\$193,829.57
WO INV. 625	(\$720.31)
WO INV. 626	<u>\$726,317.89</u>
Total	\$994,984.34

A motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to acknowledge September 2025 Cyber Security Report.

Resolutions and Contracts:

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by

Paula Petersen and carried to approve 2026 Basin Load Forecast resolution.

A 2026 Rate study was discussed and the board asked CEO Moore to bring back additional information to November board meeting.

There was a discussion on general electric rates but until 2026 budget is completed no decisions were made.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to nominate Kelly Melius as Mid-West Voting Delegate and Gary Bachman as Alternate Voting Delegate.

Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Kyle & Kaylee Smidt, Chelsea, SD, Vacant Farm; Mary Crane, Mansfield, SD, 2 Active Farms

Reconnects: Joseph & Frances Bauman, Chelsea, SD, Vacant Farm; Stephen Crane, Mansfield, SD, 2 Active Farms

Contracts: Josh & Reagan Raile, Eureka, SD, Grain Bins; Mark & Kim Hoffman, Leola, SD, Well Pump; Robin & Darin Wieseler, Faulkton, SD, Grain Bins

Retired Locations: James Fischer, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump

Capital Credits:

Estates – October 2025: One = \$803.29

73 & Older – October – 2025: One = \$1,118.02

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve three Line Construction Contracts Josh and Reagan Raile, Mark and Kim Hoffman, and Robin and Darin Wieseler.

Continued on page 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. Secretary/
Treasurer
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore
info@femelectric.coop

Management Staff

Sean Christiansen
Operations Manager
Ryan Holien
Electrical Manager
Rhonda Tuscherer
*Director of Finance and
Benefits*

Editor's e-mail:

oban@femelectric.coop

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
General Manager/CEO

As I start this article on the first of November, it has been a season of good weather and looks like a plentiful harvest for our local agricultural producers. Even though I'm not a hunter, our legendary pheasant opener had some good reports on harvest numbers as groups returned to their generational hunting spots to meet friends, family, and create lasting memories.

I have been attending some economic development meetings for the past several months and two words are repeatedly mentioned: predictability and certainty. To have a strong rural economy I do believe we need to have some predictability on several levels, such as cost of inputs both in agriculture and small businesses. A market to sell your products with positive net incomes helps drive the direction of expansion and create jobs. In the electric industry it seems we may have been lacking some predictability. However, as new information comes forward, I believe the industry is moving forward with certainty.

There are many behind door negotiations about data/server loads, new power generation, and updating our transmission lines. When I say behind closed doors, I believe we have the right people sitting at the table discussing the construction of generation and the possibility to serve extremely large loads. In the next thirty-six months we will see press releases of proposed new power generation, and you should have the opportunity to make comments. These projects will have to go through county and state permitting. Gas generation, renewables (wind and solar) and a new source of generation SMR's (Stackable Modular Reactors - nuclear) will be generation fuel of choice. There is a long, hilly road going from concept, permitting, financing, to energizing new generation. We have a responsibility to provide reliable power for you, our members, and reliable power is a must for a strong rural economy. This is just one reason to have an engaged and informed local board of directors. This whole process starts at your meter, as you are the

Continued on page 7

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMEelectric on

@fem_electric on

@FEMEelectric on

We'll post outage updates, safety tips, news and more to keep our members informed on all the latest from FEM Electric.

Statement Mailing Dates

December 29, 2025 for December's energy
January 28, 2026 for January's energy

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

So, a Power Line Fell On Your Car...

Driving accidents can happen quickly and easily in the winter months with slick, inconspicuous coatings of black ice, reduced visibility and other weather-related safety hazards.

The important thing is that you know what to do if you find yourself in a collision with a utility pole – because what you don't know can seriously injure or kill you.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is no fire...

Call 911 and remain in your vehicle until help arrives — this is where you are safest. Your vehicle may be insulating you from the electrical current. Once you leave the vehicle and place your foot on the ground, the electricity may take a path through your body and shock you.

Never go off looks; a downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

If someone attempts to assist you, warn them to stay back until the utility can de-energize the line.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is a fire...

