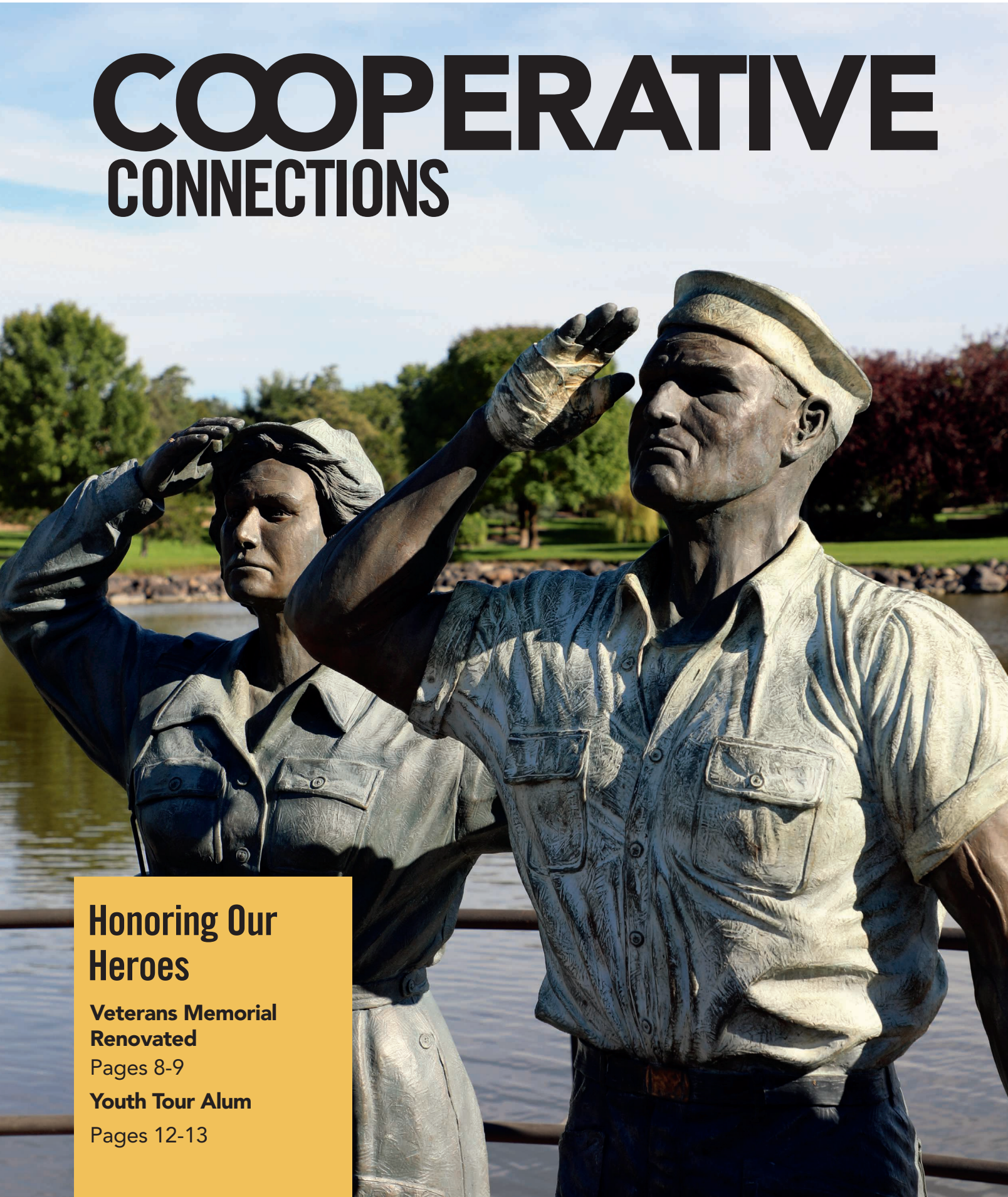
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

BUTTE ELECTRIC
NOVEMBER 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 7

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Honoring Our Heroes

Veterans Memorial Renovated
Pages 8-9

Youth Tour Alum
Pages 12-13



Photo by Travel South Dakota

November Updates



Matt Sleep
CEO

We hope that everyone had the opportunity to attend the 86th annual meeting of Butte Electric on October 20th. It's hard to believe another annual meeting has gone by. We are thankful for all of you, our members. The employees of Butte Electric work hard every day to make sure that you have power when you need it. I am thankful to have the opportunity to work for you and work with them.

We are currently working through our budgeting process. Our power providers notified us in 2025 that they would be increasing the rates we pay to them. We were fortunate at that time that they decided to split the increases between 2026 and 2027. Instead of a big 26-28% increase in 2026 they split the increase, which ended up being more like a 13% to 14% annual increase for each of those years. We were able to keep our increase in the 6% range for the average residential member electrical requirements. We are working hard on the budgeting process so that we can manage the rate increase, inflationary pressures, and system improvements all while still providing access to reliable electricity.

This month, we would like to take a moment and thank all our fire fighters and other first responders out there. This past summer was a scorcher. As hot and dry as it was, I think their dedication and constant vigilance were greatly appreciated across Butte Electric's territory. Thank goodness the weather started to cool down, and we started to get a little rain periodically through August and September. I think everyone would agree that we need some snow this coming winter to replenish our low water supplies and help prepare for next summer.

