

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Former co-op general manager Jim Moore is one of the original organizers of the Line Patrol Charity Ride and was the designated lead rider in 2021 as the group embarked on its adventure

## Line Patrol Charity Ride

20 years of assisting  
co-op families  
Pages 8-9

Food co-ops meet  
community needs  
Pages 12-13

# BOARD REPORT



The FEM Board of Directors review the member services report.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on August 23, 2022, 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, Accounting Clerk Angie Sieh.

Ryan Holien and Jesse Brown were present until their board reports were given.

Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Sonje Oban.

**Changes to the agenda:** Add Notice of East River Annual Meeting

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from July 20, 2022, meeting:** none

**Next Meeting Date:** After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, September 20, 2022, 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.

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

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Tom Thorpe to enter executive session at 10:20 a.m.

Topics review employee benefits and review Manager/CEO and Board performance appraisals.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach to leave executive session at 11:56 a.m.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen to approve Manager/CEO performance Appraisal.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius to approve FEM Electric employee benefit package as presented.

The board acknowledged reviewing the July 2022 Cyber Security Report.

### **Resolutions, Contracts, and Nominations:**

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve the review and changes to policies: 421-Employee Discipline,

422-Employment at-Will, 423-Information Technology Procedures, 424-Commercial Driver's License, 425-Drug-Free Workplace Policy and Statement, 426- Apparel Policy.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Eric Odenbach to approve the 2023 Wellness Committee Sonje Oban, Josh Weigel, Chad Dutenhoffer, Justin Larson, Angie Sieh, Crystal Thorson.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen to nominate Scott Moore as Voting Delegate for Federated Insurance and CFC at Region Six Regional Meeting.

Board Acknowledged receiving Notice of East River Annual Meeting September 7, 2022.

### **Membership Business:**

Board acknowledged membership business.

### **New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:**

**Disconnects:** Delores Prisbe, Roscoe, SD, 2 Vacant Farms; Darwin E. Aman, Eureka, SD, Pasture Pump; Douglas Stroh, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Twila Rausch, Onaka, SD, 2 Active Farms; Gordon & Betty Mack, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Preacher's Run Farm, LLC, Golden Valley, MN, Active Farm; Tom Waletich, Mina, SD, Active Farm

**Reconnects:** Mitzel Hoffer Prisbe Real Estate, LP, Roscoe, SD, 2 Vacant Farms; Alex Aman, Eureka, SD, New House; Jerry & Sharon Stroh, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Donald Tuscherer, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Jerome Mack Farms, LLC, Leola, SD, Active Farm; James MacDougall & Amy Blackstone, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Cody & Lori Bruns, Warner, SD, Active Farm; Tyler Lacher, Mina, SD, Active Farm

**Contracts:** Pembroke Colony, Ipswich, **Continued on 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

#### Editor's e-mail:

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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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opportunity provider and  
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**Scott Moore**  
**General Manager/CEO**

FEM Electric continues to have a good year; both getting work completed and financially. Barring any crazy weather, our agriculture members should have a good harvest, with strong commodity price in turn helping keep a strong rural economy. We continue to see a strong demand for new electrical services or increased sizes of existing services. South Dakota has a strong economy; some is due to our value-added plants along with strong regional and international markets. We are also seeing our members diversifying into manufacturing and animal confinements which will help keep stable electrical rates in the long run.

Our region has been blessed over the past ten years as we have seen many young couples return or move to our area. Our school age students seem to be increasing in numbers which is a good sign. These children are our future leaders and South Dakota's greatest asset. I would once again ask parents and grandparents: if you know of family and friends that are looking to move, encourage them to look at South Dakota. Better yet, look at Faulk, Edmunds, and McPherson counties. There is a mass of opportunities for employment and entrepreneurs. We don't need out of state money to keep our economy strong; we need local talent and investors

so we can keep ownership and profits local.

As we move into fall, this would be a good time to check, and test run your generators, and check your electrical hookups to make sure everything operates correctly. Temperature that ranges from 28-31 degrees Fahrenheit and moisture in the air make for icing conditions on electrical power lines. In South Dakota these temperatures and conditions can happen from October to April. Mother Nature has a way of reminding us of who is in charge every so often.

