

# Cooperative Connections



**Electricity in the classroom**

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**People behind the power**

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*Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.*

# Committed to a Co-op Culture for All



**John Lee, CEO**

jlee@butteelectric.com

Over the years, you've heard me expound on why and how Butte Electric is different – because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Butte Electric, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

## Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded in 1940, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today 80 years later. Butte Electric was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.

By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

## Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our communities. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our communities. In turn, we invest in our diverse communities base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Butte Electric was founded in 1940, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you – the members we proudly serve – is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all.

**By connecting with us,  
you can get real-time  
updates from your co-op.**

# Butte Electric

## Cooperative Connections

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## Scholarship Applications Due Soon

The deadline is approaching for the 2021 Butte Electric Cooperative \$1,000 scholarship for graduating high school seniors.

Applicants must be U.S. citizens and a dependent of a Butte Electric Cooperative member. He or she must be planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

The recipient will be chosen based on a combination of ACT or SAT scores, overall grade-point average, a personal statement of career goals, a one page essay, and an adult appraisal. Completed applications and supporting documents must be returned to Butte Electric before 3 p.m. on **Friday, February 19, 2021**. The winner will be announced in April.

Applications online at [www.butteelectric.com](http://www.butteelectric.com)  
For more information, call 605-269-0680.

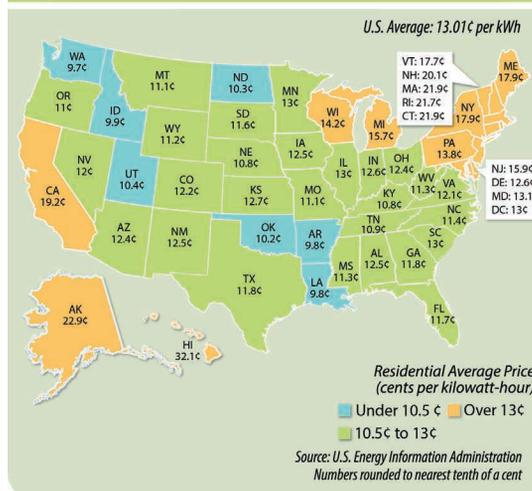


## Rates Worth Celebrating

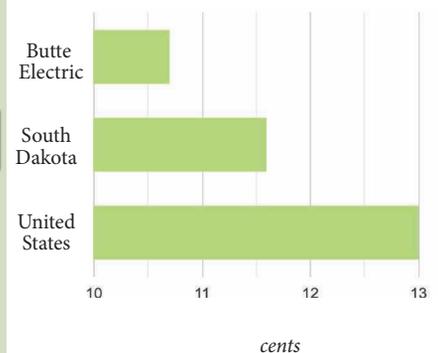
With a mission to provide safe, reliable power at a low cost, our goal is to ensure Butte Electric members get the best value for their dollar. We can proudly say our rates are among the most competitive – not only in the state – but in the country! On average, our members pay about eight percent less than other South Dakotans. Take a look to see how we measure up.

### Average Prices for Residential Electricity

2019 figures, in cents per kWh



### Residential Rate Comparison



The effort to keep rates low is ongoing and a part of the Butte Electric promise. We'll never stop working to save money for our members while continuing to provide industry-leading service.

# Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

## Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at [www.sdrea.coop](http://www.sdrea.coop). You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"**

**Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old**

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, members of Southeastern 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.

# Recipes to Power Up Your Day

## Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

**Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD**

## Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

**Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD**

## Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

**culinary.net**

## Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

**Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD**

Please send your favorite seafood recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Which Appliance Should I Upgrade?



**Pat Keegan**

Collaborative Efficiency

**When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts.**

**Dear Pat and Brad: My husband and I just bought a home that was built in the 1970s. The kitchen appliances are so old that they may be originals, but we only have enough money for one appliance upgrade. Which appliance replacement will help reduce our energy bills the most? – Jessica**

Dear Jessica: You're smart to consider energy use as you look at replacing appliances because most new appliances use much less energy than they did in the past. Manufacturers have found innovative ways to reduce appliance energy use without sacrificing performance. The federal government began tightening appliance standards in the 1980s and has continued as technological innovations became more cost-effective.

