A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

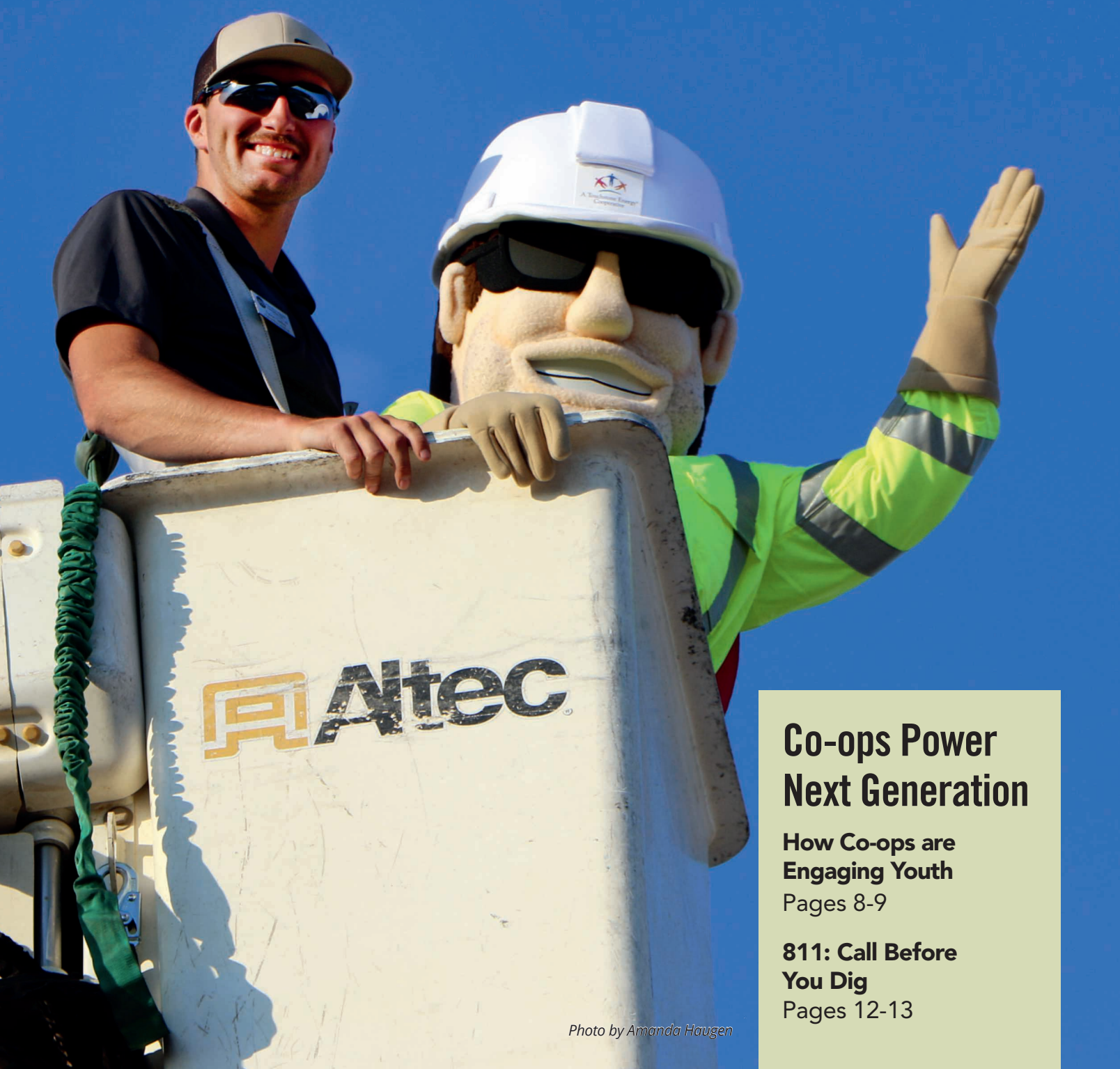

Photo by Amanda Haugen

Co-ops Power Next Generation

Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

Matt Sleep
CEO

February and March brought some of the coldest weather so far this year, and as our home heating systems worked harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Butte Electric, you are provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. Through our SmartHub app you can even see how electricity use may have spiked on days when you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

Fuel Prices

Butte Electric purchases electricity from our power generation partners, Rushmore Electric and Basin Electric, at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partners account for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses—and the cost of fuels that are used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand. While these fluctuations can impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with Rushmore Electric and Basin Electric to plan ahead and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

Extreme Weather

While we cannot control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

Infrastructure and Equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, Butte Electric members pay a monthly availability charge. This monthly flat fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in our service territory. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations, and other essential equipment.