With fall harvest starting soon please remember to be safe, and don't cut corners. The truck traffic will increase, large equipment will be on the roadways, and we all need to be patient. We need a safe and productive harvest.

FEM Electric is planning a strategic planning session in December 2022, which will include a session for members. The last strategic planning was in 2019 and included a session for members. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Scott Moore at 605-426-6891 or email me at [moore@femelectric.coop](mailto:moore@femelectric.coop).

FEM Electric has started to compile our  
**Continued on pg 6**

## Statement Mailing Dates

Sept 28, 2022 for Sept's energy

Oct 27, 2022 for Oct's energy

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

# Practice fire safety this fall and winter

When the weather turns colder, you inevitably start hearing more news about house fires. Even a small fire can be devastating.

Most house fires are caused by cooking that gets out of hand. But the second most common cause is materials in the home that catch fire. This often occurs when a heat source, such as a space heater or flying embers from a fireplace, comes into contact with fabric or paper, which then ignites. Once a fire starts, it can move so rapidly that even the best efforts to put it out may fail.

When it comes to old houses, the risks are even higher. The older the wood is that a house is constructed of, the faster it burns. Once flames invade the walls of an old house, they move with frightening speed.

Fire protection in any home is necessary, but even more careful precautions should be taken if your house is older. Here's how to help ensure the safety of your house and everyone in it.

**SMOKE DETECTORS.** These are the first and best line of defense; they allow you to get out of the house at the first whiff of smoke. Six in 10 deaths in house fires occurred in homes that did not have working smoke detectors. Go beyond the federal recommendations and put a smoke detector in every room. Stay on the even safer side by opting for those that detect both smoke and carbon monoxide.

**FIRE EXTINGUISHERS.** Keep small fires from getting out of control with fire extinguishers that are easily accessible. Choose several extinguishers that are light enough for even kids to handle. Make sure they have simple pull mechanisms that don't require much strength. Look for fire extinguishers that work for various parts of the house; for instance, an extinguisher in the kitchen should be able to handle grease fires.

**INSTALL ARC-FAULT INTERRUPTERS.** These ingenious little gadgets detect the electrical arcing that occurs when an old wire buried deep in your wall begins to fail. Speak with an electrician about where best to install interrupters and how your particular ones work.

**MAINTAIN IT ALL.** Finally, test everything on a regular basis. Smoke detectors should be tested every month, their batteries replaced every six months, and old smoke detectors replaced every 10 years. Opt to purchase an extra fire extinguisher so your family can take it to the backyard and practice using it.

## ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES REPRESENT AT DAKOTAFEST



Electric cooperative representatives were on hand at the 2022 Dakotafest in Mitchell to share information about energy efficiency and electric-powered lawn implements and to showcase a 2022 Ford Lightning electric pickup truck provided by Vern Eide Ford. Shown left to right are Sheila Gross, Jared Rakness, Jennifer Gross, Patrick Soukup, Kristie Hauck, Brett Snyders and Tara Miller.

To see a video of this event and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



## Do not touch power lines

**Kendyl Gill**

Kendyl knows that electricity always seeks a path to the ground and that all power lines should be treated as if they are energized. Kendyl is the child of Brent and Emily Gill, and they are members of Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake.

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.

# PRIMO PASTA!

## PASTA WITH ZUCCHINI AND TOMATOES

### Ingredients:

- 7 oz. short whole wheat pasta like penne fusilli or farfalle
- 2 lbs. zucchini, chopped
- 1 lb. grape or cherry tomatoes cut in halves
- 3 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 6 garlic cloves minced
- 1/3 c. Parmesan cheese grated
- 1 c. parsley or 1/2 cup basil finely chopped
- 1 tsp. salt
- Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

Cook pasta per package instructions undercooking by 2-3 minutes or until pasta is cooked but firm. While pasta is cooking, preheat large ceramic non-stick skillet on medium-high heat and swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat. Add zucchini and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Return skillet to stove, swirl 1 tbsp. of oil to coat, add tomatoes and cook for 3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute, stirring a few times. Turn off heat and add cooked pasta and zucchini, remaining 1 tbsp. of oil, salt, pepper, cheese and parsley or basil; stir and serve. Adjust seasonings to taste. [ifoodreal.com](http://ifoodreal.com)