It may seem like the oldest appliance should go first. That may make sense if you want the looks and features of a newer oven or dishwasher. But with most appliances, the energy savings you get from a new one will take several years to pay for itself with the energy saved.

The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator. An older fridge can cost about \$20 to run every month. Replacing an old fridge with a new ENERGY STAR®-rated model can cut that down to less than \$5 a month. The ENERGY STAR® label certifies that the appliance saves energy. New refrigerators will include an additional label, the Energy Guide label, which shows how much energy it uses annually and compares that to the most and least efficient models available. It's also possible to measure how much energy your fridge is using with a kWh meter. Energy auditors use these meters to measure energy use for common household appliances. Sometimes the energy use of an older fridge can be reduced by replacing the seal around the door.



**The appliance replacement most likely to produce the greatest energy savings is your refrigerator.**

When you're looking to replace an old fridge, style counts. A top-freezer setup is the most efficient, while a lower-freezer unit offers medium savings, and a side-by-side style is the least energy efficient.

If your goal is to save money on your energy bill, resist the urge to keep the old fridge in the basement or garage - that won't help you reduce your energy use. An old fridge in an uninsulated garage on a hot summer day can use a lot of energy. Maybe you just need more freezer space. If so, we recommend the most efficient freezer you can find. You can find recommendations on [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

If your current fridge is in good condition, another appliance you may want to consider upgrading is the dishwasher. With most of us spending more time at home these days, chances are you're using your dishwasher more than you used to.

As with any major purchase, be sure to read customer reviews for any brands and models you're considering, and look for additional opportunities to save money, like an upcoming Presidents Day appliance sale.

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape. For additional energy tips and information on Collaborative Efficiency visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips)

# Legendary Performer Gary Mule Deer - and His Pompadour - are Still Going Strong

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Just like his trademark pompadour, Gary Mule Deer is still standing tall and proud after all these years. Thanks to the wondrous super holding power of Kenra 25, Mule Deer is still taking the stage with his skyscraper hairdo and delivering the sharp wit and old-school country music that have made him a South Dakota entertainment icon.

Going strong at 81, Mule Deer is one of the first to be amazed that he continues to have the stamina to do hundreds of shows a year (pre-pandemic) after six decades in the business. Not that he's prone to just let himself go. Despite some age-related medical issues, he works hard to keep his physical and spiritual energy up.

"I try to stay as fit as I can," Mule Deer said from his home in Spearfish. "I'm careful about what I eat, and I always pay attention to what I watch on TV or see on the internet. I try to keep things light and stay away from the dark. Tuning into the news any more than necessary can really bring your spirits down."

Mule Deer was part of a 40-show tour with Marty Stuart and The Steve Miller Band – including 24 scheduled appearances at the Grand Ole Opry – when the pandemic brought the tour to a halt. He managed to perform at the Opry last November and returned in January. But it wasn't anything like pre-pandemic days.

"A lot of the fun of doing the Opry is hanging out backstage," he said. "Now you can't just hang out. You have to wear a mask up to the microphone, then you can take it off. After you do your show you have to put the mask back on, go to your locker and grab your stuff and leave."

Mule Deer said he is happy to comply with the rules to help contain the virus. He recently lost one of his long-time friends and fellow country music stars, Charlie Pride, to the disease.

"Charlie was a real legend. We had just

done the Opry together last February. My wife Nita and I were great friends with him and his wife, Rozene. He could not have been a nicer guy and a true gentleman," Mule Deer said. "This disease is scary, but the scariest thing to me is that some people still think it's all a hoax."

