

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pristine Prairie

**Tellus & Lori Waddell Grow,
Harvest Native Plants**

Pages 8-9

Drive Out to a Drive-In!

Pages 12-13

Happy Labor Day!



Matt Sleep
CEO

The summer is about done, and we are heading into fall Toot sweet! As many of you know, September is the best month to enjoy the beauty of our area! Not that it isn't pretty the rest of the year, there is just something about September that steps it up a notch. The warm days and cool nights. The fall smell in the air. The changing of the colors. It really doesn't get any better than this.

As we move from late summer to early fall it's important to be aware of our Proximity policy that outlines the importance of maintaining a safe working distance not only from above ground power lines but also any electrical equipment above or below ground. As dry as it has been this year it is especially important to be aware of where all the electrical equipment and power lines are located before moving large equipment, loads, and starting any construction projects. Please take some time to safely assess the situation and make sure that the proper clearances

are maintained before proceeding. If you ever have any questions or concerns before working or moving around electrical equipment and power lines, please give us a call at (605)456-2494.

Fall also is a time when construction projects are kicked into high gear to finish ahead of the deep snow that we are going to have this year!! It is not uncommon to have to dig trenches, basements, etc. when moving forward with these projects. When starting a big construction project that you are trying to get done before all the deep snow comes this winter, please keep in mind that you need to call 811 before you dig. This is an easy process, just call 811. Then follow the steps from there. Thank you for calling 811 and having all the utilities marked before digging...this helps you and all the rest of our membership save money.

Fall means school is commencing after a long summer for many of our area children. Please be extra careful around school zones and buses. It's kind of like all the snow that we are going to receive this winter, we all must remind ourselves how to drive around in those conditions each year. Be careful. Slow down. Watch out for Children. Be Safe!

Included with this column is a picture of Nathan checking on a pole on one of the hot days we had in late July. Sometimes poles quite literally end up between a rock

Can You Dig It?

- An underground utility line is **damaged once every few minutes** because someone didn't call 811.
- Call 811, the "Call Before You Dig Number," at least **3 business days** prior to digging.
- 811 locators **do not detect** underground sprinkler systems, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.
- Even if you have previously had underground utilities marked, **utilities can shift**, so it's best to call before starting a new project.
- Once **all of your utilities** have been located, then you can start your digging project!

Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org)



and a hard place. But, as you can see from the second picture, the views can be breathtaking.

As was mentioned last month, the annual meeting is on October 20th at the Community Center in Belle Fourche. Registration will begin at 5:00 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres and refreshments available in the gymnasium before the annual meeting starts. We hope you can join us.

We didn't have an adventure at the Newell shop this past month. Instead, we took part in an exciting rescue mission involving two redbell hawk chicks that fell out of their nest that was about 80 feet in the air. A picture of the chicks is included. The chicks were restored to their nest not by our bucket truck (which was not tall enough) but by an accomplished tree climber. Until next month, thank you for your membership and be safe.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BUTTE ELECTRIC

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STAYING PREPARED IN RURAL S.D.

As most South Dakotans know, weather on the Great Plains can be frightfully unpredictable. In fact, South Dakota holds the record for the fastest temperature rise ever recorded. On Jan. 22, 1943, the temperature in Spearfish climbed from 4 degrees below zero to 45 degrees above zero in only two minutes.

Winter storms also offer reminders of how quickly severe weather can reshape daily life. The Blizzard of 1966 brought wind gusts of 70 mph and snowdrifts reaching more than 30 feet. Roads remained blocked for days, and massive livestock losses made it one of the most severe blizzards in state history.

Winter Storm Atlas, another devastating blizzard in October 2013, dropped several feet of snow over the Black Hills. Heavy snow and strong winds toppled trees and power lines, and devastated livestock operations, leaving some residents without electricity for a week or longer.

Although not every storm will make the record books, severe weather can still disrupt a household. A little preparation on an ordinary day can make a difficult day much easier.

Make A Plan

Emergency preparedness begins with a plan. FEMA recommends that households develop a plan for alerts, appropriate shelter, evacuation and communication if family members become separated.