## MEXI-CORN LASAGNA

### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
- 1 can Mexican corn
- 1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce
- 1 c. Pace picante sauce
- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 16 oz. low-fat cottage cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 c. parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp. oregano
- 1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese

### METHOD

Combine first six ingredients in large skillet. Simmer 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Combine cottage cheese, eggs, parmesan cheese, oregano and garlic salt; mix well. Arrange 6 tortillas on bottom and sides of a lightly greased 13x9x2 baking dish, overlapping as necessary. Top with half the meat mixture. Spoon cheese mixture over meat. Arrange remaining tortillas over cheese. Top with remaining meat mixture. Bake 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Remove from oven and sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Let stand 10 minutes, serve with additional picante sauce. Serves 8. **Carol and Rollie Smith, Brandon**

## BAKED SPAGHETTI

### Ingredients:

- 8 oz. package angel hair pasta
- 1/4 c. chopped parsley
- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 lb. ground pork
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. garlic salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. Italian seasonings
- 2 c. tomato sauce
- 1 c. water
- 2 c. canned crushed tomatoes
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 garlic cloves chopped
- 1/2 c. green peppers chopped
- 1/2 c. onion chopped
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 c. shredded Monterey Jack cheese

### METHOD

Cook pasta and set aside. Add 1 tbsp. olive oil to pasta and stir in to keep it from sticking together. Precook beef and pork together with salt, garlic salt and black pepper. Drain grease off and set aside. In a large pan add parsley, Italian seasonings, tomato sauce and water, garlic, green peppers, onions and crushed tomatoes. Bring sauce to a boil then reduce to a simmer and continue to cook for 30 minutes. Add cooked meat to the sauce. Let set while preparing the baking pan. Grease a 9x13 inch pan. Layer sauce with spaghetti noodles in the pan. Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes. At 30 minutes pull spaghetti from the oven and mix cheeses together then pour on spaghetti evenly. Bake 5-10 minutes until cheese is melted **Jane Cave, Sioux Falls**

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# BOARD REPORT & NOTICE

## Continued from pg 2

SD, LG COMM

**Retired Locations:** None

## Capital Credits:

**Estates - August 2022** - three = \$2071.72

**73 & Older - August 2022** - two = \$32,655.52

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen to approve three phase service contract with Pembroke Colony.

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: July 2022 financials and check register for the month of July 2022 contained information on checks #32683 through #32764 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for July 2022 totaling \$380,687.96.

Directors reviewed Basin Capital Credit retirement and power bill credit.

Directors reviewed Renewable Energy Credits (REC's) that were sold.

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

**Legal Update:** none

## Meeting Report:

East River board update was given by Gary Bachman. Paula Petersen reported on a board leadership class she attended in Pierre.

The board acknowledged the receipt of the July 26, 2022, Safety Meeting Minutes.

**Adjourn:** President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.

## Continued from pg 3

2023 operating budget for the board's approval in December. If you are thinking of adding any electrical load, please call Rob Vetch or Ryan Holien early. Delay in materials being delivered will still exist through 2023. Planning early will help get your project completed on time and on budget.



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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

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# FEM SAFETY WATER DELIVERED

The 2023 shipment of FEM's safety water came in on the 9th of August. Staff unloaded 8 pallettes of water, and delivered 6 pallettes to 6 of FEM's area schools on the 9th and 11th.

There are four different safety messages printed on labels, designed by area students. Each message conveys tips about electrical safety.

The remaining pallettes of water will be distributed to groups as a tool for fundraising. If your group or event is interested in water, please call the FEM office at 605-426-6891.



# FARM SAFETY PARTY

FEM Electric, along with Northern Electric, Lake Region Electric and Agtegra Cooperative, hosted a Farm Safety Party in the Kid's Zone at the Brown County Fair.

Six stations were set up for children to learn about electrical, propane, fire extinguisher, ATV, grain bin, and helmet safety. At each station, kids were asked to listen to each presentation in order to gain a sticker. Once six stickers were collected, participants



were able to choose prizes, and received an electrical safety water bottle provided by the electric cooperatives.

At the electrical safety station, Lake Region Electric provided their "Power Town" demonstration, which is a scaled down version of a farm with live power lines. Demonstrators were able to show spectators what happens when farm equipment or trees come in contact with power lines.