If your vehicle has caught fire, you must proceed with extreme caution. Again, even if a line isn't sparking, it may still be energized.

To make your escape, jump from your vehicle to the ground, making sure your body is not touching the ground and vehicle simultaneously. Making contact with both would make your body a direct conduit, and you would be electrocuted.

For that same reason, do not assist anyone else exiting the vehicle or accept help exiting the vehicle.

Once you're on the ground, keep your feet together and hop or shuffle away from the scene, at least 40 feet away. As you move, your goal is for there to not be a voltage difference between your feet. You do not want one foot off of the ground while the other foot is making contact with the ground.

Call 911 and warn others to stay away from the scene.

If you come across downed power lines...

Stay no less than 40 feet away, as the ground can become energized. Never drive over downed power lines – not only do you risk electrocution and damage to your vehicle, but the added tension could pull down surrounding utility poles and create additional hazards.

If you're a first responder at the scene...

Always assume lines are energized. Contact the utility and wait for them to de-energize the lines and give you the all-clear.



Always assume a downed power line is energized. A downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

"Never go outside during a lightning storm!"



**Josiah Krcil,
Age 9**

Josiah cautions readers on the dangers of going outside during a lightning storm. Great picture, Josiah! Josiah's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Specialty SOUPS

CHEESEBURGER VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
2 lbs. block Velveeta cheese
(2) 12 oz. cans evaporated milk
(3) 10.5 oz. cans cream of mushroom soup
10.5 oz. can cream of celery soup
1 can French style green beans
1 can mixed vegetables
1 can diced potatoes

Method

Brown ground beef. Cut Velveeta into cubes. Put all ingredients into slow cooker. Cook on low six to eight hours, stirring halfway through or cook on high two hours, and then on low another two hours, stirring halfway through.

Wendy Thorson
Northern Electric

DUMPLING SOUP

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tsps. sesame oil
1 cup carrots, shredded
5 green onions, thinly sliced (whites and greens separated)
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 cup white miso paste
6 cups chicken vegetable broth, divided
1 lb. frozen mini dumplings
3 cups baby spinach
3 tsps. soy sauce (plus more to serve)
Hot sauce or chili oil to serve

Method

In a large pot, heat the vegetable oil and sesame oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, green onion whites, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften, two to three minutes. In a small bowl, combine the miso paste with 1/2 cup broth, whisking until the miso is dissolved. Add the miso mixture and remaining broth to the pot and bring to a boil.

Add the dumplings and bring to a simmer. Heat until the dumplings are heated through, three to five minutes. Stir in the spinach, cooking until the greens are wilted, one to two minutes. Add the soy sauce and green onion greens.

Serve hot with hot sauce or chili oil, and extra soy sauce.

Susan Forma
Union County Electric

PHEASANT CHOWDER

Ingredients:

2 pheasants (thighs and breasts: or only breasts if preferred)
4 celery stalks, sliced
1/2 lb. bacon strips, sliced
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 cups chicken broth
4 medium size Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 cloves garlic, diced
5 tsps. flour
2 cups half-and-half
1 cup parmesan cheese
Salt and Pepper

Method

Put cubed potatoes in a separate pot, cover with the chicken broth, and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until they are soft.

Slice the pheasant meat, across grain into 1/4 to 1/2 inch strips.

Cut bacon slices into small pieces and put in a Dutch oven on medium heat. Add diced celery and onion and cook until the bacon and celery are cooked through and onions are transparent. Add the garlic and pheasant. The meat should cook quickly because of the small sized pieces. Once meat is cooked, add the flour one tablespoon at a time while stirring the mixture, thoroughly coating the vegetables and meat.

Add the potatoes and broth from the separate pot. Once incorporated, stir in the half-and-half, then stir in the parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. This chowder is ready to eat once heated through, or you can let it simmer on low heat. Flavors should continue to meld.

Nick Kvernevig
Lake Region Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

Board Report Continued from page 2

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to retain \$96.42 from a member's capital credits for bad debt.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve 2026 Market Rates for Aberdeen Energy, Mina, and Agtegra, Bowdle Facility.