Start by identifying the types of emergencies most likely to affect your area. For rural South Dakotans, that may include anything from blizzards and tornadoes to severe thunderstorms and wildfires. A good safety plan starts by choosing a safe place inside the home for high winds and tornadoes, generally a basement or small interior room, away from windows.

Next, consider who in your household may need extra help during an emergency, including infants, older adults and pets. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do, then walk through the plan together.

Build A Practical Supply Kit

Once the plan is in place, start collecting and organizing supplies your household could rely on if the power goes out or travel becomes difficult. FEMA recommends keeping enough food and water for at least several days, with one gallon of water per person for each day. For example, a

family of four preparing for three days would need at least 12 gallons of water.

Choose nonperishable foods your household already eats and that can be prepared without electricity. Then add the basics needed to get through an outage, including flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit and a way to recharge cellphones. A NOAA Weather Radio can also provide important updates even when cellphone service is unavailable.

Next, tailor the kit to your household. Set aside medications and other essentials.

There is no need to build the entire supply kit at once. Start with what is already in the house, then add supplies during regular shopping trips. Check the kit a few times each year to replace expired food, medications or batteries.

Preparedness cannot stop a storm, reopen a highway or restore electricity, but it can provide time and options when conditions begin to change.

For more information, visit Ready.gov for additional tips on making an emergency plan, building a supply kit and staying prepared.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Owen Williams, age 7

Owen reminds members to not plant trees near power lines. That is great advice, Owen! Thank you!

Owen's parents are Bruce and Jing Williams from Wakonda 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.

FALL DESSERTS

GOLDEN GRAHAM/ SMORES BARS

Ingredients:

7 cups Golden Graham cereal
16 oz. mini marshmallows
1/2 cup butter
6 full size Hershey bars

Method

Unwrap Hershey bars and break apart on lines and then each piece again in half. Set aside. Melt the butter and 6 cups of the marshmallows. Stir in the Golden Grahams cereal. Cool for one minute. Stir in remaining marshmallows and Hershey pieces. Press lightly into a greased 9x13 pan with slightly wet hands. Cool and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsp. flour

Topping

(makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

VERY GOOD PEACH DESSERT

Ingredients:

First layer:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup nuts
1 stick margarine
Mix together and press in 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 F for 10 minutes.

Second layer:

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
Cream together and add 1 cup Cool Whip. Spread on top of cooled crust.

Third layer:

1 cup sugar
2 tbsp. white corn syrup
3 tbsp. cornstarch
1 cup water
Combine ingredients, cook until thickened, then remove from heat. Add 3 tbsp. of peach-flavored gelatin and 1/4 tsp. almond flavoring. Cool. Peel and slice fresh peaches, then combine with the cooled mixture. Spread on top of cheese filling. Top with a layer of whipped topping and chill.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

FROM LIGHT SWITCHES TO LIFELONG HABITS



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Do you have energy-saving helpers at home? Teaching your children to build good energy habits saves money on your electric bill today and sets them up for a lifetime of smart energy use. Here's how to get your family started on a household energy-saving adventure.

Safety First

When it comes to electricity, start with safety basics. Secure cords so appliances, lamps or other plugged-in items can't be pulled down. Use outlet covers and safety plugs to keep little hands from getting injured.

As they get older, teach children not to stick things in outlets. When they are old enough to use outlets, let them know they should never unplug by pulling the cord. When playing outside, educate them to stay away from downed power lines, keep a safe distance from all electrical equipment and avoid the dangers of electricity near water.



Teaching Energy Habits

Keeping safety in mind, you can teach age-appropriate energy habits.

Turning off fans and lights when you leave rooms is always a good habit to instill. Fully powering down TVs, computers and gaming systems reduces energy waste.

Keeping the refrigerator door open is a common energy waster for kiddos – and some adults. Show them they can take a quick look inside and scan their options. If they need time to decide what they want, they can close the fridge while making up their minds.

Closing your home's doors is another tip to keep heated or air-conditioned air inside the home. I wonder how many kids these days are asked if they were born in a barn or if they would even know what you mean?

Hot water is another saver to consider. In addition to reducing wasted water, using less hot water helps you save on your energy bill. Heating water is typically the second-highest energy use in a home, behind heating and air conditioning. Reduce energy use by turning off the water while hand-washing dishes, taking short showers and not overfilling the bathtub.