FEM provided safety water to families as they came through the tent, and gave kiddos an opportunity to dress up as a lineworker. Once they had the lineworker's rubber gloves on, they attempted to twist nuts and bolts off a board, much like a lineworker does on a daily basis. Some even figured out the trick!

There was a steady stream of kiddos who stopped under the tent from 10 am to 2 pm, and as an added benefit to the cooperatives, many parents commented they learned something, too!

Thursday of the Brown County Fair was also Cooperative Day, and a number of cooperatives partnered to make the day special in addition to the Farm Safety Party. Announcements were made periodically throughout the day announcing the Farm Safety Party, and sharing how "cooperatives are locally-owned organizations that are the heartbeat of our rural communities".

FEM hopes to see everyone next year!





Roger Lawien and his wife, Kris, are regular participants in the Line Patrol Charity Ride. *Photos by Brad Letcher*

## Line Patrol Charity Ride marks 20 years of serving those in need

### Billy Gibson

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

When Roger Lawien encountered some unexpected health problems, his fear and anxiety were assuaged by the assurance that he had several key factors in his favor.

He knew he could rely on his faith. He knew he could rely on his family. And he knew he could rely on his fellow cooperative employees across the state.

Lawien, member services manager at Moreau-Grand Electric based in Timber Lake, is a part-time volunteer and full-time advocate of Line Patrol, Inc., a charitable organization that exists to provide financial relief for South Dakota electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

Since the program was launched in 2003, hundreds of co-op employees have contributed to the emergency response fund by staging golf tournaments, bowling tournaments, auctions, trap shoots, 5K runs, raffles,

bake sales and more. One of the most popular and highly anticipated events is the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride held each September.

This year's 20th annual event took place on Sept. 10 and was co-hosted by Rushmore Electric, Butte Electric and Grand Electric. More than 200 riders and other participants gathered in Whitewood at the Iron Horse Inn and spent the afternoon motoring through the picturesque northern Black Hills.

Lawien was there perched aboard his prized Indian Roadmaster, soaking in the experience with his co-op friends and feeling grateful to have a dependable network of support that can be counted on not only to help rebuild lines and poles after a storm but also render aid in a personal crisis situation.

"Having been a recipient of funds from this program, it means a lot to be among these fellow co-op employees who are all so eager and willing to demonstrate their kindness and sincerity by showing up every year to contribute

Estimated amount of Line Patrol funds

**\$580,000**

donated to electric co-op employees

to a worthy cause like this," Lawien said. "It's that same cooperative spirit that bonds us all together. It's the can-do attitude they bring to their jobs every day in service to their members and their ongoing efforts to improve the quality of life in their communities. They are salt-of-the-earth people who care deeply for one another and the people around them."

Lawien said more than 240 families have received assistance through the fund totaling roughly \$580,000. He is one of three directors of the program along with Jessie Tucker (West Central Electric) and Tim Neises (Central Electric).

Jerry Swartz was one of the first



Jerry Swartz, pictured above-left, was the first recipient of Line Patrol funds after he was injured in 2004.

recipients of Line Patrol funds after he was involved in a workplace accident. He expressed what the charitable organization has meant to him and his family.

“Back in 2004, I had an extreme accident at work. I spent six months in recovery and this foundation gave us a check for \$500 to help us out. It may not seem like much money, but at the time it meant everything to me and my family. It’s amazing. God bless this fund and the people who donate to it and keep it running,” Swartz said.

One of the original organizers of the Charity Ride is former Northern Electric General Manager Jim Moore. Each year, as is the custom, Moore leads the cavalcade of dozens of motorcycles

away from the gathering site and along the chosen route.

“The ride has just gotten bigger and better over the years,” Moore said. “The money goes to help co-op employees in need. One person had a tornado damage their home, another lineman from Yankton was killed in Afghanistan and we set up a scholarship fund for his three children. I always tell my wife, Janice, this is the one thing I look forward to every year and truly love because we’re helping employees and their families get back on their feet.”

Laine Mitchell, communications director at Butte Electric, said helping to host the Charity Ride was an honor for the cooperative and something the organization was happy to support.

“Having many of our own employees benefit from the Line Patrol fund over the years, we are thrilled to co-host this year’s event and help raise money for other cooperative families across South Dakota. The ride is just one of the many ways the foundation bonds our cooperatives together and has touched countless lives in the last 20 years,” Mitchell said.