Energy Policy and Regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

You Have Control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce energy use by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, such as early in the morning or later in the evening, to save energy. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors, and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.

COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS
BUTTE ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1531-1031)

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.

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EFFECTIVE WAYS

To Lower Home Energy Use

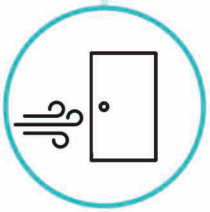
Outside factors, such as fuel and equipment costs and extreme weather, can impact electricity prices. But you have the power to control home energy consumption by taking proactive steps to reduce energy use.

Thermostat Management

The thermostat is one of the best places to lower your energy use because heating and cooling account for a significant portion of home energy consumption. During winter months, adjust your thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting to reduce energy use. The Dept. of Energy recommends 68 degrees or lower.

Utilize Off-Peak Energy Times

Plan energy-intensive chores and tasks, such as running the dishwasher or washing clothing, during off-peak energy hours, when the demand for electricity is lower. Off-peak times are early in the morning or late evenings. By scheduling these activities during off-peak periods, you can help keep rates lower, reduce demand and relieve pressure on the grid.



Seal Your Home

According to ENERGY STAR®, about 20% of heated or cooled air that moves through a home is lost due to lack of proper insulation and air leaks. Ensure your home has sufficient insulation levels and seal air leaks around windows and doors with caulk and weatherstripping. This is a simple, effective way to lower energy use and improve indoor comfort.

Maintain Equipment

The health of your heating and cooling system is essential for comfort and can greatly impact energy bills. Maintain your system by regularly replacing dirty filters and scheduling annual inspections for maintenance and necessary repairs.

Distracted Driving

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Distracted driving is any activity that diverts attention from driving, including talking or texting on your phone, eating and drinking, talking to people in your vehicle, fiddling with the stereo, entertainment or navigation system – anything that takes your attention away from the task of safe driving.

Texting is the most alarming distraction. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

You cannot drive safely unless the task of driving has your full attention. Any non-driving activity you engage in is a potential distraction and increases your risk of crashing.

Consequences

Using a cell phone while driving creates enormous potential for deaths and injuries on U.S. roads. In 2022, 3,308 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

Get Involved

We can all play a part in the fight to save lives by ending distracted driving.

Teens

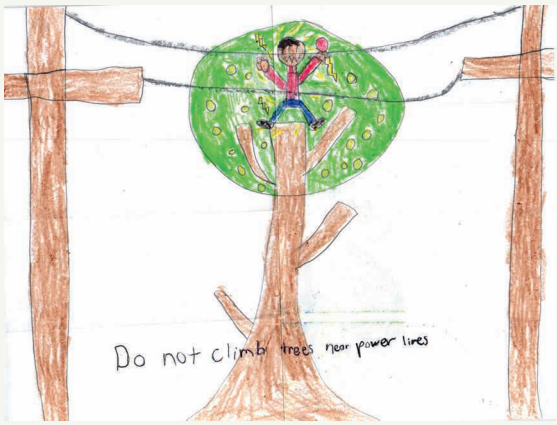
Teens can be the best messengers with their peers, so we encourage them to speak up when they see a friend driving while distracted, to have their friends sign a pledge to never drive distracted, to become involved in their local Students Against Destructive Decisions chapter, and to share messages on social media that remind their friends, family and neighbors not to make the deadly choice to drive distracted.

Parents

Parents first must lead by example – by never driving distracted – as well as have a talk with their young driver about distraction and all of the responsibilities that come with driving. Have everyone in the family sign the pledge to commit to distraction-free driving. Remind your teen driver that in states with graduated driver licensing (GDL), a violation of distracted-driving laws could mean a delayed or suspended license.

Educators and Employers

Educators and employers can play a part, too. Spread the word at your school or workplace about the dangers of distracted driving. Ask your students to commit to distraction-free driving or set a company policy on distracted driving.



"Do not climb trees near power lines."

Naomi Krcil, Age 7

Naomi cautions readers about the dangers of climbing trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Naomi! Naomi's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil, members of Charles Mix Electric Association.

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.

Let's Have BRUNCH

EASY BREAKFAST MUFFIN

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 tsps. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
2 eggs (beaten)
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup milk

Method

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a 12 cup muffin tin with paper liners or spray each cup with cooking spray. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.

Add in eggs, oil and milk and mix only until combined, don't beat or over mix or they will be dry! Fold in 1/2 cup mix-ins if desired.