Gamify Your Bill

Review the electric bill with older children. Be sure to focus on energy use, which is shown in kilowatt-hours on your bill.

It's also a good opportunity to teach budgeting and household finances. If you save money on the electric bill, you may be able to do something fun with that money instead. Consider a trip to mini golf, getting ice cream or choosing a longer-term goal to fund a weekend family trip.

Make it a game. Consider a family reward for using less energy than the previous month or the same month of the previous year, or an individual reward for the one who guesses how many kilowatt-hours you used that month. The winner gets to pick the movie for family night.

Exploring energy efficiency and conservation with your children doesn't have to be a chore. Find fun ways to build lifelong energy habits and save energy around your home.



Aunicka and Jagger Dargatz and
Micki Lesnar from Lake Region
Electric pose with sparklers

AMERICA'S 250TH

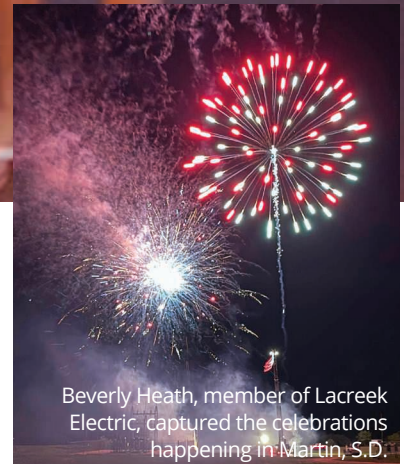
Electric Cooperatives Celebrating Independence



Oahe Electric General
Manager Jordan Lamb takes
a moment to pose with
wildlife in the Black Hills.



Central Electric employee
Heather Gales and
her family celebrated
America's 250th in
Chamberlain, S.D.



Beverly Heath, member of Lacreek
Electric, captured the celebrations
happening in Martin, S.D.



Bailey Meyer, member of
Lake Region Electric, shares
a photo of her children
celebrating the holiday.



Lake Region Electric
employee Autumn Spiering
and her boys went touring
around Custer.



Central Electric employee
Lindsey Wilson's family
celebrated America's 250th
and July 4th at Lake Mitchell.

A photograph of a man and a woman, Tellus and Lori Waddell, sitting in the back of a tractor. They are both smiling at the camera. The background is a lush green field with some purple wildflowers. The tractor's frame and controls are visible in the foreground.

WONDROUS WILDFLOWERS & PRAIRIE PRESERVATION

Tellus and Lori Waddell.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Waddell Native Seeds Turns Rural Acreage into Prairie Paradise

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Journeying east on U.S. Hwy. 12 toward Milbank, as you make a steep descent into Whetstone Valley, you'll pass the usual South Dakota crops – corn, soybeans, some wheat here and there.

But for Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative members Tellus and Lori Waddell of Marvin, the most fascinating – and lucrative – harvest is one most of us would overlook, growing tall in roadside ditches and uncut fields.

For more than 30 years, the Waddells have allowed their Grant County acreage to run wild as they grow, harvest and sell the seeds of dozens of native wildflowers and grasses.

"We started noticing wildflowers up in the pasture, and at that time [the internet was] coming out so we could do some research on what they were," Lori recalled. "Tellus started calling nurseries asking them if they wanted this or that ... and that's how we built into this – and there are not a lot of people that do this."

When Lori says "this," she's referring to more than just collecting seeds. She means getting up early before the weather

is too hot, rolling up her sleeves and driving around the property in a side-by-side scanning the ground for patches of whichever wildflower type is ready to be harvested – by hand – for seeds.

"It's very, very labor-intensive," Tellus added. "It's not like picking flowers – because we don't pick a flower. You have to let [the seeds] develop. Right now, we're picking things that blossomed about six weeks ago."

With dozens of plants and just as many harvest schedules, the Waddells have a steady amount of work to do from mid-spring all the way into fall.

Traversing the lightly traveled trails over their expansive, glacially carved property, (this reporter was joined by two labs in the back seat of the side-by-side) Tellus and Lori are quick to point out distant patches of coneflowers, blazing star, wild turnips, vervain and their personal favorite flora they cultivate, milkweed.