The weekend began with a social on Friday evening and concluded the following night with a buffet dinner and charity auction.

Sponsors for this year’s ride were Irby, Altec, RESCO, Dakota Supply Group, Border States Electric, WESCO and The Okonite Company.



Hundreds of riders from across the state participate in the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride each year. The program exists to provide financial support for electric cooperative employees and their families in times of need.

# OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

FEM Electric is excited to celebrate National Co-op Month with you, the member owners. Because of members like you, FEM Electric was formed to serve rural communities who were being over looked by investor owned electrical utilities. These founding members formed a cooperative based on the principle of helping their rural communities in need of power.

Today, FEM Electric still provides electricity to rural areas in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties, and still values the principle of helping our area communities. That's why we have programs such as Co-ops in the Classroom, where we visit our area schools to educate youth about electrical safety, and where their electricity comes from. We donate bottled water with electrical safety messages printed on the labels to schools, area events or charitable organizations for fundraising. Not only are

we spreading awareness, we are helping our communities and members. FEM also provides safety demonstrations with the high voltage trailer, hosts career days with schools, coordinates Youth Tours to Washington DC, Youth Excursions as part of SDREA, and provides scholarships to member students.

FEM's commitment to community doesn't end there. We have a number of additional programs to help, such as water heater rebates, heat incentives, heat loans and a special electric heat rate. For more information, visit our Energy Efficiency page at [www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop).

As always, FEM will continue to look for ways to provide efficient, dependable, and friendly service that you, the member owner, have come to count on.



## Focused on YOU.

Electric cooperatives were created to serve their members. Because we're a co-op, we're able to adapt to our community's unique needs. That's the power of co-op membership.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH

# WHAT IS A CO-OP?

*with Safety Sadie*



An electric cooperative is a company that provides electricity to its members. Electric co-ops are owned and operated by their members, which keeps them invested and involved in their community. Electric cooperatives often provide service to rural communities.

X	S	U	A	T	W	J	V	D	X	B	T	N	U	F	M	R	R	T	P
M	G	A	R	A	H	X	H	A	S	H	K	D	Z	V	A	K	E	H	K
L	R	O	Q	T	T	Q	L	K	A	S	I	V	U	N	S	E	N	D	D
F	B	L	R	E	H	U	A	J	Y	U	U	P	A	P	X	L	E	W	Q
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E	A	L	X	X	M	H	X	J	Y	D	V	B	M	E	I	T	A	U	N
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L	H	N	E	Q	W	F	A	C	R	B	M	Q	Y	J	E	L	L	J	A
P	J	P	Z	S	O	I	M	F	O	F	B	B	B	A	W	L	U	F	N

- ENERGY
- MEMBER
- OWNED
- UTILITY
- SERVICE
- ELECTRICITY
- COMMUNITIES
- EDUCATION
- TRAINING
- NETWORK
- RENEWABLES



# CO-OPS OFFER HEALTHY CHOICES

The Sioux Falls Food Co-op has persevered for 50 years by adhering to the co-op model. *Photo by Sioux Falls Food Co-op*

## Food co-ops meet the need for nutritious, healthy choices

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Back in the 1930s, rural community leaders all across the country began traveling from farm to farm knocking on doors and asking for \$5 as seed money to build out a network of electric distribution systems.

It was not an insignificant sum to solicit from many farmers and ranchers contending with substandard soil conditions, the vagaries of weather patterns and fairly primitive mechanization compared to today's operations.

But in exchange for that investment, those same community leaders turned the promise of rural power into a reality and presently there are more than 750 locally-owned electric cooperatives serving roughly 40 million Americans.

Bess Pallares keeps that electric co-op success story close to mind as she embarks on establishing a grocery store in Brookings County using the

cooperative business model as her template.

Pallares is president of the Dakota Community Market board of directors, whose members have been working since 2019 to bring a food cooperative to the Brookings area. She reports that the endeavor hasn't been a cake walk, but she continues to be inspired by the way like-minded electric co-op leaders back in the '30s managed to gain popular support for locally-owned, independent entities created to provide a valuable service.

The board's market analysis indicates that a "low food access zone" exists within Brookings County when it comes to full-service retail grocery stores with just two providers in a 50-mile radius.