Fall, winter, and early spring can cause real challenges during dry weather conditions. Sometimes the greatest risk of wildfire occurs during the early fall and late winter/early spring. Please take steps to keep the fuel loads down to a minimum around your homes, garages, barns, and other buildings. Also, please call us at (605) 456-2494 if you see any trees or other hazards around the power lines and equipment.

The moisture and cooler temperatures have created a few outage situations over the last month. If you have experienced an outage, please call (605) 456-2494. This number is answered 24 hours a day. We often hear from members that they have experienced an outage but didn't call because they thought a neighbor might have already called it in. This creates a couple of problems. First, it isn't uncommon that an outage is just at one location. So, if you don't call, we can't send out a crew to fix the problem. Second, someone else may have called and we sent a crew out and fixed the problem. However, we weren't aware of those who were also experiencing the same outage but did not call. This outage wasn't fixed. Then, when we did find out, we must send a second crew out to fix the outage, which takes more time and expense. So, please call immediately when experiencing an outage.

Along those same lines, it is important that you keep your contact information up to date with us. If you have a new email address, mailing address, cell phone number, land line phone number, or any other changes, please call us at (605) 456-2494 and update your information.

Have a Happy Thanksgiving, safe travels, and thank you for your membership.

Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.

86TH ANNUAL MEETING

6 PM • Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2026

Belle Fourche Area Community Center

Join us for the Butte Electric Annual Meeting.
Registration starts at 5 p.m.
Learn about the current happenings at Butte Electric Cooperative.

Agenda

- Call to Order
- Invocation
- National Anthem
- Welcome
- Approval of Minutes
- Treasurer's Report
- Election
- President's Report
- Manager's Report
- New Business
- Adjourn

If you are disabled and need a special accommodation to have full and equal enjoyment of this program, call 605-456-2494.

Nondiscrimination Statement

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call 866-632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington D.C. 20250-9410, by fax 202-690-7442 or email at program.itake@usda.gov

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BUTTE ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1531-1031)

Board of Directors
James Mortenson, Spearfish – President
Chandy Olson, St. Onge – Vice President
Travis Schenk, Spearfish – Treasurer
Thomas Brunner, Nisland – Secretary
Cris Miller, Spearfish – Asst. Secretary
Daniel Hefner, Whitewood
Steve Smeenk, Newell
Jessica Casteel, Vale
Dan Marrs, Whitewood

Office Personnel
Matt Sleep - Chief Executive Officer
Abby Olson - Chief Financial Officer
Lee Ann - Staff Accountant
Angie - Administrative Assistant
Norma Jo - Member Services
Cheyenne - Office Services Rep.

Operations Personnel
Brett Fosheim - Chief Operations Officer
Bart McLellan - Member Services & Safety
Chuck - Operations Manager
Jacob - Work Order Clerk

Foreman:
Adam - Spearfish
Jeff - Newell
James - Sturgis

Lead Lineman:
Mike - Spearfish
Dave - Newell
Adam - Sturgis

Linemen:
John - Spearfish
Corey - Spearfish
Keaten - Spearfish
Taten - Newell
Jade - Newell
Kyle - Newell
Dalton - Sturgis
Ty - Sturgis
Nathan - Sturgis

Butte Electric Beacon Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc., PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provied reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for $12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at City, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Butte Electric Beacon, PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760; telephone (605) 456-2494; fax (605) 456-2496; email butte@butteelectric.com

This institution is an equal opportunity provider

KEEP SAFETY AT THE HEART OF YOUR HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

The holiday season, stretching from late November through mid-January, is widely considered the most joyous time of the year. Families gather, festive parties fill our calendars, and a spirit of generosity warms our homes. However, alongside the cheer comes a significant spike in travel, home decorating, and large-scale cooking. Consequently, preventable accidents and injuries dramatically increase during these months. To ensure your family and friends remain safe and injury-free throughout the festivities, keeping safety top of mind is crucial. Below is a comprehensive guide of tried-and-true advice to help you navigate the season securely.

Traveling for the Holidays? Be Prepared and Alert

For millions of people, the holidays mean hitting the road to visit loved ones. Unfortunately, car travel during this busy period carries the highest fatality rate of any major transportation form. Hundreds tragically lose their lives in crashes on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day alone. Alarmingly, alcohol impairment contributes to approximately one-third of these fatal incidents.

To stay safe on the roads, follow these essential guidelines:

- Winterize your vehicle: Prepare for harsh weather and keep a well-stocked emergency kit in your trunk.
- Rest up: Get plenty of sleep before departing to avoid the severe dangers of drowsy driving.
- Plan ahead: Leave early and anticipate heavy traffic to eliminate the dangerous temptation to speed.
- Buckle up: Ensure every passenger is properly restrained, regardless of the trip's length.
- Eliminate distractions: Put your cell phone away; it remains the primary driving distraction today.
- Designate a driver: Always use a completely sober driver. Alcohol and medications cause severe impairment.

Decorate with Caution and Care

Decking the halls instantly puts families in a holiday mood, but hospital emergency departments treat thousands of decorating-related injuries annually. Remember these safety tips:

- Keep poisonous seasonal plants, like mistletoe and holly berries, strictly out of the reach of children.
- If utilizing an artificial tree, verify it is clearly labeled as "fire resistant."
- For live trees, cut two inches off the trunk for better water absorption. Water daily and remove it when dry.
- Place your tree at least three feet away from fireplaces, radiators, and space heaters.
- Discard and replace light sets featuring broken sockets, frayed wires, or loose electrical connections.
- Turn off all holiday lights before going to bed or leaving the house.

