

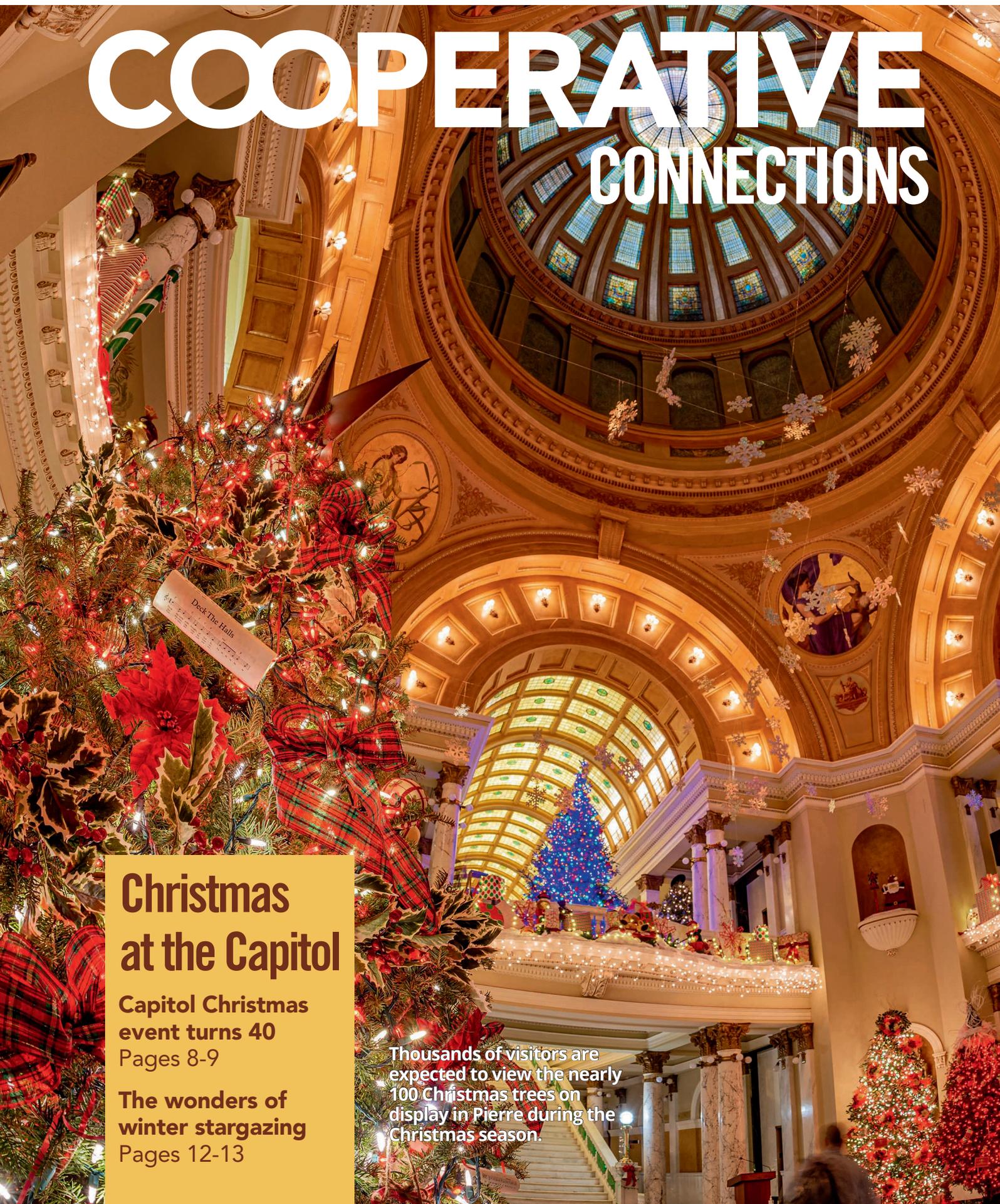
COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Christmas at the Capitol

Capitol Christmas
event turns 40
Pages 8-9

The wonders of
winter stargazing
Pages 12-13

Thousands of visitors are expected to view the nearly 100 Christmas trees on display in Pierre during the Christmas season.



BOARD REPORT



FEM Board member Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, and Line Superintendent Rob Vetch

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota, at 8:30 a.m. on October 19, 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, Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, General Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Line Superintendent Rob Vetch, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer. President Gary Bachman welcomed guest employees Ryan Holien and Sonje Oban.

Darrin Lynch, Regional Vice President of National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC) was present to review FEM's annual KRTA with board and staff. Angie Sieh attended during the presentation.

Changes to the agenda: add 7E NISC election

Changes/Additions to Minutes from September 20, 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, November 16, 2021, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Darrin Lynch reviewed FEM Electric's

KRTA with board and staff, along with some discussion.

Darrin Lynch and Angie Sieh left the meeting.