"It's for the butterflies," Tellus explained as he pulled the vehicle up to the family's newest experiment: milkweed planted as a row crop.

"It's the first time we've ever done that," Tellus said, proudly explaining his youngest son, Levi Waddell, is heading up the initiative.

Tellus added, "As every generation takes over, you'll get different things."

Most outbuildings on the Waddells' land double as drying rooms for at least one harvest during the season.

That includes their three-stall garage – a more accurate description may be the seed processing facility – where the Waddells dry the seeds, separate them from the chaff and package them for shipment to area greenhouses and other customers.

Demand has grown to the point where the Waddells have hired about a dozen part-time summer workers to help harvest seeds.

Their harvesting efforts don't stop at the

The Waddells are row cropping milkweed for the first time. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed, making it an important resource for conservation efforts.

Photo by Jacob Boyko





Lori Waddell enjoys photographing native flowers on the acreage.
 Top row: prairie lily, pasque flower (S.D. state flower), wild turnip.
 Bottom row: blazing star, scarlet gaura, coneflower.
Photos by Lori Waddell

fence line – Tellus is known to park his car, knock on the doors and ask to collect seeds if a patch of prairie catches his eye.

"We have picking rights [agreements with property owners] from here to Pierre down to Grand Island, Nebraska," Tellus said, recounting an especially vibrant purple field of vervain near Forestburg.

This led Tellus to a more solemn conversation. Piece by piece, he and Lori have bought surrounding acreage in an effort to isolate their native plants from the effects of drifting pesticides. Tellus said that when mixed into a slight breeze, the chemicals are potent enough to wipe out their native broadleaf plants for years at a time – even if the spraying takes place miles away.

Tellus and Lori's observation is that biodiversity is shrinking throughout the region for this same reason – diverse fields of native flowers and grasses are becoming more difficult to find, and the wildlife that relies on native plants for food are becoming increasingly scarce.

"You talk to people in their 80s, and they'll talk about walking through a field of lilies," Tellus said. "And then they just sit there for a bit and try to think of the last time they've seen that. Sometimes 40 or 50 years ago."

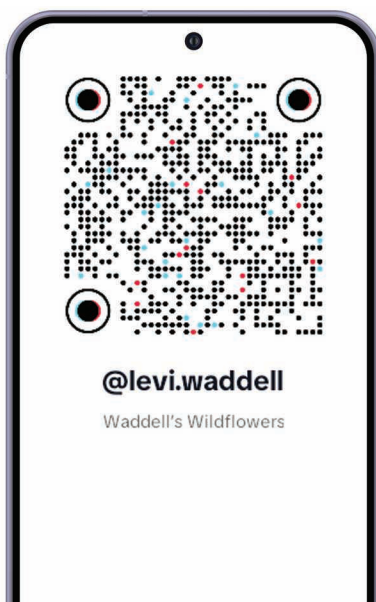
He continued, "that's when people realize the prairie is pretty much gone."

Levi Waddell uses social media to spread awareness about native plants, conservation and his family's operation.

His TikTok page, Waddell's Wildflowers, has more than 1,000 followers and 19,000 likes and chronologizes the day-by-day life of a native plant harvester.

The Waddells hope to share their story to educate others on the importance of conservation and inspire them to preserve the native prairie for generations to come.

"God gave us this beautiful earth and we're ruining it," Lori said. "If we can at least preserve and protect our little corner, I feel like we've done our job."



PROCESSING NATIVE SEEDS



The harvested seeds are spread indoors to dry for several weeks.



The dried seed heads are broken apart to loosen the seeds from the surrounding plant material.



The seeds are fed into a hammer mill to break apart remaining plant material from the seeds.



The cleaned seeds are sifted one final time to remove any extra material. The separated chaff is spread where the seeds were harvested so any unseparated seeds can germinate.



86th Annual Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.

October 20, 2026

Belle Fourche Community Center

"Registration, hors d'oeuvres, and refreshments start at 5 p.m

Annual meeting begins at 6 p.m.

We hope you can join us!



What Consumers Should Know About Plug-In Solar Systems

Cathy Cash
NRECA

It seems easy enough. You set up a solar panel or two and its small generator-type device outside, plug the thing into a wall socket in your house and before you know it, electricity is flowing and lowering your power bill.