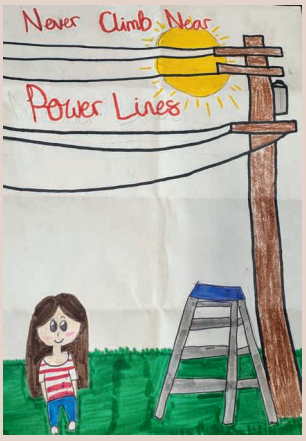
Watch Out for Holiday Fire-Starters

The glow of candles and fireplaces is a holiday staple, but combined with combustible decorations, house fire risks skyrocket. The National Fire Protection Association notes candles cause 46% of December home fires.

- Place candles in sturdy holders away from curtains and curious children.
- Store matches and lighters in a locked, high cabinet.
- Consider battery-operated flameless candles as a very safe alternative.
- Never burn pine branches or wrapping paper in fireplaces; they can cause flash fires.
- Use a protective screen for burning fires and never leave lit candles unattended.

Be highly alert to the extreme dangers of turkey fryers. Hundreds of fires and severe burns are linked to these devices. Consider using oil-less fryers or purchasing fried turkeys from professionals. If you must fry your own, strictly follow all U.S. Fire Administration guidelines.

By taking these simple, proactive steps, you can protect loved ones and ensure your holidays remain merry, bright, and safe.



"Never climb near power lines."

Penelope Poppen

Penelope warns readers to never climb near power lines. Thank you for sharing, Penelope! Penelope's parents are Brett and Megan Poppen, members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

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.



THE FAMILY TABLE

ENCHILADA CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

1 lb. hamburger
1 medium onion, chopped
1 green pepper, chopped
1 can (10 oz.) enchilada sauce
6 tortilla shells
1 cup shredded cheese
1 can pinto beans

Method

In a glass baking dish, put the browned hamburger, onion, pepper, beans and sauce in shells and roll up. Layer with shredded cheese on top. Bake 20 minutes in oven.
Optional: Use 1 cup of sliced black olives on top of cheese

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

PARTY IN A PAN

Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. hamburger, browned
1 can cream of celery soup
1 can cream of chicken soup
1 box Stove Top Stuffing Mix
1 can corn, drained
3 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Method

Combine the hamburger, celery soup and chicken soup in a bowl and set aside.
Prepare the Stove Top Stuffing as directed on the box. Layer half the hamburger mixture, half the corn, half the stuffing, and half the cheese; repeat layers again. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350°F or until cheese is melted.
Makes a 9x13-inch pan.

Kathy Zomer
Douglas Electric

BEEF TERIYAKI

Ingredients:

1lb. boneless beef sirloin steak
2 tbsp. cornstarch
14 oz. beef broth
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp. brown sugar
1/4 tsp. garlic powder
3 cups broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups rice
1 2/3 cups water

Method

Cook the rice in water according to the directions on the bag.
Slice beef in very thin strips. In a large skillet, saute the beef strips until browned and the juices evaporate.
In a mixing bowl, combine cornstarch, beef broth, soy sauce, brown sugar and garlic powder. Mix thoroughly.
Add the liquid mixture and broccoli florets to the beef. Cook until mixture boils & thickens to a desired consistency, stirring frequently.
Serve over the cooked rice.

Karen Soulek
Charles-Mix Electric

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture from Shutterstock.

Financial Report

Statement of Operations – Fiscal Year Ending July 31, 2026 unaudited

Assets	
Electric Plant in Service	$91,949,463
ConstructionWorkinProgress	$78,223
Total Electric Plant	$92,027,686
LessReserveforDepreciation	$34,579,512
Net Electric Plant	$57,448,174
Investments in Associate Organizations	$8,043,389
Other Investments	$1,761,805
Total Other Investments	$9,805,194
Cash - General Fund	$336,682
Cash - Construction Fund	$0
Temporary Investments	$1,713,764
Accounts Receivable (Less Uncollectibles)	$2,006,001
Material and Supplies	$1,332,632
Prepayments	$195,555
Interest Receivable	$16,436
Total Current Assets	$5,601,070
Deferred Charges	$196,620
Other Accounts Receivable	$0
Total Assets	$73,051,058

Equities	
Patronage Capital	$29,014,982
Other Equities	$1,979,539
Total Equities	$30,994,521

Statement of Operations	
Total Operating Revenue	$19,033,331
Total Operating Expenses	$14,213,223
Depreciation Expense	$2,377,501
Interest on Long Term Debt	$1,258,223
Other Deductions	$50,790
Total Cost of Electric Service	$17,899,737
Electric Operating Margins	$1,133,594
G&TandOtherCapitalCredits	$637,434
Net Margins	$1,771,027

Long-Term Liabilities	
Long-TermDebt–RUS&CFC	$38,029,923

Current/Non-Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	$1,290,030
Customer Deposits	$510,115
Taxes	$448,072
Other Current Liabilities	$210,308
Total Current Liabilities	$2,458,525