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

Motion by Paula Petersen, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to acknowledge manager, staff and electrical department reports, along with work order inventories.

WOI #571	\$115,709.41
WOI #572	\$11,321.95
<u>WOI #573</u>	<u>\$28,340.13</u>
TOTAL:	\$155,371.49

The board acknowledged reviewing the September Cyber Security Report.

Resolutions, Contracts, and Nominations:

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve policies #401 Loss Control Program, #402 Funeral Leave, #403 Military Leave, #404 Civic Duties.

Policy #405 Sick Leave was not approved after discussion on COVID leave. Policy #405 will be brought back for approval in November with changes.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve the review of Contractor Mutual Aid

Agreement and Construction Work Standards.

Motion by Paula Petersen, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve 2022 Basin Load Forecast Resolution for FEM Electric:

WHEREAS, Basin Electric Power Cooperative has completed a detailed forecast of total demand and energy requirements for the period of 2021 through 2050; and

WHEREAS, the forecast was prepared in accordance with current Rural Utilities Service regulations using reasonable methodologies and assumptions; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors of FEM Electric Association, Inc. has reviewed the study and its conclusions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Directors of FEM Electric Association, Inc. does hereby adopt and approve the 2022 Load Forecast prepared by Basin Electric Power Cooperative as a reasonable forecast of the future demand and energy requirements for FEM Electric Association, Inc. through the year 2050.

FEM Board acknowledged and requested the Manager/CEO Scott Moore be the delegate for NISC and cast the ballot electronically.

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

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Mike & Leda Yost, Redfield, Shop & Active Farm; Steven & Kris Scherr, Roscoe, Active Farm; Enid Rogers, Seneca, Active Farm; Dianne Hannigan, Ipswich, Active Farm

Connects: Mike & Lori Kalkman, Miranda, Shop & Active Farm; Ylises & Crystal Duran, Roscoe, Active Farm; Dirk & Jen Rogers, Groton, Active Farm; Donnie & Tonya Luond, Ipswich, Active Farm

Contracts: none

Retired Locations: none

Continued on pg 10

**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.

Subscription information: As part of their membership, FEM members devote \$1.00 from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$15 annually. (USPS 189-720) Periodical Postage Paid at Ipswich, SD 57451 and at additional offices.

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Design assistance by SDREA

**FEM Electric is an equal
opportunity provider and
employer.**



Scott Moore
General Manager/CEO

As we look at October 2021 in the rearview mirror, what a turnaround from dry and dusty to wet and lush. With the recent fall moisture, we can hope that members can be optimistic as we look forward to a productive 2022. FEM Electric is in our annual process of creating our 2022 budget that the board of directors will review in November and approve in December. Having a good budget and following it is critical to FEM's success. Many of FEM's construction projects and large purchases have been in place to complete or purchase for the past five years. We don't need any knee-jerk decisions or purchases.

FEM Electric's daily operation is no different than your household or business needs. We have and will continue to deal with rising costs and material shortages now, and I believe for several years into the future. It seems prices rise faster than they ever come down and I'm just guessing we haven't seen the end of rising cost. We need less government policies and restrictions and more long-term solutions from American investors and work force. My belief is we can get this slow-moving freight train back on track by picking up the pieces, working together, and putting our and future generations destiny back in the hands of the American people. We need to stay optimistic and work together at keeping rural America's economy strong and productive.

FEM operations department finished plowing in our new underground the end of September and they are currently cutting over member locations and energizing the new lines. They have also been busy switching how members electricity is fed to their location; allowing the transmission construction companies to cut over and energize the new transmission lines.

Any work completed outside creates work in the office. Our office staff is looking at getting projects closed while maintaining their daily duties in preparation of yearend.

The electrical wiring department has had a successful year with getting projects completed, with more to complete before yearend. They have projects lined up for 2022 so please plan and call early if you are looking to use FEM's electricians. Call Ryan Holien at 605-426-6891.

If planning to add electrical load at one of your locations, please call Rob Vetch 605-426-6891. It is never too early to start planning.

As we move out of fall harvest, we hope you had a safe and productive year and as the holiday season approaches please be safe at home, work, and on your travels. Enjoy your family time.

**Statement
Mailing Dates**

Nov. 30, 2021 for Nov.'s energy

Dec. 30, 2021 for Dec.'s energy

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

Ready your home for a winter break during the holidays

If you're planning to be out of town for an extended period of time during the holidays, take heed of the following recommendations to save some energy and keep your home safe while you're away.