The board set February 13, 2026, as the date for Board Appreciation Pancake Breakfast.

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information:

The check register for the month of September 2025 contained information on checks #35640 through #35720 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for September 2025 totaling \$479,043.80.

September 2025 financials were reviewed.

Quarterly budget update with TIER was reviewed.

Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer reviewed 2026 Wellness budget and plan with the board. Items will be included in 2026 budget.

Interest received from CFC Member Capital Securities (MCS) and SCTC were reviewed.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

Legal Update: none

Meeting Report:

East River monthly board report was given by Gary Bachman, and monthly video was watched.

Tom Thorpe reported on NRECA Regional meeting along with SDREA board meeting activities.

Gary Bachman attended the Basin monthly board meeting and reviewed it with the board.

The safety meeting minutes from September 19, 2025, were acknowledged.

Employee meeting minutes from September 16, 2025, were acknowledged.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



Manager's Article Continued from page 3

owner of FEM Electric Association.

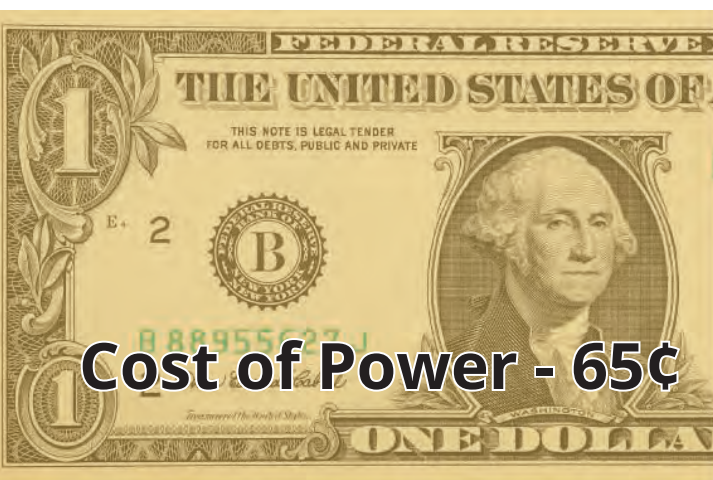
It can be easy to listen to and ponder on negative reports or news while at the same time believing we are in a terrible situation. The sky isn't falling but we will have some tougher years ahead. FEM Electric will approve a new annual budget in December and a new construction work plan in 2026, these topics will help FEM Electric maintain our existing facilities while replacing some older facilities. We are defiantly in changing times and costs are increasing but please remember when getting your power from your electric cooperative any margins get allocated to your capital credits, not to out-of-state investors.

One thing is certain - time moves on, and we are entering the holiday season, so I hope you enjoy safe and happy holiday season.

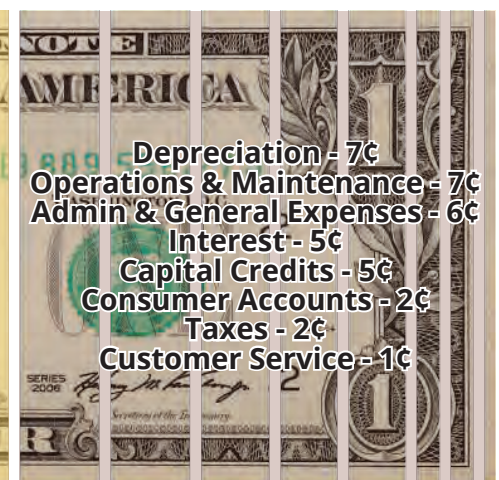
If you are planning 2026 expansion projects, please contact Sean Christiansen or Ryan Holien 605-426-6891.



WHERE YOUR DOLLAR GOES



Cost of Power - 65¢



Depreciation - 7¢
Operations & Maintenance - 7¢
Admin & General Expenses - 6¢
Interest - 5¢
Capital Credits - 5¢
Consumer Accounts - 2¢
Taxes - 2¢
Customer Service - 1¢



During the annual Garden Glow event, McCrory Gardens in Brookings is transformed into a winter wonderland.
Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

NATURE GROWS & GLOWS AT MCCRORY GARDENS

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Tucked among the towering pines at the busy corner of 6th Street and 22nd Avenue in Brookings, S.D., you'll find a little plot of botanical paradise.