These portable, DIY solar energy systems can generate several hundred watts and are marketed like appliances that only require a regular outlet. But as plug-in solar becomes more popular, consumers should be aware that these products require important safety considerations.

So, what should you know about behind-the-meter, plug-in solar kits?

Well, first of all these systems have the potential to put lives and property at risk. Electric utility leaders note that almost all of these devices lack U.S. safety requirements, such as certifying under UL codes or standards. UL has only recently developed a safety certification for plug-in solar systems.

Yep, unlike rooftop solar and electric vehicle charger installations, these plug-and-play packages skip the traditional interconnection process, oversight and hardwiring.

If a home's wiring is not up to snuff to support plug-in solar, the consumer wouldn't know because they didn't call a licensed electrician to install the equipment nor an inspector who could spot that hazard.

That can be dangerous on multiple fronts, leading to overheated wires in a residence, property damage, fire and even worse, serious or deadly electrical shock.

"Plug-in solar introduces real safety risks at the consumer-member level," said Jeffrey Groenewold, NRECA senior energy solutions manager. "Existing residential wiring standards were not designed for generation through standard outlets so plug-in solar increases the potential for fire and shock hazards."

Charged solar systems can back feed or send electricity back to the grid and re-energize power lines unbeknownst to your electric cooperative. This could be fatal for lineworkers.

"The evolving plug-in solar industry must work to ensure these systems are properly managed and controlled to prevent unintended back feed," said Groenewold. "This is critical to protecting cooperative lineworkers and keeping them safe when they are out working to restore power."

Unplugging the system does not diminish its risk. Contact with the power cord energized by the solar panels can cause devastating injury.

Will Morris, a consultant to NRECA Business and Technology Strategies, underscored that these systems are not harmless appliances and should not be treated as such, especially around children.

"When we were growing up, our parents taught us, if you would just unplug a blender or an iron or something like that, you're putting that device in a safe state. With this, it is the complete opposite," he said.

"If somebody has this on their patio plugged into an exterior outlet and they unplug it and drop it in a puddle.... You can get 800 watts going to you. That can be a real bad day."

Then there's the affordability factor. Is plug-in solar really a good deal?

The apparatus for this behind-the-meter energy resource can cost a few hundred dollars to more than \$1,000 but their output – even in areas with plenty of sunshine – will shave only an estimated 40 to 80 cents per day off your power bill, according to industry experts.

"I would be very surprised if in our markets, plug-in solar makes much financial sense because the average cooperative consumer rates are pretty low," said Morris. "It would take a long time to recover that investment,"

European apartment dwellers who face very high electricity rates have been eagerly buying "balcony solar" for a while and expect to pay off their investment in a couple years, he said.

In Germany, where rates are particularly high, the plug-and-play packages are designed within the country's safety mandates and must be registered with the grid operator.

"So, the German utility knows when that device is being utilized, they have potential for energy to flow back into the grid," he said.

But here, states are at various stages of potentially regulating plug-in solar to ensure their safety.

"We're at the wild, wild west phase of it right now," Morris said. "You can buy this and you just plug it in. It's like buying a hairdryer, except the hairdryer got UL certified."

Members are encouraged to contact their electric co-op for knowledgeable advice on plug-in solar and to inform the co-op if they are operating such a device.

"The bottom line is if you're looking to lower your electric bill with some behind-the-meter device, please let your electric co-ops know," said Groenewold. "Co-ops have a variety of programs to partner with you to save money and to do it safely."



DRIVE OUT TO A DRIVE-IN

Outdoor Movie Theaters Offer Old-Time Fun

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

It's one of the defining cultural behemoths of the 20th century. Load the family into the station wagon – or someone you fancy in a borrowed hot rod – and head over to the drive-in theater. You pick up popcorn and soda pop, tune your car stereo to the transmitter, and settle in for an unforgettable experience.

It all started in 1933, when Richard Hollingshead of Camden, New Jersey, began developing an accessible and comfortable way to bypass the confining indoor theater seats and allow moviegoers a way to enjoy a show from the comfort of their own vehicle.