- Set your home's thermostat to 50 degrees. This temperature is a happy midpoint that avoids wasting energy to warm an empty house while still preventing damage to your pipes and plants. If sub-20-degree days are forecast during the time you are away, drip faucets.
- Turn off your electric water heater at the breaker or set it to the lowest temperature possible.
- To avoid a potential fire hazard, unplug the washer and dryer before you leave your home. Disconnect the hoses leading to the washer to prevent them from freezing.
- Unplug all of your small appliances. You'll reduce the risk of a house fire and save a bit on your electric bill.
- Don't broadcast your travel plans on social media. Instead, share photos from your trip after you return.
- If you set a timer for your outdoor or indoor lights, make sure to switch up the times over the days you'll be gone so it's not obvious to any onlookers that the house is empty when lights go on at 6 p.m. every day like clockwork. If possible, stagger several timers that control different lights to approximate the natural movement of someone through a house.
- Close blinds and curtains. Don't advertise your belongings to any would-be house burglars.
- Be strategic about putting out post-holiday recycling and trash. If there are a lot of boxes from new gadgets or other expensive electronics, wait until you get back to put them out so they're not sitting outside in full view for days. Or have a trusted neighbor set them by the curb on the appropriate day.
- Place a hold on all mail and newspaper deliveries, and ask a neighbor or a friend to pick up any packages from your porch.

DID YOU KNOW?



On Christmas Eve 1923, President Calvin Coolidge began the country's celebration of Christmas by lighting the first National Christmas Tree decorated with electric lights.



Don't cut down trees by power lines

Milo Thompson

Milo reminds electric cooperative members that cutting down trees located near power lines can be hazardous. Milo is the child of Kurt and Rebecca Thompson of Hayti. They are members of H-D Electric.

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.

HOLIDAY DESSERTS

CRANBERRY CAKE

Ingredients:
3 Tbsp. butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
2 cups flour
1 cup milk
3 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
2-3 cups raw cranberries

Butter Sauce

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup evaporated milk or cream
1 Tbsp. flour
1 tsp. vanilla

METHOD

Grease and flour a bundt pan or 9 x 13 inch pan. Cream butter, sugar and egg. Beat in flour, milk, baking powder and salt. Fold in cranberries. Spread batter in pan. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. Bundt pan may need one hour. Serve with butter sauce. For butter sauce, mix flour and sugar. Place all ingredients except vanilla in saucepan. Heat, beating well over high heat until hot and bubbly. Add vanilla. Serve warm over cranberry cake.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

BAKED RICE PUDDING

Ingredients:
2 cups milk
1 cup water
1/4 cup sugar
3 tbsps. rice
1 tbsps. butter
1/4 cup raisins
Pinch of salt

Topping

Sugar
Cinnamon
Milk

METHOD

In a 2-qt. baking dish, add milk, water, sugar and rice. Stir together. Add a pinch of salt and raisins. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour. Take out of oven and add butter. Let sit while you eat main meal. Dish up in bowls, sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon and add milk.

Deanna Dean, Artesian

FANCY CHRISTMAS CAKES

Ingredients:

Cakes

1 pkg. (2-layer size) white cake mix
1 tbsps. McCormick® Red Food Color
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 tbsps. McCormick® Green Food Color
1 pkg. (16 oz.) chocolate candy coating, such as CANDIQUIK®

Buttercream

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, softened
1 tsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
1 pkg. (16 oz.) confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 tbsps. milk
Pinch of salt

METHOD

Preheat oven and prepare batter as directed. Divide batter evenly into 2 bowls (about 1-1/2 cups of batter each). Stir red food color and vanilla into first bowl. Stir green color into second bowl. Pour red and green batter into greased 13 x 9-inch baking pans. Gently tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. (If you do not have 2 13 x 9-inch pans, bake one color cake first, then reuse the pan to bake the second.) Bake 6 minutes. Remove pans from oven and tap on counter to remove any air bubbles. Return pans to oven and bake 6-9 minutes longer. Cool in pans 10 minutes. Invert cakes onto wire rack. Cool completely. Refrigerate cakes until ready to assemble. For buttercream, beat butter in large bowl with electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add vanilla and mix. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar on low speed, scraping sides and bottom of bowl after each addition. Add milk and salt; beat on medium-high until light and fluffy, at least 3 minutes. If frosting is too thick, beat in additional milk.

www.mccormick.com

Please send your favorite soup 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.