For 60 years, South Dakota State University's McCrory Gardens has not only served as a mecca for horticulture enthusiasts, but also a versatile, community-focused space for weddings, workshops and other seasonal festivities.

"Here, our mission is connecting people and plants through education, research, discovery and enjoyment of the natural and built landscape," said Lisa Marotz, director of McCrory Gardens.

Working toward that mission, Marotz and staff keep a schedule full of activities for SDSU students and community members with a variety of seasonal events: a spring-time syrup-making workshop where participants are taught to tap trees; the summer-time TuliPalooza where more than 15,000 tulip bulbs are planted in a colorful display; and the family-focused fall festival during Hobo Day weekend featuring horse-drawn hay rides and food trucks.

"There really is always something to see — just maybe not always what you expect," said Kathryn Bowar, an SDSU ag science

student and McCrory Gardens intern from Hoven, S.D.

Bowar says the space is increasingly popular for students looking to take a break from busy campus life to study, hang out with friends, or just enjoy time alone in a tranquil, outdoor environment surrounded by nature.

"I grew up as a ranch kid and adjusting to city life was overwhelming at times," Bowar added. "Coming to McCrory Gardens was a breath of fresh air and helped me recenter in the beauty of nature."

The garden's hallmark event is the regionally renowned Garden Glow, which transforms the dormant grounds into a winter wonderland with bright and festive Christmas lights and decorations.

"Garden Glow is a way that we are able to bring thousands of people to a botanical garden in South Dakota in December," Marotz said with a laugh. "We started out in 2015 when about 51 people came. Last year we were up to about 13,000, so it's grown a lot in popularity."

At the upcoming Garden Glow, visitors will meander through the reindeer meadow, travel across the life-size "Candy Land" board, warm up with a stop at the hot cocoa hut and peek inside Santa's summer-time home while exploring all the garden has to offer.

And there's been a lot of change over the garden's 60-year history, from new flowerbeds and gardens to patios and memorials.

But despite that, Marotz says she and her staff work to ensure the original vision of the garden and the contributions of those who worked before her are preserved.

Rather than tearing out and replacing sections of the gardens, the staff update and add to the space, with each parcel of the 25-acre garden bearing the fingerprints of past enthusiasts who cultivated, researched and appreciated the flora that make the Midwest beautiful.

"We have visitors comment that they now know what heaven looks like," Marotz said. "That's what people feel here: sanctuary and peace."



Lisa Marotz – McCrory Gardens Director since 2016 – with intern Kathryn Bowar, who is beginning her third fall working at the garden.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

With bright, blooming flowers, McCrory Gardens is the perfect stop for migrating butterflies and other helpful pollinators.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Many area visitors recognize this cottage as the 1928 Lawson Gas Station in Lake Preston, which was moved to McCrory Gardens in 1996 and renovated in 2024.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Each cactus in the cacti garden is dug up each fall and moved into a greenhouse on campus before being replanted in the spring.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



The 1991 Sioux Quartzite rock garden and 2013 waterfall are a favorite fixture in the garden — and the site of numerous summertime marriage proposals.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



A labyrinth of pathways and trails lined with mature trees and vines give garden visitors a sense of exploration — even though they're right in the middle of Brookings.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



During the Garden Glow event, the East Terrace Lawn and Gazebo becomes The Enchanted Forest. Marotz notes this was the site of the first Garden Glow in 2015 — miniscule compared to today's expansive decorating.

This winter, Garden Glow is open 5-9 p.m. from Dec. 6, 2025 through Jan. 6, 2026.

Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

60TH ANNIVERSARY THE MCCRORY STORY

*Photos submitted by
McCrory Gardens*

1964

The S.D. Legislature approves funds to construct Bailey Rotunda and Wagner Hall on the site of SDSU's Horticulture-Forestry Gardens. Samuel A. McCrory, head of the horticulture department at SDSU, advocated for a research garden filled with S.D. flora that would also serve as a learning center for students. McCrory passed away March 10, 1964.



1966

The new horticulture garden is formally dedicated "McCrory Gardens" to honor the late department head.



1977

McCrory Gardens receives the prestigious All-American Display Garden Award. The Garden is now designated to receive and showcase winning plant selections each year.



1979

McCrory Gardens is named on a list of the top 10 small gardens in the U.S. by ARCO Travel Club Magazine.



1988

The first annual Garden Party is held to fund the maintenance and operating costs of the garden.



1994

The late Gov. George Mickelson is honored in the newly-constructed Mickelson Grove.



2012

The new Education & Visitor Center is dedicated.



2025

McCrory Gardens celebrates its 60th anniversary!



ENERGY ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR FEM MEMBERS

It's no secret that electrical rates will be increasing in 2026. If you're in need of assistance with your electricity bills, there is help available through the State of South Dakota.

The Department of Social Services (DSS) offers a number of programs to assist South Dakotans in times of need such as the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). This program can help FEM members during the heating months of October 1st through May 15th.

Members who need assistance need to fill out the DSS Low Income Energy Assistance Application, which can be found at dss.sd.gov/economicassistance, or they can call 1-800-233-8503 for more information.

There are a few eligibility requirements such as the total gross income of the house hold must not exceed maximum income guidelines, and the applicant must be responsible for paying the home heating costs. Income guidelines are:

Household Size	Maximum 3-Month Income
1 Person	\$7,825
2 Person	\$10,575
3 Person	\$13,325
4 Person	\$16,075
5 Person	\$18,825
6 Person	\$21,575
7 Person	\$22,514
8 Person	\$23,014
9 Person	\$23,514
10 Person	\$24,431

LIEAP is only one of the many assistance programs DSS offers. FEM has also worked with the Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) in the past. This program prevents disconnection of services during the months of October through March. Do not hesitate to reach out if you need help.

For other questions about your bill, you can call our office at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880.



RECIPES NEEDED

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

Submit recipes to graphics@eastriver.coop or contact your local co-op for more information.

Submit to be entered into a drawing for 1 of 2 \$100 Visa gift cards
Deadline for submissions: December 15th, 2025



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS



Look out for the “energy-saving device” scam. Whether sold on social media platforms or through random emails, consumers have fallen victim to scams where these products claim to reduce or even eliminate energy bills. These products are advertised as devices that will “balance” or “clean” the power in your home, thus saving you money. There is no such device that can simply be plugged in to lower energy use.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

To maximize your fireplace's efficiency, always keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper is like an open window, allowing warm indoor air to escape and cold air to enter. Consider installing a fireplace insert, which improves heat output by circulating warm air into the room rather than letting it escape up the chimney. Also, burn only seasoned hardwood to ensure a hotter, cleaner burn. Regularly clean and inspect your chimney to maintain safe and efficient operation.

Source: [energy.gov](https://www.energy.gov)



Bright Lights, Safe Nights

Outdoor holiday lighting safety

- Use outdoor-rated lights with UL safety labels.
- Plug into GFCI outlets for shock protection.
- Stay at least 10 feet from power lines when hanging lights.
- Don't hang lights with tacks, nails or screws — use clips instead.
- Keep cords away from water and snow.
- Inspect for damage like broken sockets or frayed cords.
- Don't overload extension cords or outlets.
- Turn off lights before bed or when away; a timer makes it easy.

Safe
Electricity.org®





The 2006 Youth Tour group takes a photo on the Albert Einstein Memorial in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan

YOUTH TODAY. LEADERS TOMORROW.

South Dakota's Youth Tour Continues to Inspire Leadership Years Later

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdsrea.coop

Each summer, a new group of South Dakota teens will board a plane for Washington, D.C., full of excitement for the trip of a lifetime. They're part of the South Dakota Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, a weeklong experience that connects rural students to the people, places and ideas that shape our country.