Facts and Figures ENDING JULY 31, 2026	
Number of Members	5,912
Number of Meters	7,682
Miles of Line	1,550
Transmission Line	63
Underground Line	889
Overhead Line	598
MetersperMileofLine	4.87
New Services – 2025	160
Outage Time (Minutes per meter per year)	93

Taxes Paid	
Gross Revenue Tax	
Meade County	$18,686
Lawrence County	$119,346
Butte County	$50,435
City of Newell	$919
City of Spearfish	$124,412
City of Sturgis	$11,391
CityofBelleFourche	$9,652
City of Whitewood	$133
City of Deadwood	$1,148
Total	$336,122
2025 Real Estate Tax	
Butte County	$31,810
Lawrence County	$6,106
Meade County	$7,115
Total	$45,031



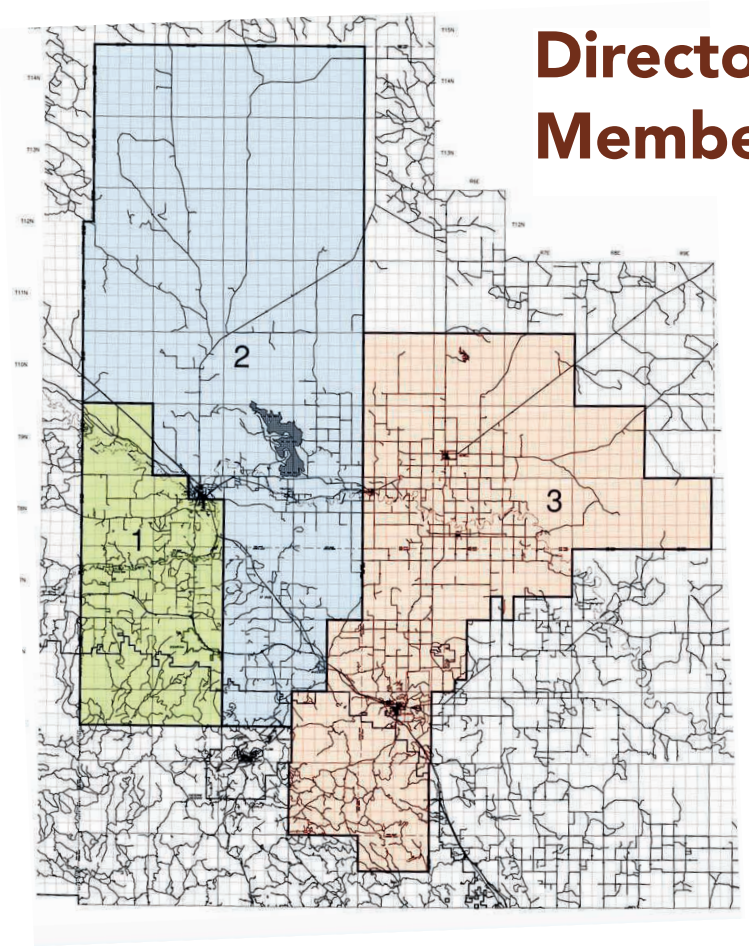
Residential $10,710,330
Large Commercial..... $4,314,201
Small Commercial..... $1,945,072
Irrigation and Grain $988,258
Seasonal..... $348,651
Other $726,818



Cost of Power $9,537,150
Distribution Expense $2,728,720
Depreciation..... $2,377,501
Administrative & General Expense ... $1,619,461
Customer Accounts Expense..... $415,516
Customer Service & Info Expense ... $101,351
Transmission Expense..... ($188,975)
Other..... $50,789

Total Operating Revenue: $19,033,331

Total Operating Expenses: $14,213,223



Directors Elected by the Members to Serve

The Butte Electric Cooperative board of directors consists of nine directors, elected by the cooperative's membership, who represent one of the cooperative's three districts. Each year at the annual meeting, cooperative members elect a director to represent each district for a three-year term. This year, the director seats held by Cris Miller, Chandy Olson, and Dan Hefner are up for re-election.

DISTRICT 1



James Mortenson
Spearfish



Cris Miller
Spearfish

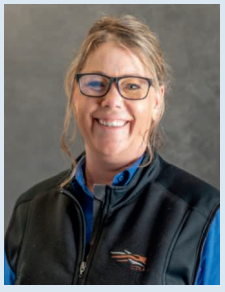


Travis Schenk
Spearfish

DISTRICT 2



Dan Marrs
Spearfish



Chandy Olson
St. Onge

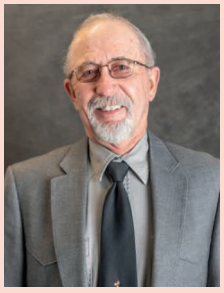


Tom Brunner
Nisland

DISTRICT 3



Steve Smeenk
Newell



Dan Hefner
Whitewood



Jessica Casteel
Vale



HONORING OUR HEROES

Veterans Memorial Undergoing Revamp

The WWII memorial on Capitol Lake shows soldiers saluting the American flag after battle. Later, after the Korean and Vietnam soldier statues and walls were added beneath the flag, the WWII veterans appear to salute them too. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Lee Leuning's father was about 80 when he sat in his son's sculpting studio to become the sailor at South Dakota's World War II memorial.

For three days, Leuning studied his face and shaped his features. His father slowly began talking about the war. After 50 years, the experience still weighed heavy.