Mule Deer also stays busy helping his son, Shawn Michael Bitz, promote the budding novelist's new book, *The Slim Chance*

"I always thought 'adult humor' wasn't very grown up," he said. "You can tell what kind of laughter comes out of people who respond to clean humor and 'blue' humor. When you're entertaining to make people happy and not just shock them, you can hear the difference. My type of humor brings a healthier kind of laughter. It comes from the gut and the spirit, where all the good stuff is."



Legendary performer Gary Mule Deer is still going strong entertaining audiences all over the country. Photo courtesy of Jill Jarrett.

Tour: *Stories in the Key of G-Whiz*. Bitz is also author of *Butterfly Pit Crew*. Both books are available on Amazon.

Apart from his 350 TV appearances and sharing the stage with every notable performer from Frank Sinatra to Willie Nelson, he said there are two things he is most proud of: working clean and working for charity.

Audiences can always count on a clean, upbeat show from Mule Deer.

He has also been a solid supporter of a great number of charities. Many of them have been projects also supported by fellow performers such as Pride, Vince Gill, Bing Crosby, and a long list of sports celebrities. The Make-A-Wish Foundation honored Mule Deer with a Walk of Fame star for his fundraising efforts.

Mule Deer signs off with a joke: "I saw a woman the other day riding a bike in Spearfish. I yelled out to her, 'Cow!' She flipped me off. Then she hit the cow."



Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

## ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

### Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@srea.coop

Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

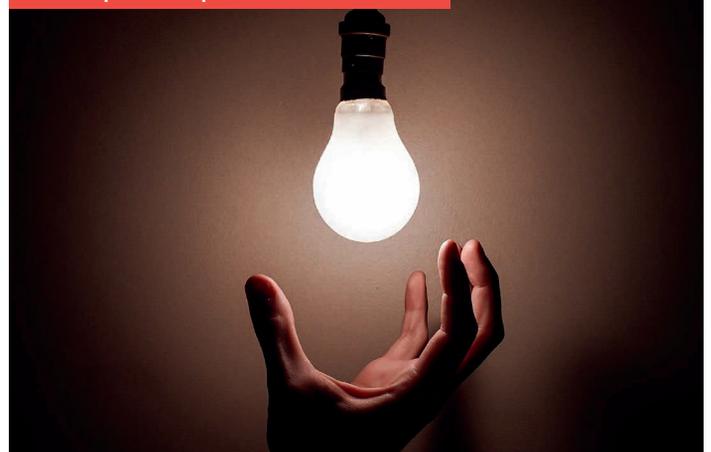
"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

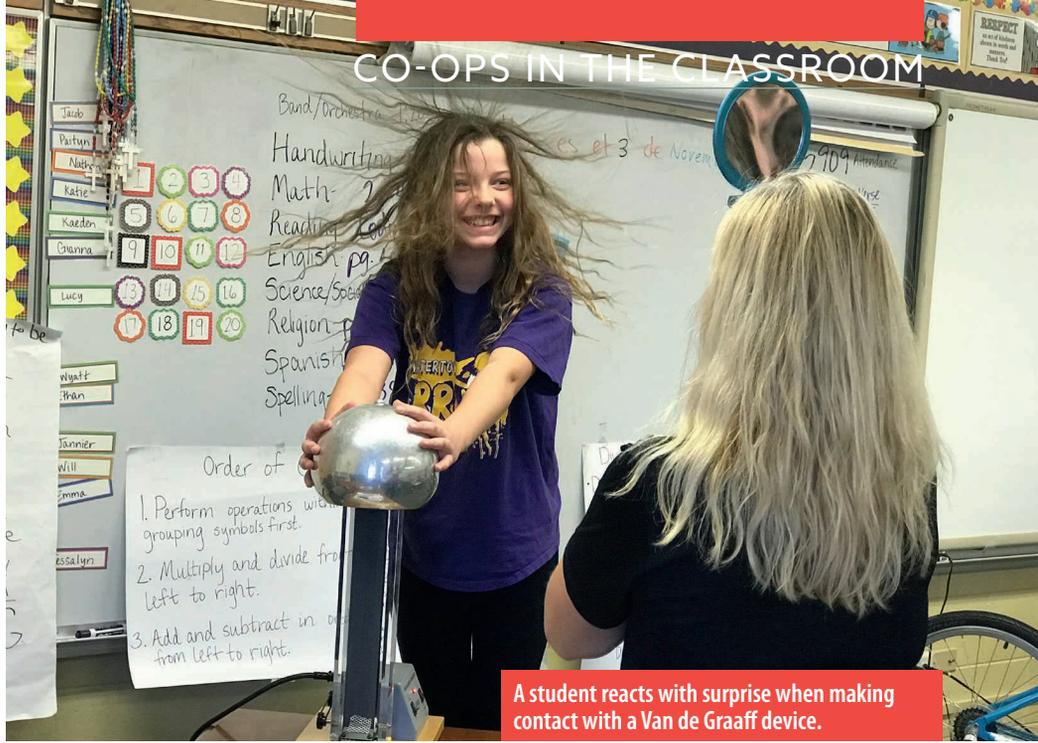
The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.