The Youth Tour began after a 1957 speech by former Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, who encouraged electric cooperatives to send young people to the Capitol so they could "see what the flag stands for." Since South Dakota sent

its first group in 1963, more than 1,300 students have made the trip.

During the trip, students visit landmarks like Ford's Theater, the National Archives and the U.S. Capitol. They meet members of Congress, make friends from across the country and see firsthand how decisions made in Washington affect people back home.

For many, the most meaningful part of the trip happens long after they return. The experience lights a spark that shapes how they view their communities and their roles within them.

Two of those alumni, Kevin Larsen and Andi Fouberg, still carry lessons from their Youth Tour experiences today.

Kevin Larsen

Kevin Larsen remembers applying for Youth Tour in 2006 as a junior from Howard High School to represent Central Electric Cooperative.

"I've always been a history nut," he said. "My parents, like a lot of farmers, weren't made of money. This was a chance to go see the nation's capital, and I figured, why not apply?"

Once he decided to apply, he approached his high school English teacher, who helped him polish his essay, which landed on the desk of longtime Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen. "Lo and behold, the legendary Ken Schlimgen gives me a call," Larsen said. "And the rest is history."

Larsen now serves as the public information officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society in Pierre. He is also active in local organizations and community leadership roles, serving as president of the Pierre Kiwanis Club, incoming exalted ruler for the Pierre Elks Lodge, and in 2025

he ran for a position on the Pierre City Commission, only to come short by a handful of votes.

“These types of trips instill a passion for civics, and I think they mean a lot more for rural South Dakota kids,” Larsen said. “I’m from the middle of nowhere, Canova, South Dakota – a lot of people don’t even know where that is. The nearest town from our farm was six miles away, and that town is 100 people if everybody’s home. I think the opportunity to travel means more coming from somebody that was raised on a farm.”

He laughs when he thinks back to the trip. He keeps in touch with one of his roommates from that week. “You build connections you don’t expect,” he said. “One of the guys I roomed with ended up being a friend of my wife’s, and years later he attended our wedding.”

Larsen also credits his former Youth Tour Director, Brenda Kleinjan, for making the trip a success. “She was so passionate about the places we visited,” he said. “We weren’t just seeing historic monuments; we were learning what they meant.”

For Larsen, that week in D.C. helped set him on a lifelong path of leadership. “That trip really instilled that leadership ability and finding that inner voice to apply for something you might not think would ever happen,” he said. “When I sent off the essay in high school, I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams that I’d get an all-expenses-paid trip to D.C. We even ate well, too.”

Andi Fouberg

When Andi Fouberg applied for the Youth Tour, she was a high school student from Letcher. “I’m pretty sure my best



Kevin Larsen
2006 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo



Andi Fouberg
1994 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo

friend went the year before, and I thought that seemed pretty cool,” she said.

Also representing Central Electric Cooperative, she joined the 1994 Youth Tour, a year she remembers vividly for an unusual reason.

“The night before we left was when O.J. Simpson went on the white Ford Bronco run through Los Angeles,” she said with a laugh. “We watched it on TV in the hotel in Sioux Falls because we met there and stayed the night before we all flew out together.”

The trip instilled an early passion for civic life in Fouberg. After college, she moved to Washington, D.C., and spent 10 years as Sen. John Thune’s communications director.

“Youth Tour was what prompted me to want to be in D.C. at some point,” Fouberg said.

While working for Sen. Thune, Fouberg would regularly meet new Youth Tour students visiting the Capitol every year in June.

“I’d see these students walking the same halls I once toured, wide-eyed and curious, and I’d think, that was me,” she said.

Now, Fouberg leads the South Dakota State University Alumni Association as its president and CEO. She credits that early trip with showing her what public service and connection can look like.

“The trip had an impact on me wanting to be out there and be part of that environment,” she said. “It made me want to be part of the process and feel like you are part of the government machine, but in a way that helps people.”

Reflecting on it now, she believes the experience gives students from small towns something they might not otherwise see.