Today, more than 25 years later, Leuning's father stands immortalized in bronze on the shore of Capitol Lake in Pierre, representing sailors like himself who served in World War II.

He stands among five other slightly larger-than-life statues representing members of the U.S. armed forces. The display, called "Why We Fought," depicts the service members in tattered uniforms saluting toward the American flag.

"It's soldiers in each individual moment stepping out of battle and recognizing the flag and what they fought for," Leuning said.

A member of Northern Electric Cooperative, Leuning created the figures with fellow sculptor Sherri Treeby. Visitors to Pierre will find their work throughout the city, including statues along the Trail of Governors and a relief plaque commemorating the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge. At Capitol Lake, their sculptures honor veterans of World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Several of the World War II figures have family connections. Leuning used his mother's likeness for the army corps mechanic – she served as a plane mechanic in WWII – and his sons as models for the pilot and Marine. Treeby's father, an Army veteran, provided the face of the Coast Guardsman.

The WWII memorial was the first memorial unveiled, dedicated by Gov. Bill Janklow just four days after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Leuning recalls being amazed by the turnout – thousands of visitors were at the Capitol for the dedication.

He remembers one Navy veteran watching the dedication parade from a hospital bed with an attendant.

"Every time a flag came by with an honor guard … that guy would have his aide get him out of the bed, and he'd snap to attention," Leuning said. "That, to me, showed this really means something to them."



Recent renovation improved water drainage. Previously, water under the granite tiles caused loosening. The tiles have since been replaced with sod grass. The stream bed was also replaced. *Photo by Jacob Boyko*

Subsequent dedications for the Korean and Vietnam memorials during Gov. Mike Rounds' administration attracted even more visitors. The state estimated 32,000 people attended the two-day Vietnam dedication in 2006. Some veterans watched the ceremony from pontoon bridges on Capitol Lake.

Unfortunately, years of exposure have taken a toll on the site. Trapped water beneath the granite tiles caused some to loosen and crumble, explained Leah Haugan, Special Projects Coordinator for the South Dakota Bureau of Human Resources and Administration.

"Try as we might to keep it in great shape, you can't keep up with deteriorating stone," Haugan said.

Over the summer, the state began work on a renovation project for the memorials, which will bring some changes to the site.

Sections of granite have been replaced with grass. The military seals embedded in the walkway were lifted out and placed on pedestals. The stream from the Artesian well remains, but it's now bordered by a concrete curb. The granite tiles around the fountain were upgraded from ¾ inch thick tiles to 2 inch thick tiles, and the fountain enclosure was remade with concrete and granite tiles around the top.

Restoring the site is part of the state's commitment to honoring veterans and their service, Haugan said.

"Words are words, but when you build something like that that memorializes their efforts and their sacrifice, I think that shows them there's proof positive that we recognize and honor them," Haugan said.

The renovation does not bring back the Flaming Fountain's flame. Methane rising from the artesian well that feeds Capitol Lake kept the flame burning for decades, but it went out around 2015 when the flow could no longer sustain it. Haugan said a more ambitious fountain project is among the ideas for the site, depending on funding.

A separate proposal would honor Native American code talkers who served in World Wars I and II using their native languages to transmit messages that enemy forces were not able to translate. Funding for that memorial also remains unresolved.

Visiting the memorials, Leuning has seen what that recognition can mean to a family. The day after the Vietnam memorial dedication, he returned to take photos and was approached by a woman asking him to take her picture. He obliged, and the lady went up to the bronze statue and hugged it.

"She said, 'That's my Davy. It looks just like my Davy.'"

Then she pointed to her husband's name on the wall.



Leuning's Vietnam War memorial.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



Sculptor Lee Leuning with his dad, Donald Leuning, at the World War II Veterans Memorial dedication Sept. 15, 2001, in Pierre.
Photo submitted by Lee Leuning



An estimated 32,000 people attended the Vietnam War Memorial dedication in 2006.
U.S. Airforce Photo by 1st Lt. Carrie L. Kessler

Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.
85TH ANNUAL MEETING
October 21, 2025 • Belle Fourche, South Dakota

The Eighty-Fifth Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. was called to order at 5:00 p.m., on October 21, 2025, at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center in Belle Fourche, South Dakota, pursuant to an official notice mailed to all members of the Cooperative at their last known address as shown on the records of the Cooperative.

Thomas Brunner, Secretary of the Board of Directors, advised there were 321 members registered and declared a quorum was present.

Cris Miller, President of the Board of Directors, called the 85th Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. to order.

Secretary Brunner gave the invocation.

Secretary Brunner introduced Matt Sleep, CEO of Butte Electric.

CEO Sleep led the Pledge of Allegiance, recognized all the Veterans in attendance, welcomed all in attendance to the 85th Annual Meeting, and called Cris Miller, Board President and Angie Alexander to come up and prepare the membership for the first round of Bingo.

Director Jessica Casteel and Angie Alexander conducted the first round of Bingo with a $100.00 bill credit awarded to the winner.

Secretary Brunner read the Official Notice and the Affidavit of Mailing of the Notice.

President Miller asked if the members would like the minutes of last year's meeting read or if someone would make a motion to dispense with the reading and approve the minutes. A motion was made, seconded, and carried to dispense with the reading of the minutes and approved them as presented.