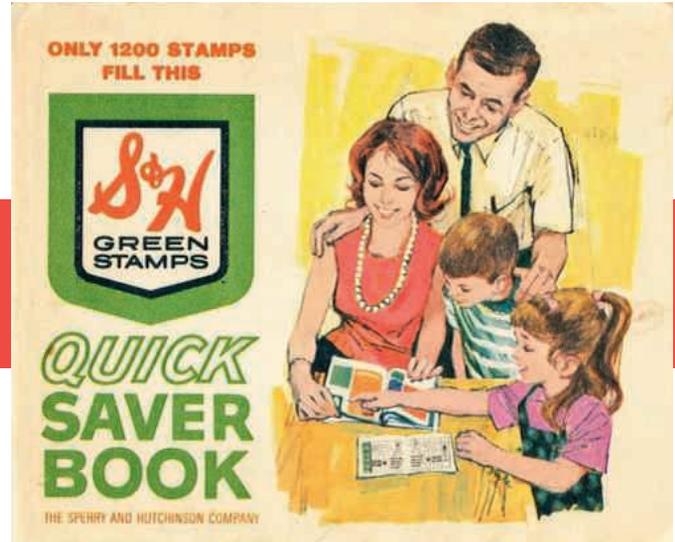
BLAST FROM THE PAST

Scott Moore

FEM Electric Manager/CEO

No New Concept

We may think that it is a new concept or sales idea, but there isn't anything new about loyalty points or getting a gift for doing business with a local, regional, or national retailer or merchant. In the 1930s through the 1970s many small merchants offered S&H Green stamps. Yes, they would have double stamps for purchasing gas or items on a certain day or just a regular number of stamps for doing business with a local merchant. The local merchant would buy the stamps, then distribute them to customers when they made a purchase. The customers would then place the stamps in a redemption book to keep a count. Once the customer collected a certain number of stamps, they could redeem the stamps for everything from china and linens to small appliances and furniture from a S&H catalog or one of 600 redemption stores located in cities throughout the U.S. At the height of this program, S&H was printing three times the stamps as the United States Postal Service. I'm sure we have members that remember licking the S&H Green Stamps and placing them in the redemption book, along with looking at the catalog hoping that their parents or grandma would purchase something for the kids.



Need a little help this holiday season?

FEM Electric will provide free gift wrapping services Friday, December 10th from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm as part of Hometown Holiday!



WINTER WEATHER

CAN BRING POWER LINES DOWN



DID YOU KNOW:

STAY WHERE YOU ARE

You've just been in an accident involving a downed power line. Your first instinct might be to get out and run, but that could cost you your life. In most cases, the safest place to be is inside your car or truck. Wait there until electric utility workers deenergize the power. If your car is on fire or you see smoke, escape as safely as possible by making a clean, solid jump out and hop away with both feet together as far as you can. Warn others not to approach the scene.



- That downed power lines are extremely dangerous and even deadly?
- The current could spread throughout the ground and anything touching the ground?
- Stray voltage spreads like ripples on a pond?
- If you step from one "ripple" (voltage) to another you could be electrocuted?
- Downed lines could be hiding under standing water, ice or debris?

Learn more at:

 Safe
Electricity.org®

CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPITOL

Each year, musicians and other entertainers from across the state perform for the tens of thousands of visitors who travel to Pierre to see the “Christmas at the Capitol” displays and decorations. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Christmas at the Capitol: Celebrating 40 years of yuletide splendor and dazzling displays

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

With all of its spectacular lights, familiar carols and colorful decorations, Christmas at the Capitol inspires thousands to become awash in the spirit of the season.

It’s an especially magical and meaningful event for Moriah Gross, founder and director of the Pierre Youth Orchestra. Over the past decade, Gross and her students have performed in the Capitol Rotunda and added to the yuletide ambiance that more than 20,000 visitors travel from far and near to experience.

Gross is one of many performers slated to appear in the Rotunda as Christmas at the Capitol takes place from Nov. 23 through Dec. 26. Visitors to this year’s celebration can expect to see brilliant hues of ruby, pink and pearl in recognition of the event’s 40th anniversary.

“Winter Wishes” is the theme for 2021 as nearly 100 decorated trees will line the halls and fill the

historic structure. Local businesses and government agencies, non-profit organizations and other community groups from across the state will once again put their decorating skills to the test and give the Capitol and its environs a South Dakota Christmas flair.

This year’s official lighting ceremony will take place on Tuesday, Nov. 23, at 7:30 p.m. The popular Pie Day is set for Saturday, Dec. 4, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., when complimentary slices of pie, cookies, coffee and ice cream will be offered along with live musical entertainment sure to spark the Christmas spirit.

Gross said she and her students look forward to the event each year, but one memory stands out for her among the rest. Two years ago, she accompanied a guest performer who sang the traditional carol Silent Night in the language of the Lakota Sioux.

“It was so spectacular and moving to be able to have that experience there inside the State Capitol and honoring the Lakota people and

culture, and also to have our students experience that as well,” said Gross, a member of Oahe Electric Cooperative outside of Pierre.

A native of Kansas and accomplished string instrumentalist, Gross relocated to Pierre 10 years ago and soon realized there was no educational string program for public school students. So, she started the Pierre Youth Orchestra, which has nearly 40 students who are set to perform at the Capitol on Sunday, Dec. 19, at 5 p.m.

THIS YEAR’S OFFICIAL LIGHTING CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE TUESDAY, NOV. 23, AT 7:30 P.M. THE POPULAR PIE DAY IS SET FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 4, FROM 11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Gross said while she calls the Capitol “one of my favorite places to perform,” the experience is also beneficial for her music students in many ways.