“Growing up in Letcher or any small community in South Dakota, I don’t know that civic engagement is something you naturally imagine yourself doing without exposure from something like Youth Tour,” she said. “Without exposure to Washington D.C. through something like that, I probably would not have pursued that path. It all had its roots in Youth Tour.”



Kevin Larsen (left) takes a photo with Youth Tour friends at the FDR Memorial in 2006.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan



POWERING MEMBER EDUCATION

FEM MEMBERS TOUR BASIN FACILITIES

August is a busy time of year. It's back to school time, fair time, and in 2025, it was tour time for FEM members.

A small group of FEM members joined members from Northern Electric and Lake Region electric for a tour of Basin Electric's facilities.

Basin staff welcomed members with a lunch and a tour of several sites within Basin's headquarters on the first day of the tour. From there, members were bussed to one of the local wind farms where a portion of power is Basin's power is produced for its membership.

As an added treat, members took a cruise on the Lewis and Clark Riverboat where they enjoyed a meal and conversation.

The second day of the tour gave members an opportunity to tour Dakota Gasification, a coal fire plant, and a coal mine site. Each location showed how coal is mine, processed, scrubbed, and used to create energy and a number of by-products that are sold as commodities.

The tour may be short, but we hope it was fun and educational for all of the members that attended. If you're interested in future tours, be on the lookout in future editions of this newsletters for a chance to sign-up.



FREE Gift Wrapping

December 5th
9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Everyone is welcome!

FEM ELECTRIC

PRESENTS THE 2026 YOUTH TOUR

JUNE 14 - 20, 2026

Here is your chance of a lifetime to experience an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 14-20, 2026.

What does it cost?

Nothing!

This is why cooperatives are different! Co-ops are always giving back to the communities we serve, and helping students learn about the political process to interact with your government is one way cooperatives give back. We hope students who attend walk away from this week as a better leader, and with a sense that they can make a difference.

When is it held?

June 14-20, 2026

Students will meet in Sioux Falls on Sunday, June 14th for an orientation before flying to D.C. on Monday, June 15th. Everyone will return to South Dakota on Saturday, June 20th.

There will be featured speakers on National Youth Day that will provide insight on the important roles electric cooperatives play in their community. Students will learn about American history, and their role as a citizen by meeting with their representative and senators at the nation's capital.



This trip is for any high school junior or senior in FEM Electric's territory!

For more information contact:
Crystal Thorson
thorson@femelectric.coop
FEM Electric Association, Inc.
PO Box 468
800 5th Ave.
Ipswich, SD 57451
www.femelectric.coop
Application Deadline:
December 22nd, 2025



How do I enter?

Students who are interested should complete the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C. application. Applications can be found at www.femelectric.coop, through your school counselor, or you can pick up an application at FEM Electric.

How do I win?

FEM Electric's selection committee will review and evaluate all applications received. Students may be asked to participate in an interview. The committee will select THREE students to represent FEM Electric at this year's event.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



NOV. 25-DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m. (holidays included)
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

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.

NOV. 27
Community Thanksgiving
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Groton Community Center
Groton, SD

NOV. 28
Snacks With Santa
2-4 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

NOV. 29
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 5-6
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-890-2974

DEC. 6
Hometown Christmas
All Day
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656

DEC. 6
KJAM Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Madison, SD
605-256-4514

DEC. 6
Parade of Lights
6 p.m.
Redfield, SD
605-472-0965

DEC. 6
Holly Jolly HoeDown on Ice
Fort Pierre Expo Center
Pierre, SD
605-289-1334

DEC. 7
KCBA Hometown Christmas
10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

DEC. 13
Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Aberdeen, SD

DEC. 14
A Poker Alice Christmas
2 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

DEC. 14
Shaun Johnson Big Band Experience Holiday Show
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

DEC. 15
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
7-9 p.m.
H.S. Performing Arts Center
Mitchell, SD

JAN. 22
Gentleman's Quartet: Instrumental Quartet with Erin Shields
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 21
Bellator Titans Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
Blackjack, Scorpion (horse) Races, Find the Titan, Live Auction & More
City Lights Bar & Event Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 22
C Street Brass
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

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