Travis Schenk, Treasurer of the Board of Directors, presented the Financial Report for the previous year. Treasurer Schenk pointed out that total revenue from energy sales was $17 million for the year. Operating expenses were $15.9 million. Net investment in Utility Plant is just over $1.6 million this year. Long-term debt is $39.8 million while the total electric plant owned is just over $89 million. In 2025, the number of meters reached 7,438.

President Miller asked for a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement as presented. A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements as presented.

President Miller drew a member's name for a $100.00 bill credit.

President Miller gave his annual address to the membership.

CEO Sleep gave his annual address to the membership.

Director Jessica Casteel and Angie Alexander conducted the second round of Bingo with a $200.00 bill credit awarded to the winner.

President Miller called on Attorney Ronda Miller to preside over the election. After introducing the members of the election and credentials committee, Attorney Miller called on the Chairman of the Committee to read the Certificate of the Credentials Committee.

Petitions were submitted by:

District 1 - James Mortenson

District 2 - Dan Marrs

District 3 - Steve Smeenk

Attorney Miller asked for a motion for unanimous ballot for James Mortenson, Dan Marrs, and Steve Smeenk. A motion was made and seconded. Attorney Miller called for a vote and the motion passed.

Attorney Miller proceeded with the declaration of the election and turned the meeting back over to President Miller.

President Miller drew a name for the pre-registration $200.00 bill credit.

Secretary Brunner reported on the Butte Electric Scholarship program. Secretary Brunner introduced the four 2025 scholarship winners along with the two 2024 annual meeting scholarship winners. Director Olson had the honor of drawing for three 2025 Annual Meeting attendance scholarships, one for $1,000.00 and two for $500.00.

Director Jessica Casteel and Angie Alexander conducted the second round of Bingo with a $300.00 bill credit awarded to the winner.

President Miller called for any unfinished business. There was no unfinished business.

President Miller called for any new business. There was no new business.

President Miller drew for a prize for a lucky member who completed updated their contact information tonight and then drew for a lucky member who signed up for access to Smart Hub tonight. A door prize drawing was conducted for all the items that had been donated by businesses who do business with Butte Electric.

President Miller drew a name for the pre-registration $300.00 bill credit.

President Miller thanked all for attending.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn the meeting.

Cris Miller, President

Thomas Brunner, Secretary

CERTIFICATE OF SECRETARY

I, Thomas Brunner, do hereby certify that I am the duly elected, qualified Secretary of the Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (hereinafter called the 'Cooperative'); that the foregoing is a complete and correct copy of the original minutes entered in the Minute Book of the Cooperative of the meeting of its members held October 21, 2025, that at the meeting a quorum of the members was present and acted throughout; and the resolutions contained in the minutes of the aforementioned meeting have not been modified or rescinded.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name as Secretary and affixed the Corporate Seal of the Cooperative this 20th day of October 2026.

Thomas Brunner, Secretary

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF BUTTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. 86TH ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Membership Meeting of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. will be held October 20, 2026, at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center, Butte County, Belle Fourche, South Dakota beginning at 6:00 p.m. to take action on the following matters:

1. Report on the number of members present in person in order to determine the existence of a quorum.
2. Reading of the notice of the meeting and proof of the due publication or the mailing thereof, or the waivers of notice of the meeting, as the case may be.
3. Reading of unapproved minutes of previous meetings of the Members and the taking of necessary action thereon.
4. Election of Directors and bylaw changes.
5. Presentation and consideration of reports of Officers, Directors, and Committees.
6. Unfinished Business.
7. New Business.
8. Adjournment.

_____

Thomas Brunner, Secretary

Statement of Ownership

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10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.)

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc.	PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760

11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box → ☐ None

Full Name	Complete Mailing Address
Rurall Utilities Service	Washington, DC, 20250

12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes:
☐ Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
☐ Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)

13. Publication Title	14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below
Butte Electric Cooperative Connections	10-01-26

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation			Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)				
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1)	Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	5412	5431
	(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
	(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®		
	(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))			5412	5431
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1)	Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541	38	39
	(2)	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541		
	(3)	Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail)		
	(4)	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))			38	39
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)			5450	5470
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))			10	10
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)			5460	5480
i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100)			99%	99%

16. Electronic Copy Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Paid Electronic Copies		
b. Total Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		
c. Total Print Distribution (Line 15f) + Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a)		
d. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100)		

☐ I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

17. Publication of Statement of Ownership
☑ If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the November issue of this publication. ☐ Publication not required.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Matthew R. Sleep, CEO — Date: 09-29-2026

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



How a Youth Tour Friendship Changed Marty Larsen's Life

The 1969 South Dakota Youth Tour group. Marty Larsen is pictured in the top row, seventh from the right. John Nordlie is pictured in the top row, fifth from the left. *Photo courtesy from the SDREA Archives*

Frank Turner
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When Marty Larsen earned a spot on the 1969 Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., through Turner-Hutchinson Electric Cooperative, he had every reason to believe dairy farming would remain at the center of his life. Turner-Hutchinson, a predecessor of today's Southeastern Electric Cooperative, served the area around his family's dairy farm seven miles west of Hurley.

Youth Tour gives high school students sponsored by their local electric cooperatives the chance to spend a week in Washington, D.C., visiting historic sites, learning about government and electric cooperatives and meeting students from across the country. South Dakota began sending students on the trip in 1963. Larsen went just six years later.