The Smithsonian Magazine reports a peak of more than 4,000 American drive-in theaters in 1958. But with cities continuously expanding and the price of property increasing, most of them have closed in the time since. Today, it's estimated that fewer than 300 drive-in theaters remain.

But don't fret! If you're reading this magazine, there are still some nearby drive-in movie theater options for you and your family (or your date) to enjoy!

Midway Drive In – Miller, S.D.

In Miller, mid-May through Labor Day weekend is drive-in movie season. Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are illuminated by the distant glow of the local drive-in movie theater.

Sarah Resel is one of the owners of the Midway Drive-In. Growing up in Miller, the drive-in was her weekend hangout and the site of so many cherished memories. Years later, that's still the case – just under slightly different circumstances.

A show is about to start at the Midway Drive In near Miller.
Photo submitted by Midway Drive In

"We pretty much don't have weekends during the summer," Resel said. "We're committed to being here with the theater. We all have full-time jobs; we always call this our community service."

Despite the hefty commitment, Resel says seeing people turnout from all over the country for an authentic drive-in experience makes it worthwhile.

"I think with us in our Miller community, we take it for granted that it's just here," Resel said. "It's crazy the support we get from other towns coming to our community."

Pheasant Drive-In – Mobridge, S.D.

Cam Wal Electric Cooperative members Jon and Jill Olson of Mobridge have experience with both indoor and outdoor theaters.

"The day-to-day prep is a little bit different," Jill said, explaining



The Pheasant Drive-In sits on the Missouri River hills near Mobridge.
Photo submitted by Pheasant Drive-In

the maintenance needed for the property and screen, along with weather surprises.

"I think weather is probably the number one issue," she continued. "We had a windstorm that came through Sunday [July 19] and caused some damage for us."

Even with the unexpected challenges, Jill said owning the drive-in theater is a positive experience, and on summer nights as people from near and far gather for a showing, she's reminded why she does it.

"It's a completely different vibe than sitting inside a dark theater," Jill said. "Parents do such a good job making it a fun experience, like bringing a pickup, backing it in and letting the kids sit in the back end. The other weekend, we had a family bring a bunch of blow-up air mattresses. The kids can talk and run back and forth – it just isn't your typical thing."

Hilltop Drive Inn Theater – Gregory, S.D.

"It's awesome," Rosebud Electric Cooperative member Dawn Boyer said when asked about running a drive-in movie theater.

"It's like owning a piece of the past while being in the present – and hopefully the future."

When Dawn was a kid, her mom worked at the ticket counter, sometimes taking Dawn along too. When she learned in 2018 the theater was looking for a new owner, it just seemed right.

"Two weeks later, I was running a theater I knew nothing about," Dawn laughed.

The drive-in is an 80-year-old landmark in Gregory County, and the oldest operating drive-in theater in the state. The age is catching up with it, Boyer said, explaining the heavy maintenance schedules necessary to keep the theater running.

Though the theater is becoming harder to operate, Boyer says the smiles on visitors' faces make it all worth it.

"The people who come through that have never seen a drive-in before – that's who we do it for," Boyer continued. "The expression on somebody's face when that big screen lights up at night is awesome."

Pheasant City Drive-In Theatre – Redfield, S.D.

Redfield's drive-in theater has been open continuously since 1953, and thanks to Dave and Stacey Marlow, it will continue for many years.

"We bought it at the time the industry was changing over to digital projectors," Stacey said, recalling the 2014 sale. "And [the previous owner] wasn't going to do it, so we went to him and asked if he'd like to sell it."

Since taking over, they've upgraded the display system again, installing a brighter, higher-contrast laser projector that allows shows to begin earlier and helps future-proof the theater.

While modern, the theater retains its original elements: the speaker poles are functional (Dave spends hours wiring each spring) and the propane popcorn maker satisfies hungry moviegoers.

"People tell us all the time, 'We are so glad you took this and have kept it going,'" Stacey said. "This is a part of our town we didn't want to lose, so we decided we were the ones to step up and save it."

Winner Drive In Theater – Winner, S.D.

In 2022, Rosebud Electric Cooperative members Austin and Jill Moser were looking for more space for their family. They finally found the perfect house on a nice chunk of land – with a catch.

"The movie theater was included," Jill said. "We thought, 'Why not?'"