“It’s just the opportunity to play for

DECKING THE CAPITOL HALLS



Nearly 100 trees are decorated by clubs, associations, non-profits and government agencies. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

an audience in this kind of setting. It's very intimate and not like playing on a stage in a large theater where the audience is sitting at a distance away from you," she said. "In the Rotunda, there are people all around, sometimes standing room only, and they're very close and intimate. It's an emotional time of year and you get to really connect with the audience. At the same time, they have to be disciplined and focused on what they're doing. It's a unique experience that a lot of students don't always get to have."

She said many students will return after they've graduated from the program and sit in on the performance and have their photos taken with the current crop of students at the Capitol.

Observing Christmas at the Capitol from behind the scenes, Gross noted the many individuals and volunteers who help make the event a success each year.

"I can't say enough about all the committees, greeters, volunteers, organizers and others around the

Approximate number
of annual visitors

20,000

to the Christmas at
the Capitol event.

community who make this possible for people coming in from all over the country and the world. You have the sights and sounds and scents of the pine trees, and it all adds up to a wonderful holiday experience," she said. "There are so many people who all work together to make this something special."

The annual holiday event started back in 1981 with a dozen decorated trees and has grown in popularity through the past 40 years. Visitors can look for some of the more popular recurring displays such as a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments from the China Painters Organization and an old wooden nativity scene that the local Knights of Columbus group sets up on the second floor of the Capitol each year.

Those interested in serving as a volunteer for the event can contact rick.augusztin@state.sd.us.



The State Capitol grounds are also decorated to evoke the spirit of Christmas. *Photo by Travel South Dakota.*

Continued from pg 2

Capital Credits: Estates – October 2021 - One estate = \$1,112.67
73 & Older – October 2021 - None

Justin Larson, Jesse Brown, Crystal Thorson, Angie Sieh, Rhonda Tuscherer, will be on the Value Added Economic Development Patronage Loan Committee.

Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast date is January 21, 2022.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach to approve market electrical rates for Agtegra, Bowdle Location, and Glacial Lakes Energy, Mina for 2022.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: Check register for the month of September 2021 contained information on checks #31897 through #31976 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for September 2021 totaling \$360,665.47.

September 2021 financials were reviewed.

The 3rd Quarter budget projection, financial ratios, and RUS/CFC Loan Summaries were reviewed.

The proposed 2022 Wellness Plan and Budget was reviewed. The board agreed for this plan to be in the 2022 budget.

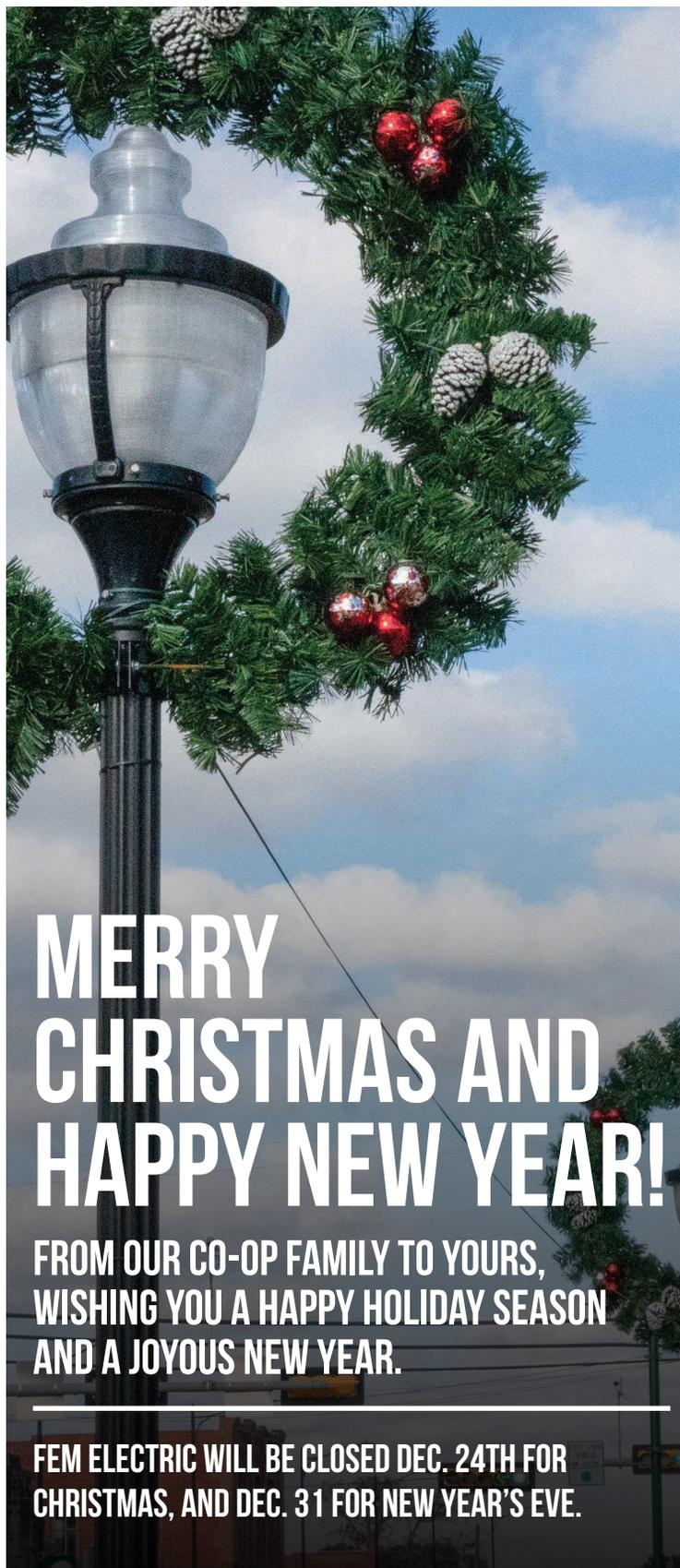
Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve director and attorney fees.