"On average, there are typically 2.84 grocery stores per 10,000 population. We have .68 in this area," she said. "People keep saying they're sick of having to drive miles and miles to get to a full-service grocery store that stocks



Bess Pallares

what they want and need for their families."

To generate start-up capital, the board is offering memberships at \$150, a little more than a week's worth of groceries for many families. Meanwhile, Pallares and her board members are scouring the landscape for additional financing sources and federal grant opportunities with plans to have a retail store up and running as soon as possible.

She has had discussions with East River Electric in Madison about accessing available funds through the Rural Electric Economic Development Fund (REED). The REED program



Caselli's Garden is among a growing list of fresh food suppliers for Dakota Community Market. *Photo by Caselli's Garden*

is designed to provide financing to help build the economic base of rural communities within East River Electric's regional service area. Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.

**Hundreds of organizations, businesses, medical facilities, housing projects and many more have received financial support through the REED program over the past 20 years.**

Pallares said she sometimes feels exactly like those early electric cooperative pioneers, attempting to pave the way for providing a reliable source of quality, low-cost food in the Brookings area. She has become active in the Billie Sutton Leadership Institute Rural POWER program to help tap into the regional business community with the goal of developing an optimum financial strategy and making connections with future suppliers and other partners.

"The Institute opens up a giant network across the state where you can meet a lot of people doing the same kinds of things you're doing, and they've

got great ideas and big goals and a fearless entrepreneurial spirit. One of our board members has gone through the class and I'm doing it now. It's been transformational," she said.

The Dakota Community Market is not the only fearless group striving to launch a locally-owned and locally-controlled food cooperative. The Coteau Community Co-op is also trying to establish a food co-op to serve the Watertown area. Both have plenty of successful models and supporters to help guide and inspire their efforts.

The National Food Co-op Startup Network and the National Co-op Grocers based in Minneapolis are both available to provide resources and expertise. Additionally, there are a few successful stores already operating in South Dakota, including Natural Abundance in Aberdeen, Breadroot Natural Food Co-op based in Rapid City and the Sioux Falls Food Co-op.

Patrick Saylor is general manager of the Sioux Falls Food Co-op on West 18th Street, an operation that has been going strong for the past 50 years through several relocations, growing competition and even a fire. Saylor sees food co-ops across the region as sharing the same common goals and working together to accomplish those goals.

"We tend to put a different twist on things, but in the end we all want the families we serve to have a better way of

accessing the food they eat to maintain good health and a healthy lifestyle," said Saylor, who used to frequent the store as a teen and replaced long-time manager Molly Langley in 2016. "It's always encouraging to see different leaders working hard to do what we've been able to do. It takes a lot of effort and it takes tireless visionaries to stay focused and committed to achieving what you want to accomplish together."

In meeting its commitment to improve the quality of life in the community, the co-op has a program called Big Change, where shoppers are invited to round up their expenditures to the next whole dollar amount. The difference is added to a fund that goes to support local charities such as the Teddy Bear Den, Mobile Pantry of Sioux Falls, Bishop Dudley Hospitality House, SD Voices for Peace and many more. The co-op even has a space available for public meetings and workshops.

The store recently celebrated an expansion and re-opening, and Saylor said he's optimistic about the future while keeping an eye on industry trends.

"We're growing. There's a lot of competition, but we've got a great location, great employees and a great product," he said. "The co-op model is alive and well. We have members who support us and are committed to our mission of providing a source of healthy, affordable good choices."

# SMARTHUB & STATEMENTS

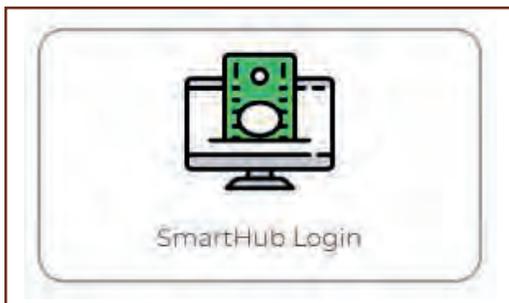
## Review your statements the day they're ready!

By now you've experienced some sort of delay when sending or receiving your mail. This can be frustrating, especially when it comes to paying your bills on time.