The Mosers say running the drive-in theater with their three kids has been a good experience for the family and has given the kids an opportunity to work concessions.

During the Mosers' second season in operation, a windstorm damaged the screen, necessitating a lengthy rebuild. Luckily, the theater was able to reopen for the 2025 season.

"It's really great to see how many people still support drive-in movie theaters," Jill said. "There's not that many left in the country. We meet people from all over – we've had people from France come to the theater."

Verne Drive In – Luverne, Minn.

Half an hour east of Sioux Falls, the Verne Drive In welcomes hundreds of I-90 travelers Wednesday through Sunday each summer.

Owner and operator Doug Rozeboom said his goal is to provide an experience that is affordable, fun and unique for both locals and travelers.

"I don't want to say drive-in theaters are a thing of the past, but they're becoming it," Rozeboom said. "It's a unique experience because you can't just go anywhere to watch a movie outdoors on a big screen."

He continued, "Kids are able to run around and throw a football, so they can blow off some steam."

Rozeboom described the enthusiasm of moviegoers, recounting creative truck-bed setups, typically with lawn chairs, sofas or mattresses.

"For the Toy Story 5 premiere, someone had a tree-trimming truck, so they had the boom arm out," he laughed. "I was like, 'Huh, that's interesting.'"

Making the perfect setup is part of the drive-in movie theater experience!
Photo submitted by Verne Drive In



Winner's drive-in features a curved screen.
Photo by Kim Boyko





RUNNING TOWARD BETTER CARE

Avera Race Against Cancer Makes Every Step Count

Frank Turner

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As Vice President of Community Giving for Avera Foundation, Kellie Yackley helped lead the fundraising effort that brought the Avera Cancer Institute to Pierre and helped build the Helmsley Center, a cancer treatment center at Avera St. Mary's Hospital. From the beginning of the campaign, she conveyed to the region the importance of bringing cancer care closer to home.

However, a year after the cancer center opened its doors, that mission became personal. Yackley was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer and soon found herself receiving treatment at the same oncology center she had helped bring to Pierre. Instead of traveling regularly to Sioux Falls, she was able to complete most of her care close to home, surrounded by her family, community and local care team.

"The center was open for a year, and then I received the diagnosis. That irony was lost on nobody, but everything that needed to be managed with my care was managed in Pierre," Yackley said. "I understood the importance through the campaign, but it really landed when I became the patient instead of the fundraiser."

Yackley's fundraising efforts had come full circle. For years, Yackley has lead the team who organizes the annual Avera Race Against Cancer, the foundation's largest fundraiser, raising money for cancer treatment, technology, research and patient services across the region.

Participants line up for the Avera Race Against Cancer in Pierre, outside of the Helmsley Center.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

Held on the Saturday of Mother's Day weekend, the event includes a 1.5-mile walk, a 5K run and a 10K run. For Yackley, the race is proof that a community gathering can have an impact far beyond the finish line.

"It takes all of us, from the \$2 donation to the folks providing five- and six-figure gifts," Yackley said. "Every dollar counts."

The race began 38 years ago when a group of women organized an event to support a friend undergoing breast cancer treatment in Sioux Falls. The event continued to grow and eventually became connected with Avera. For many years, it was known as the Avera Race Against Breast Cancer before expanding to recognize people



Judy Davis, left, inspired the original Avera Race Against Cancer. She is pictured with Jackie Haggard-Tuschen, a longtime volunteer who helps kick off the event in Sioux Falls.
Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

affected by all forms of cancer.

Today, the race is held in six Avera communities: Sioux Falls, Pierre, Aberdeen, Mitchell and Yankton in South Dakota, and Marshall, Minn.

“We want people to get care locally,” Yackley said. “Rather than saying everybody needs to come to Sioux Falls to participate, we wanted to make sure people could participate locally, where they receive their care and where their care team is.”

Virtual participation has also extended the race well beyond the six host communities. Over its history, the event has drawn participants from 42 states and several countries, helping the race reach more people than ever before.

In 2026, the event drew 8,683 participants and raised more than \$1 million through sponsorships, registration fees and fundraising by individuals and teams. Those funds support cancer screening and early detection, genetic testing, 3D mammography and other advanced technologies intended to identify cancer sooner and improve treatment.