Legal Update: none

Meeting Report: East River board update was given by Gary Bachman. SDREA Board report was given by Tom Thorpe

The board acknowledged the receipt of the Safety Meeting Minutes from September 29, 2021 and employee meeting notes from September 30. The board packet also included current accident and near miss reports.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



FEM'S NEW WEBSITE

Behind the scenes FEM staff has been working diligently on a brand new website thanks to help from Touchstone Energy. The new site is mobile friendly, and will feature the same information members have come to rely on over the years.

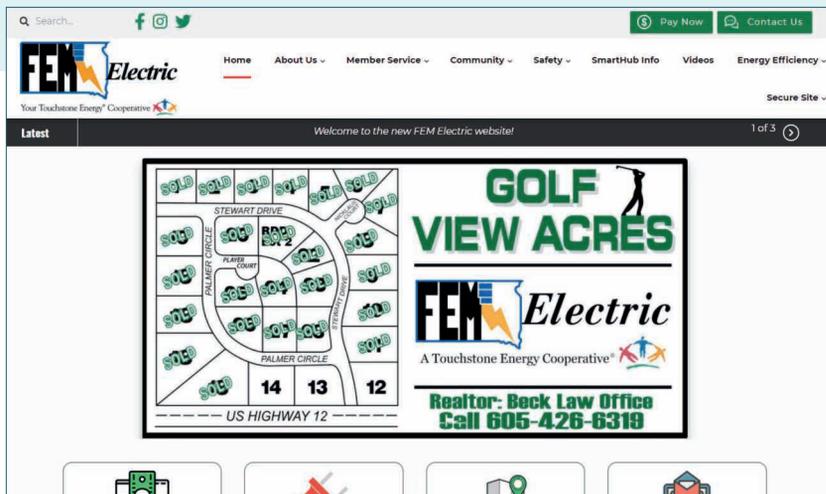
If you stop by femelectric.coop on your computer, you may see the new homepage, as shown below.

If you've visited the FEM website on your mobile device (your phone or tablet), you'll notice that the new site adapts to the size of your screen!

We're excited to share our new user friendly website with our members, and we hope you enjoy it!



HOW THE NEW FEM SITE MAY LOOK ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE



FEM ELECTRIC'S NEW HOME PAGE, FOUND AT FEMELECTRIC.COOP

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- @FEMElectric on
- @fem_electric on
- @FEMelectric on

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



SEARCHING FOR THE STARS

Badlands Observatory photographer Teresa Hofer captured this image of The Pleiades, also known as the Seven Sisters.

Badlands Observatory welcomes stargazers, researchers and others interested in pursuing the field of astronomy

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

For centuries, astronomers have sought to find a scientific explanation for the Star of Bethlehem, which is described in the Gospel of Matthew as the celestial sign that led the Magi into the presence of the Christ child.

Some have speculated that the object high in the night sky could have been a supernova, a comet or possibly a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus.

Accomplished astronomer Ron Dyvig has views of his own. As a researcher who adheres to scientific methods, he's a bit hesitant to plow into topics where science and faith may collide.

But when pressed to offer an educated opinion on the Christmas Star, he replies, "There are several elements that make it challenging to address from a scientific standpoint and there are a

half-dozen theories beyond what's there in the Biblical accounts. But I think it could have been a nova or the planet Venus. Venus can be remarkably bright after sunset when it appears to descend in the west for several weeks. That may have been what the Magi saw and would be something they could follow. But a lot of people have strong religious beliefs about it, and if you believe it was a miracle, then science can't really explain it adequately."

Dyvig is founder of the Badlands Observatory, which he opened for his own private viewing and independent research in 2000. Two years ago, he began renovating the facility located in the small community of Quinn just north of I-90, with the goal of one day welcoming members of the public interested in astronomy.

While the renovation project is not fully complete and a grand opening is set for next spring, Badlands

Observatory is now welcoming visitors by reservation only.