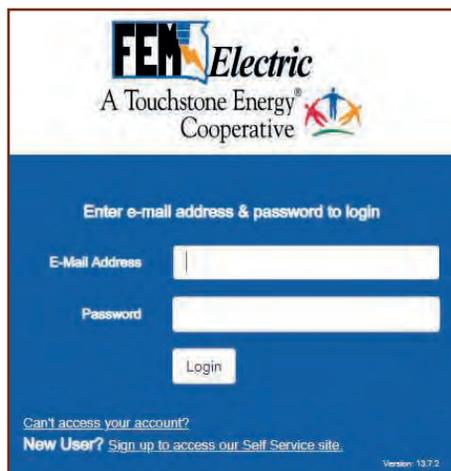
FEM has a solution that can help move your bill payment process along - SmartHub! By signing up for SmartHub, you can be notified and view your FEM statements the day they are available.

We've provided a step-by-step guide on how to set up notifications about your FEM account.

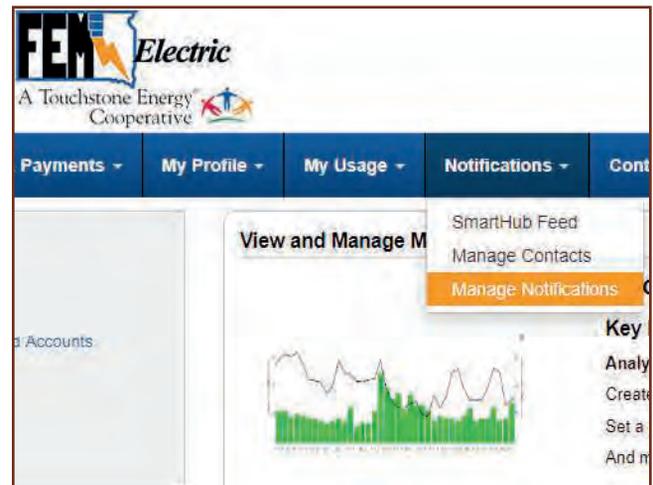
First, visit [www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop) and scroll down a short distance to the SmartHub Login button, pictured below, and click it to begin.



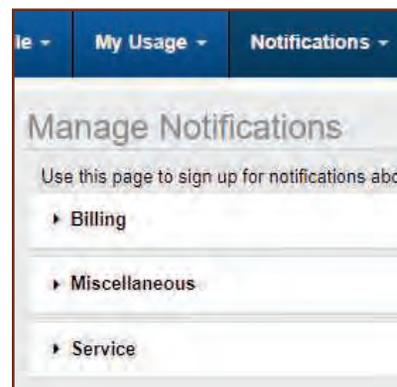
You will be redirected to our SmartHub Login page. If you already have a SmartHub account, simply login with your email and password. If not, you can sign up by using the "[New User? Sign up to access our Self Service site](#)" link below the Login button.



Once you've logged in, you can navigate to "Notifications" to adjust your notification settings. When you hover over "Notifications", select "Manage Notifications", as shown in the sample below.



The Manage Notifications screen will come up. From this page, you can set your notifications for billing, miscellaneous items like auto payments, and more.



Click the arrow by "Billing" and the drop down will expand to show you a list of several different alert types and their descriptions. Each alert type lets you decide if and how you would like to be notified. You can set the alert to either text or email you (or

both) when your bill is available.

To receive a notification when your bill is available, use the drop downs under the "Text Message" or "E-Mail" columns. If you'd like to be notified both ways, you select your cell phone number and your email in both columns. You can also use "Payment Reminder" to send a reminder

**Manage Notifications**

Use this page to sign up for notifications about activity on your billing account.

▼ Billing

Select Account  
All Accounts ▼

Alert Type	Description	Text Message	E-Mail	
Bill Available	This is a notification to inform you when your bill is available in SmartHub.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Billing Change	This is a notification to inform you when you change your billing options from SmartHub.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Credit Card Expiration (new)	This is a notification to inform you when your billing credit card is about to expire.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
DQ Notice	This is a notification to inform you when your bill is past due in SmartHub.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Declined Auto Pay	This is a notification to inform you that your automatic credit card payment was not processed.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Payment Confirmation	This is a notification to inform you we received your payment submission.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Payment Reminder	This is a notification to inform you that you have an upcoming payment due date.	None	None	Options
Scheduled Payment Notification	This is a notification to inform you when a payment is scheduled or canceled.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	
Unsuccessful Payment Notification	This is a notification to inform you when an unsuccessful payment has been made.	605-555-5555 ▼	myemail@email.com ▼	

Reset Save Settings

to yourself that your bill is due. With this option, you can customize the reminder to tell you any number of days before the due date. There are a number of notifications available that may be useful. Click "Save Settings" when you've opted into the right ones for you.