“Every person who participates matters,” she added. “Every person that we touch matters, and every dollar that we raise matters.”

Proceeds from the race also help support Avera’s cancer navigation services, which connect patients and families with assistance at any time of day. Patients can call with questions about treatment reactions, appointments or other concerns. The service also helps coordinate care and provides bereavement support for families after a loved one dies.

Another resource supported by the race is the New Look, Same You program. The program provides wigs to patients experiencing hair loss from chemotherapy and can connect patients with cosmetologists who offer advice about skin care and other appearance-related concerns during treatment, a service Yackley herself used.

The race also highlights the stories of cancer survivors, caregivers and families at each location, recognizing the people behind every diagnosis.

Yackley recalled the story of a Pierre-area woman who expected to travel to Sioux Falls, a three-hour drive across the state, for radiation treatment. Because treatment required appointments over several days, the care would have meant an extended stay away from home. The woman later learned that the treatment she needed was

available in her hometown of Pierre.

“She was able to receive all of that care here because the technology had been expanded to Pierre,” Yackley said. “That is a perfect example of why this matters for rural people.”

At a previous race, organizers recognized the late Dr. Mikel Holland, former president and CEO of Avera St. Mary’s Hospital. Holland supported the effort to build the Helmsley Center and later received treatment there during his own cancer journey. His wife, Debbie, shared the story of his treatment, leadership and connection to the center.

“He was heavily involved in fundraising for the cancer center, and later he was able to receive his care at the Helmsley Center,” Yackley said. “Ultimately, his team cared for him here.”

Years after helping advocate for expanded cancer services in Pierre, Yackley remains committed to ensuring future patients can receive high-quality care close to home.

“For me, the race is a culmination of all the things that are really important,” she said. “We will absolutely continue to carry that banner and support patients in every region throughout Avera.”



Kellie Yackley of Pierre poses for a photo at the 2026 Avera Race Against Cancer. Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

The next Avera Race Against Cancer is May 8, 2027.
Register at AveraFoundation.org.



Runners begin the Avera Race Against Cancer. Photo submitted by Avera Foundation.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____ Dakotafest – Find us in the Touchstone Energy Building!
Your Email Address: _____ S.D. State Fair – Find us in the Horticulture Park!



SEPT. 3 (ONE DAY EVENT)
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives
at the South Dakota State Fair
Horticulture Park, State Fairgrounds
Huron, SD

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.

SEPT. 1
Deadwood Trolley on the Trail
Deadwood, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 4-6
Arts & Crafts Fair
& Farmers Market
Way Park
Custer, SD

SEPT. 6
Studebaker Car Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
South 6th St.
Custer, SD

SEPT. 11-12
Center of the Nation
9/11 Remembrance
6 p.m. Fri: Remembrance Walk
Sat. 8 a.m.-4 p.m.: Blood Drive
Herrmann Park
Belle Fourche, SD
605-641-3245

SEPT. 11-13
Stratobowl Balloon Launch
Stratobowl Trailhead
Rapid City, SD

SEPT. 12
Farmers Market
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Eras Event Center
Hill City, SD

SEPT. 12-13
Harvest & Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD
605-505-0535

SEPT. 13
Rails to Ails Bike Ride
Hill City, SD to Custer, SD

SEPT. 19
Free Christian Men's Event
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Host: Courageous Man
The Monument
Rapid City, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

SEPT. 19
Fall Festival
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Everyone Welcome
Rapid Valley UMC
5103 Longview Rd.
Rapid City, SD

SEPT. 24-26
Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival
Custer State Park
Custer, SD

SEPT. 26
Black Hills Moon Walk
Mystic Ranger District
Willow Creek Trailhead
Custer, SD

SEPT. 27
Crazy Horse Memorial Volksmarch
7 a.m.
Crazy Horse Memorial
Custer, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

OCT. 4
St. Anthony's Fall Bazaar
10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Swiss Steak 12-1:30 p.m.
Legion Hall
Hoven, SD

OCT. 15-17
Spearfish Senior Center
Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale
Thursday, Friday: 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
Saturday 8 a.m.-12 p.m.
Quilt Raffle, Pie, Coffee, Rolls
1306 N. 10th St.
Spearfish, 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.