"Since we got settled into this facility, there has just been so much public interest in it that we decided to go public. It's as simple as that," Dyvig said. "Right now we're taking it slow with small groups. During the winter months our activities will be curtailed a bit, then we'll expect a busy spring."

A native of Deadwood, the 79-year old Dyvig took a keen interest in astronomy at an early age when he was



Teresa Hofer and Ron Dyvig are long-time collaborators who have opened the Badlands Observatory to public access.

introduced to the discipline by his local Boy Scout troop leader. He created his first observatory as a youngster when he made a concrete pad and a cylinder to hold his telescope in place in the middle of a rancher's field. During his high school and college years, he spent late nights scanning the skies, marveling at the vastness of the universe and hoping to discover new heavenly bodies.

As a college student, Dyvig learned and taught the art of telescope-making and became president of the Black Hills Astronomical Society. He later designed and fabricated the optics for the Hidden Valley Observatory in Rapid City.

Dyvig spent time honing his craft as a research assistant at the University of Arizona where he worked under several mentors and utilized the advanced facilities at Kitt Peak National Observatory. He was chosen to help design and test image intensifier camera systems for Steward Observatory.

While through the decades he kept day jobs to support his avocation, his evenings were spent star gazing and pursuing new discoveries. His passion and dedication to astronomy paid off when he discovered - and aptly dubbed - Asteroid 26715 South Dakota just a year after opening the Badlands Observatory. It's just one of the 25



Photographer Bob Rossiter and Ron Dyvig are shown with the 26-inch Newtonian Reflector telescope at Badlands Observatory.

discoveries credited to Dyvig during the course of his astronomy work.

Building the observatory was no small task. First, he found and converted an old medical building in Quinn to house the facility. Then he personally designed and fabricated all of the optics, including grinding and polishing the mirror for the 26-inch f/4.8 Newtonian Reflector telescope. West River Electric

Cooperative worked with Dyvig and the town of Quinn to install hoods over surrounding street lights to reduce "light pollution" and enhance the ability to scan the night sky.

Dyvig describes himself as fortunate to find a partner in Teresa Hofer, a career accountant who shares his passion for all things celestial.

There's always something to be done

at the observatory, Hofer said. Ongoing duties include maintaining and upgrading the optical and drive systems, control systems for the telescope and dome, facility management, designing and implementing new educational programs for visitors, website updates and keeping up-to-date on developments in the field of astronomy.

"There's plenty to do, especially since we decided to make the facility public after we figured people might like to see what we do," she said. "We had to make sure everything was comfortable for the public and do a lot of renovating and painting and upgrading."

Hofer said she is starting to promote the observatory as a destination for astronomy enthusiasts who might be interested in touring the facility and peering through one of seven telescopes on the observation deck. Dyvig is in the process of also building a radio telescope to add to his collection.

Those interested in experiencing the Badlands Observatory can call 605-381-1521 to set up a viewing time or visit www.badlandsobservatory.com.



The Orion Nebula has long captured the imaginations of star watchers as it has been associated with the Greek myth of a huntsman placed among the stars by Zeus.



BUILDING RURAL LEADERS

Minnesota Ag Rural Leadership Class IX members develop problem-solving skills during a “Building Strong Teams” session.

Working today to develop tomorrow’s rural community leaders in South Dakota and Minnesota

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Success in any endeavor calls for solid leadership. Don Norton of the South Dakota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (SDARL) is eager to build better leaders who envision a more prosperous future for individuals, families and businesses across the state.

Norton believes leadership skills don’t just materialize out of thin air. Those skills and abilities have to be taught. That’s the goal of SDARL, an 18-month program that takes participants through an intensive course of conferences, class time and state, national and international seminars all designed to prepare the students to return to their communities and make positive contributions.

“You don’t see SDARL graduates sitting on the sidelines,” Norton

said. “They’re stepping up to serve on commodity and corporate boards, in community organizations, in government and in their families, leading and taking action and inspiring others to do the same.”

SDARL Class VII graduate Mike Traxinger of Claremont is doing anything but sitting on the sidelines. Traxinger is a fifth-generation farmer and rancher who also serves as general counsel and director of governmental affairs for Agtegra Cooperative. He recently joined the board of directors at Northern Electric Cooperative based in Bath, is past president of the American Agricultural Law Association, co-chair of the Agricultural Law Committee of the State Bar of South Dakota and a member of the South Dakota Farm Bureau, Farmers Union and South Dakota Simmental Association.

“The SDRAL program really helped hone my leadership skills and gave me more insight into ways that I could make a difference that I hadn’t thought of before,” said Traxinger, who also serves as president of the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives. “Leadership is vital to the continued success of rural America, farming and ranching operations, and our communities. And programs like SDARL are very effective in developing strong leaders who have a passion for service and a heart for helping others succeed in a way that’s beneficial for everyone.”