**“These are things they’re going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It’s a lot to pack into an hour, but it’s important information.”**  
 - Jennifer Gross



A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.

just provide electrical power. We’re here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we’re always here for them if they have questions about electricity.”

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

“It’s something that’s always around them and they deal with all the time,” Heinrich

said. “It’s good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents’ cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, ‘So, this is a bad idea.’ It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices.”

South Dakota’s electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unhar- nessed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s).

Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country’s rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite’s economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: “Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call ‘Neon Leon,’ and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, ‘I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year’s demonstration, my husband is alive.’ That really shows how important it is.”



Science is at the center of learning about how electricity is generated and used.

# Three Tips to Save Energy This Winter

Use these tips below to help you save energy, save money, and stay comfortable during the cold winter months ahead. If you haven't already, conduct an energy audit to find out where you can save the most, and consider making a larger investment for long-term energy savings.

## 1. Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable.

When you are asleep or out of the house, turn your thermostat back 10° to 15° for eight hours and save around 10 percent per year on your heating and cooling bills. A smart or programmable thermostat can make it easy to set back your temperature.

## 2. Replace your HVAC or furnace filter regularly.

Inspect the air filter every month and replace it when it's dirty to ensure optimum airflow and to help the system run more efficiently.

## 3. Stay cozy with extra layers of clothing and an electric blanket.

When temperatures cool down, instead of reaching for the thermostat, reach for an electric blanket. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, electric blankets can be even more cost-effective than space heaters. If you don't have an electric blanket, snuggle up with a cozy blanket.



# WINTER ENERGY-SAVINGS WORD SEARCH

This winter, you can pitch in at home to help save energy!

Read the energy-saving tips below, then find and circle the bolded words in the puzzle.



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

## WORD BANK:

- Open curtains and blinds during the day to allow **sunlight** in to warm your home.
- Instead of turning up the thermostat, add more layers of **clothing** to keep your body warm.
- If you have a **fireplace**, ask an adult to close the flue when a fire is not burning.
- Unplug **chargers** when they're not in use. They consume energy even when they're not charging phones and other devices.
- Ask an adult to check the **air filter** for your home's heating and cooling system. Filters should be replaced regularly to help the system run more efficiently.
- Always turn off **lights** when you leave a room.



Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

# The People Behind the Power

## Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

### Billy Gibson

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With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power

of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

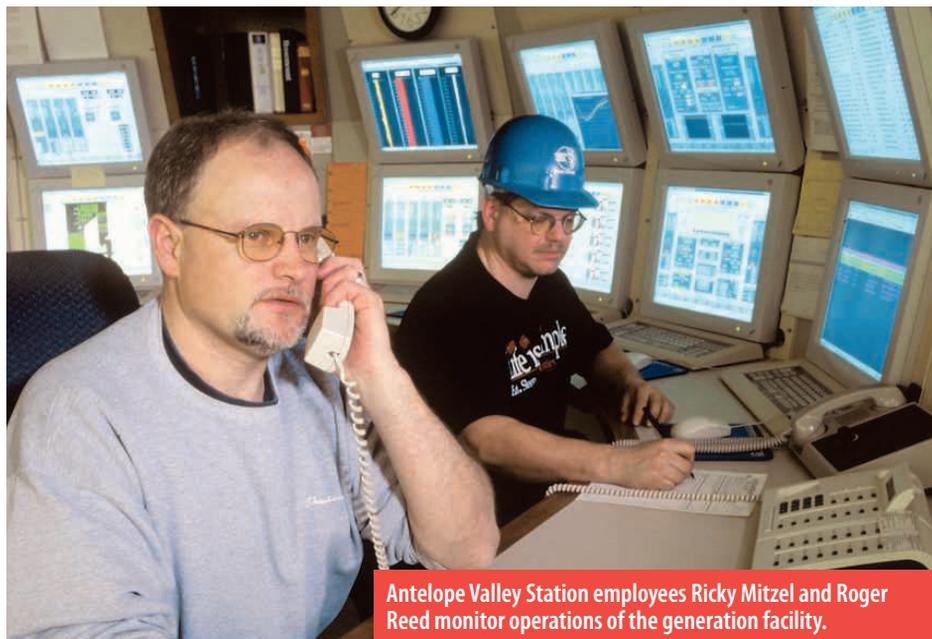
"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."



Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

## DE-STRESSING

### Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

**Billy Gibson**

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

Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."

## Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration

down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.

- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

“When you achieve food freedom, you don’t have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet.” Ching said. “Stress can

lead to overeating. If you’re under stress, don’t reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion.”

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

“Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere,” she said. “I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!”

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at [www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes](http://www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes).

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



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

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**January 18-25**

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD  
605-717-9294

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**January 21-24**

Elf The Musical, Area  
Community Theatre,  
Mitchell, SD  
605-996-9137

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**January 23**

Treasured Lives Presents:  
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD  
1-800-468-6463

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**January 29-30**

Pro Snocross Races, Days  
of '76 Rodeo Grounds,  
Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**January 29-February 6**

Black Hills Stock Show &  
Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD  
605-335-3861

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**January 29-31**

Winterfest, Lead, SD  
605-335-3861

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**February 5-6**

Mardi Gras Weekend,  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**February 10-13**

Watertown Winter Farm  
Show, Codington County  
Extension Complex,  
Watertown, SD  
605-886-5814

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**February 12-13**

SD High School State  
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown  
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

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**February 18**

The Q's High Line to  
Deadwood – A 130-year  
Retrospective, Homestake  
Adams Research and Cultural  
Center, Deadwood, SD  
605-722-4800

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**February 18-25**

Twelfth Annual Black Hills  
Film Festival, Virtual  
605-574-9454

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**February 20-27**

SD State High School  
Wrestling Tournament,  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

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**February 25**

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood  
Live: Neighbor Day,  
Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
Falls, SD  
605-367-6000

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**March 5-6**

SD High School State Debate  
& IE Tournament, Central  
High School, Aberdeen, SD

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**March 12-13**

St. Patrick's Day Weekend,  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**March 13**

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride  
and Tour, Spearfish Canyon  
Lodge, Lead, SD  
605-641-4963

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**March 13**

St. Patrick's Day Celebration,  
Knights of Columbus Hall,  
Watertown, SD  
605-886-5814

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**March 13-14**

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun  
Show, American Legion Hall,  
Philip, SD  
605-859-2280

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**March 19-20**

Annual Schmeckfest,  
Freeman Academy,  
Freeman, SD  
605-925-4237

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**March 23-24**

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center Fine Arts  
Theatre, Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4115

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**March 25**

A Lakota View of the Dead  
Hills, Homestake Adams  
Research and Cultural Center,  
Deadwood, SD  
605-722-4800

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.