We will still send a paper statement in the mail, but now you can see it before it arrives, allowing you a chance to make your payment in a timely manner. No more worrying if your payment will make it in time, and no more late fees!

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

**Don't let the 9th sneak up on you! FEM has payment options available to meet your needs.**

**Online:** You can pay your bill through SmartHub online by creating an account, or with our Pay Now option at [www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop).

**Pay by Phone:** If you'd like to make payments by ACH or credit card over the phone, please call 1-833-699-1827. You will need to have your account number ready, and will need to select that prompt that works best for you.

**Drop Box:** If you are unable to come in during office hours, FEM offers a convenient and secure drop box located in our parking lot. The drop box is checked every morning.

**In Person:** FEM accepts cash, check, or credit card payments in our office Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Our office is located at 800 5th Ave. Ipswich, SD 57451.

**ACH:** Do you want a worry free way to pay your electric bill? Sign up for ACH! Your electric payment will be automatically withdrawn from your bank account each month without you having to worry about missing a payment or dealing with late fees.

**Pay by Mail:** FEM accepts payments made by check in the mail to FEM Electric at PO Box 468, Ipswich, SD 57451.

**SmartHub App:** You can download the SmartHub app from your mobile device's store and select FEM as your provider.

**Budget Billing:** Under this plan, FEM Electric will level your electric bill based on past energy consumption. This will allow you to have a steady monthly payment all year long. Contact us for more information!

**Payment Arrangements:** We will also work with you if special arrangements need to be made.



September 29-October 1  
**Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival**  
*Photo Credit: Chad Coppess*

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.

**SEPT. 29-OCT. 1**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival**  
 Custer, SD  
 605-255-4515

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 1**  
**Oktoberfest**  
 Citywide, Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 2**  
**SiouxperCon**  
 1201 N West Ave.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**OCT. 1**  
**Prairie Village Hobo Marlin Pumpkin Train**  
 45205 SD Highway 34  
 Madison, SD  
 605-256-3644

**OCT. 1-2**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Festival**  
 Codington County Extension Complex, Watertown, SD  
 605-881-3273

**OCT. 7**  
**The Pumpkin Patch**  
 Rapid Valley United Methodist Church, Rapid City, SD  
 605-393-1526

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Great Scarecrow Festival**  
 Campbell Park  
 Huron, SD  
 605-353-8530

**OCT. 7-9**  
**Black Hills Powwow**  
 444 Mt. Rushmore Road  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605 341-0925

**OCT. 7-8**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vender Show**  
 Philip, SD  
 605-441-1060

**OCT. 8**  
**Fall Festival**  
 Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD  
 605-255-4329

**OCT. 8-9**  
**Crazy Horse Marathon & Races**  
 Crazy Horse Memorial  
 12151 Avenue Of The Chiefs  
 605-390-6137

**OCT. 15**  
**Fall Festival**  
 18473 US Hwy 83, Onida, SD

**OCT. 22**  
**Ladies Day**  
 The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD  
 605-390-2939

**OCT. 28-30**  
**ZooBoo**  
 Great Plains Zoo  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-7003

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Yankton's Harvest Halloween**  
 Downtown, Yankton, SD  
 harvesthalloween.com

**NOV. 3-5**  
**Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge**  
 100 4th Street SW, Huron, SD  
 605-352-0000

**NOV. 5-20**  
**Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

**NOV. 11-13**  
**Christmas at the Barn**  
 Front Porch 605, Groton, SD  
 605-216-4202

**NOV. 12**  
**Black Hills Meat Festival**  
 Black Hills Harley Davidson  
 2820 Harley Dr., Rapid City, SD  
 605-390-7917

**NOV. 18-20**  
**Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival**  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**DEC. 2-3**  
**Christmas in the Hills**  
 Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD  
 605-745-4140

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