The SDARL Foundation was created in 1998 under the first Executive Director Dr. Dan Gee, who stepped into the role after retiring from the Animal Science Department at South Dakota State University. The first class started in 2000 with participants representing a range of backgrounds including ranching, farming, banking, media, government and private business.

Dr. Gee was the leader of SDARL



Leadership students take a field tour of a logging operation in northern Minnesota.

in 2008 when Olga Brouwer went through the curriculum. Brouwer was so impressed with Dr. Gee and the program that she later went on to become leader of the Minnesota Agriculture Rural Leadership (MARL) and has held that position for the past 10 years. She points out that both the MARL and SDARL programs were formed on the same day 21 years ago and have graduated a combined 600 students during that time.

“I learned so much from Dr. Gee,” said Brouwer, who once operated a dairy farm in Elkton. “He was super-educational and also provided a lot of insight into the political process, how to reach out. If you go and talk to legislators and staffers you find out there are reasons why things might not be working out so well. But in order to change things, you have to be at the table and be active, especially for cooperatives.”

While both programs have similar structures and operate in similar fashion, Brouwer said MARL is affiliated with the University of Minnesota Extension and places a bit more stress on the academic side in the learning material.

Kylie and Jake Rieke are both graduates of the MARL program and leaders in their community. Along with raising corn and bean crops, Jake is chairman and a founding organizer of the R-S Fiber Cooperative while Kylie serves on the board of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association based in Danube, Minn.

Jake participated in MARL from 2018 to 2020 and was impressed with what he gained from the program. His group traveled to Cambodia and Taiwan to examine their agricultural practices.

“It was a great experience. For us, it blew open an entire network of connected individuals to draw off their expertise and bounce ideas off of,” he said. “Everybody in the group brings a unique background in different fields, so there are people you can call to ask questions or answer questions someone may have for you. It gives you a fast lane for networking and for getting your projects moving to accomplish whatever goals you have in front of you.”

Neither SDARL nor MARL receive direct funds from state or federal governments to support their programming. Participants pay

The number of years
SDARL and MARL

21

have been developing
community leaders.

a percentage of the cost of going through the program but most funding comes from individuals, businesses and partnering organizations whose goal is to improve and develop rural communities.

One of those organizations standing in full support of both programs and the concept of rural leadership development is East River Electric Power Cooperative, which provides transmission, substation and distribution services for electric cooperatives in both states.

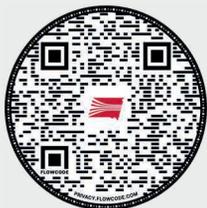
Those interested in investing in rural leadership through these programs can visit www.sdagleadership.com and www.marlprogram.org.



Christmas Day
December 25, 2021

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

NOVEMBER 26

Parade of Lights
Dakota Avenue, Huron, SD,
605-352-0000

NOVEMBER 26-28
Beautiful – The Carole King Musical

Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://www.washingtonpavilion.org/> for more info and tickets

NOVEMBER 26-28
DECEMBER 4-6, 10-23, 26-31

Christmas Nights of Lights
Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

NOVEMBER 27
Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade

Downtown, Rapid City, SD, 605-381-4204

DECEMBER 2
Christmas on the Prairie
526 North Broadway Avenue, Miller, SD, 605-853-3098

DECEMBER 2
Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights
Downtown, Yankton, SD, 605-668-5231

DECEMBER 3

Handel's Messiah
First Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

DECEMBER 3-4
Christmas in The Hills – "Visions of Sugar Plums"
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, 605-890-0519

DECEMBER 3-5
Annual Christmas Tree Lighting & Cowboy Christmas
Casey Tibbs Rodeo Center, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-223-7690

DECEMBER 4
Rapid City Garden Club's Wreath & Centerpiece Sale
Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

DECEMBER 5
Magical Medora Christmas
Homestake Opera House, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.homestakeoperahouse.org/> for more info and tickets

DECEMBER 10
for KING & COUNTRY – A Drummer Boy Christmas Tour
Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://smarturl.it/DBSiouxFallsSD>

DECEMBER 11

Breakfast with Santa
Bramble Park Zoo, Watertown, SD, tickets go on sale after Thanksgiving, 605-882-6269

DECEMBER 11

Frontier Christmas
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

DECEMBER 11-12

Christmas with the Symphony: 'Tis the Season
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

DECEMBER 11-12, 18-19

Christmas Tours of the Historic Adams House
22 Van Buren Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-722-4800

DECEMBER 15-18

Lakota Nation Invitational 45th Anniversary
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

DECEMBER 16-19
25th Annual Christmas at the Cathedral

Cathedral of Saint Joseph, Sioux Falls, SD, visit <https://ccfesd.org/events/christmas-at-the-cathedral/>

DECEMBER 18

Vendor and Craft Market
Watertown Mall, Watertown, SD, 605-882-1734

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve with The Davis Sisters
601 Columbus Street, Rapid City, SD, tickets available at <https://www.bhsymphony.org/>

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