Back then, Turner-Hutchinson Electric selected its Youth Tour delegates through 4-H, rewarding young people for their accomplishments. In 1969,

Larsen placed eighth at the national 4-H dairy judging competition in Ohio. The accomplishment earned him the cooperative's Youth Tour trip to Washington, D.C.

But before Larsen could make the trip, an Army recruiter threw a wrench in his plans, warning him that he was likely to be called for service soon. Rather than wait to be drafted, Larsen chose to enlist, expecting to head to basic training and then Vietnam.

Not long after, Larsen received an induction notice, but first he had to complete a military physical. Larsen, who is hard of hearing, failed the hearing test and was disqualified from service. Had he passed, he said he would have left for basic training about a week before the 1969 Youth Tour departed.

"Somebody upstairs was looking out for me," he said.

With the Army no longer standing in the way, Larsen was going on the trip. To prepare, his mother bought him new clothes and a new pair of shoes. Even still, he returned home with the soles nearly worn through. At the Washington Monument, he and a small group of students climbed 897 steps rather than wait in the long elevator line, then rode the elevator back down.

Near the end of the trip, the group ate at a seafood restaurant along the Potomac River. Larsen persuaded the chaperones that the students ought to try lobster, something many of them had never eaten before. When the waitress brought lobster bibs to the table, Larsen passed his around and asked everyone to sign it.

His mother later saved the bib in the scrapbook she kept of his childhood, alongside years of 4-H ribbons, judging cards and other keepsakes. Larsen still has the scrapbook today.

The students took an evening cruise on a multilevel paddlewheel-style boat on the Potomac, complete with live music. South Dakota Youth Tour students continue the tradition of a river cruise today aboard the Cherry Blossom.

For Larsen, though, the most important part of Youth Tour was the people he met. One of them was John Nordlie of Sioux Falls, a young photographer who worked with the Argus Leader and later attended Augustana College.

The two became friends during the trip and stayed in contact after returning home.

"We stayed friends after we got back," he said. "I was in his wedding party when he got married. He was in my wedding party when I got married."

For the next several years, Larsen stayed close to the life he knew, working in dairy and welding. Nordlie, meanwhile, developed an interest in pipe organs. In 1983, he called Larsen and asked if he wanted to come work for him building organs for cathedrals and music halls.

Larsen agreed, bringing his experience as a welder, machinist and mechanical problem-solver into a trade he had never expected to enter. He spent the next 20 years working with Nordlie and became deeply involved in the mechanics of organ construction.

His work eventually went far beyond basic fabrication. Larsen built components, developed specialty tools and designed machinery for organ builders. One machine he created transformed a wire-bending process that had taken workers several minutes per piece, allowing them to produce several pieces per minute. Other tools he built ended up with organ companies elsewhere in the United States and overseas.

The work also took Larsen far beyond southeastern South Dakota. Over the years, he traveled throughout the country and to Japan, worked on historic instruments and helped construct and restore pipe organs in churches, museums and other settings. More than four decades after entering the trade, he is still involved in restoration work.

Looking back, Larsen can draw a direct line from the Youth Tour trip to the career that followed. Without the trip, he may never have met Nordlie. Without that friendship, the call inviting him into organ building may never have come.

"It meant a lot to me to be able to go on that trip," Larsen said. "It changed me from a dairy farmer to a pipe organ builder."

More than 50 years later, Larsen still has the scrapbook his mother kept from the trip, along with the signed lobster bib awnd other reminders of that week in Washington. But the most lasting thing he brought home was the friendship that, years later, opened the door to a life he never could have planned.



Marty Larsen and his wife, Barbara.
Photo by Frank Turner

Interested in attending Youth Tour?
Contact your local electric cooperative to learn more about the application process.



A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Volunteers cook hundreds of meals for community members in Marshall, Minn.
Photo submitted by Teri Hively

Thanksgiving Meals Bring Neighbors Together in Marshall and Murdo

Frank Turner
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Across the Midwest, Thanksgiving has a way of becoming a community project. By late November, church kitchens, senior centers and fellowship halls fill with volunteers roasting turkeys with all the fixings for neighbors who need a meal or simply somewhere to spend the holiday. Nearly every town seems to have its own version. In Marshall, Minn., and Murdo, S.D., community Thanksgiving meals have lasted for decades.

Marshall, Minnesota

In Marshall, a community Thanksgiving dinner has grown from 35 meals served out of crockpots into an annual event that reached more than 900 people last year. Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative member Teri Hively of Balaton, Minn., has been involved from the beginning and now leads the meal through Grace Life Church in Marshall.

The dinner started 35 years ago when Hively's late mother-in-law, inspired by God's vision, began to prepare a Thanksgiving meal for the community. Her idea came with a standard that still guides volunteers today: serve great food for a great community.



Kelly Deutz, left, and Teri Hively coordinate the Thanksgiving community meal in Marshall, Minn.
Photo submitted by Teri Hively

That standard means real turkey, real potatoes and a home-cooked meal served on glass plates with real silverware.

"I want it to be a home-cooked meal," Hively said. "I want it to feel like you're at home."

The Thanksgiving dinner requires months of planning and a network of volunteers. Hively and Kelly Deutz begin organizing in August, lining up cooks, servers, donations and the smaller jobs that need to be finished before Thanksgiving Day. Deutz helps organize all the volunteers and delivery routes.

The cooking begins days before anyone sits down to eat. Volunteers arrive at the start of the week to peel fresh potatoes while another group handles setup the day before Thanksgiving. When the big day arrives, even more volunteers fill the kitchen to set up serving lines, dessert tables and a proper dining area.

Some volunteers cook turkeys at home. Others donate pies or pans of bars, while local businesses and private donors provide ingredients and money. Hively estimates that more than 200 people contribute to the dinner each year.

"I could never do it alone," Deutz said. "It takes many hands to make that happen. I just happen to be the piece that helps drive it forward."

Luckily, feeding a crowd is familiar work for Hively, who spent more than 12 years working in catering.

Service is familiar to Hively, too. She has been an EMT for 37 years and a firefighter for 32 years, including volunteer service with the Balaton Fire Department, Balaton Ambulance and Tyler Ambulance.

In 2014, Hively's mother-in-law told her she was ready to step back and pass leadership of the dinner to Teri. Soon after, Hively's mother-in-law passed away unexpectedly, and Hively took over the following year in her memory.

"I took the lead role, not knowing I was going to be in charge without her," Hively said. "But I wasn't worried because I had been there every step along the way, so I knew what the meal entailed from beginning to end."

Today, the meal remains open to anyone, regardless of income or circumstance, and volunteers also deliver meals to older residents and those who are homebound. Some people need the food, Hively explained, while others simply need somewhere to spend Thanksgiving.

Hively's children grew up helping with the dinner, and now her grandchildren are taking part. She finds jobs for families with young children so they can help, too.

"Be the hands and feet of Jesus," said Hively.

Murdo, South Dakota

In Murdo, the Thanksgiving dinner began about 20 years ago with Joe Connot, who worked at West Central. When Connot retired, the Murdo Lions Club took over and continued serving the meal at the local senior center.

The club sponsors the dinner, and members cook the turkeys and help serve. The senior center provides the space and prepares the rest of the meal. Murdo Lions Club President Travis Van Dam said about 75 people usually attend, not including those who receive deliveries.

Van Dam joined the Lions Club after watching his father volunteer with the organization and wanting to do the same for Murdo.

"There's not a lot to do in our little town, so it's just something that we can do to provide for the community," said Van Dam.

The dinner is meant for people who do not want to cook, cannot cook or may not have family nearby. Volunteers also deliver meals around Murdo, including to employees at businesses that remain open on Thanksgiving.

Last year, Van Dam used Facebook to collect meal requests and organize deliveries.

"Just helping – it just feels good to help somebody and give them a meal," he said.

Freewill donations collected at the dinner help fund local service projects. Much of the club's fundraising supports Caring and Sharing, which helps people facing illness pay for travel, medical care, food and hotel stays.

Club members also help with community cleanup, sponsor a movie day for students, collect eyeglasses and volunteer at school sporting events.

"As long as we keep getting the turnout and people appreciate it, we'll keep doing it," he said.

In Marshall and Murdo, volunteers keep showing up to cook, serve and make sure their neighbors have a place around the Thanksgiving table.



Bruce Vennard (left) and other volunteers with the Murdo Lions Club serve a Thanksgiving meal for their local community.
Submitted Photo



NOV. 7
Wine, Cheese & Chocolate Stroll
Deadwood, SD
www.deadwood.com/events/

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.

OCT. 31
Hill City Main Street Merchant Trick-or-Treat
3-5 p.m.
Hill City, SD

OCT. 31
Merchant Trick-or-Treat
4-6 p.m.
Hot Springs, SD

NOV. 1
Kadoka Holiday Festival
10 a.m.-4 p.m. (MST)
Lunch 11 a.m.-1 p.m.
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

NOV. 6-8
Hill City Girlfriends' Weekend
Hill City, SD

NOV. 7
Roast Beef Supper & Live Auction
5 p.m.
Fairburn Community Ctr. Bazaar
Fairburn, SD
605-255-4807

NOV. 7
Black Hills Meat Fest
Free Admission
Central States Fairgrounds
Nerdy Nuts Expo Hall
Rapid City, SD
Facebook.com/BlackHillsMeatFest

NOV. 7
Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair – We've got Your Six
10:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Doors Open 9:30 a.m.
Sturgis Community Center
Sturgis, SD
605-645-3719

NOV. 14-15
Zonta Holiday Craft & Vendor Show
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Ramkota Hotel
Pierre, SD

NOV. 21
Hill City Christmas Tree Lighting
Hill City, SD

NOV. 21
Lille Norge Fest
8 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Canyon Lake Activity Center
2900 Canyon Lake Dr.
Rapid City, SD
borgundlodge.org

NOV. 21
Evergreen Bazaar
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Eras Event Center
Hill City, SD

NOV. 27 (THRU JAN)
Trees & Trains Exhibit
S.D. State Railroad Museum
Hill City, SD

NOV. 27
Snacks With Santa
2-4 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

NOV. 27
Olde Tyme Christmas Parade
6 p.m.
Main Street
Hill City, SD

NOV. 27
Olde Tyme Christmas
Participating Businesses
Hill City, SD

NOV. 27-28
Kris Kringle Vendor Fair
Fri. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Hill City High School
Hill City, SD

DEC. 4-5
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Civic Center
Hot Springs, SD
951-591-2335

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.