Scoop into prepared muffin tin and bake for 15 to 18 minutes or just until golden and a toothpick comes clean. Serve with butter and jam.

Lyon-Lincoln Electric Member

UMM BRUNCH

Ingredients:

Scallops
English Muffin
Eggs

Method

Soak scallops in cold water in fridge for two hours, pat dry, sauté in butter and garlic until opaque (approx. 4 min). Put on toasted English muffin. Cook poached eggs in 10-inch skillet with 1 tbsp. vinegar (3-5 mins.) Remove with slotted spoon and drain on paper towel. Add to the scallops and top with Hollandaise Sauce.

Hollandaise Sauce:

Cut 1/2 stick butter into thirds. In double boiler, combine 1 piece of butter and 3 egg yolks, 1 tbsp. lemon juice and 1 tbsp. water. Place it over boiling water and cook while whisking rapidly. Add remaining butter one at a time, continue to cook. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Kari Reder
Northern Electric Member

SAUSAGE AND EGG TACOS

Ingredients:

4 oz. breakfast sausage, casings removed
1 tbsp. perfect pinch roasted garlic bell pepper seasoning
6 eggs
2 tbsps. milk
1 tbsp. butter
6 small flour tortillas, warmed
1/4 cup shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 med. ripe avocado, peeled, pitted and sliced

Method

Heat medium skillet on medium-high heat. Add sausage and Seasoning; cook and stir until sausage is browned and crumbled. Remove sausage from pan; keep warm. Drain fat from pan.

Beat eggs and milk in medium bowl with wire whisk. Melt butter in same skillet on medium heat. Add egg mixture; cook and stir until eggs are firm.

For each taco, place one tortilla on plate. Top with eggs, sausage, cheese and avocado. Sprinkle with additional seasoning, if desired.

McCormick.com

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Prep Now for Summer Savings

Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services Group

Q: How can I prepare my home for lower energy bills this summer?

A: Spring is in the air, and before you know it, summer will be here. There are many ways to get a jump-start on preventing summertime high bills and energy waste.

Add your cooling equipment to the spring-cleaning checklist. An annual tune-up by a heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) professional should include refrigerant charge, airflow adjustment and condenser and evaporator fan coil cleaning. This helps maximize your system's efficiency and the lifespan of your equipment, reducing wasted energy and costs.

Some HVAC companies offer discounts for cleaning equipment during the months when they are less busy. Once high temperatures hit, they are more likely to be swamped with calls to repair or replace broken equipment. Signing up for an annual maintenance plan may provide additional savings.

A dirty furnace filter can waste energy by causing your system to work harder. Make sure you have a stack of replacement filters ready to go so you are more likely to replace them as needed. Filters tend to be less expensive if you buy them in bulk. When I recently shopped for filters for my home, the per-filter price was about half as much for a 12-pack as it was for a two-pack.

Ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-splits, have a filter in the indoor unit, or head, which should be cleaned. If you clean the indoor filter yourself, be sure to turn the unit off before removing the filter and let it dry completely before putting it back.

As we transition from cool to warm weather, keep an eye on your thermostat settings. The Department of Energy recommends setting cooling temperatures to 78 degrees when you are home and higher when you are away. You can save as much as 10% a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day.

One way to feel cooler is using fans in the room you're in during the day or when you're sleeping. Using a fan can make a warm room feel cooler without having to adjust the thermostat. Remember: fans cool people, not rooms. Turn fans off in unoccupied rooms.

If your ceiling fan has a reverse function, make sure you flip the switch so it blows air down into the living space. The reverse function is great at circulating warm air in the winter, and you can maximize the comfort benefit of a fan by switching the flow of air seasonally.

Another consideration before summer hits is your home's impact on peak load—when demand for electricity is highest. This typically occurs in the morning when people are getting ready for work and school, and in the evening when they return home. Your electric cooperative must manage the energy use of all its consumers, which can be a challenge. Consider starting the dishwasher before you go to sleep or starting a load of laundry outside of your utility's peak times.

If you have a photovoltaic solar system, run your dishwasher or do laundry when your system produces the most electricity, which is typically during the sunny mid-day.

Cooking outdoors in summer is a great way to save energy. Using the stove or oven heats your kitchen, which requires more energy for cooling. Get the grill cleaned now so that you are ready to enjoy outdoor cooking.

Incorporate these tips into your summer prep to save energy and lower your bills.

From Dell Rapids to Nashville

Julie Eddy Remembers South Dakota Roots

Jacob Boyko
jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

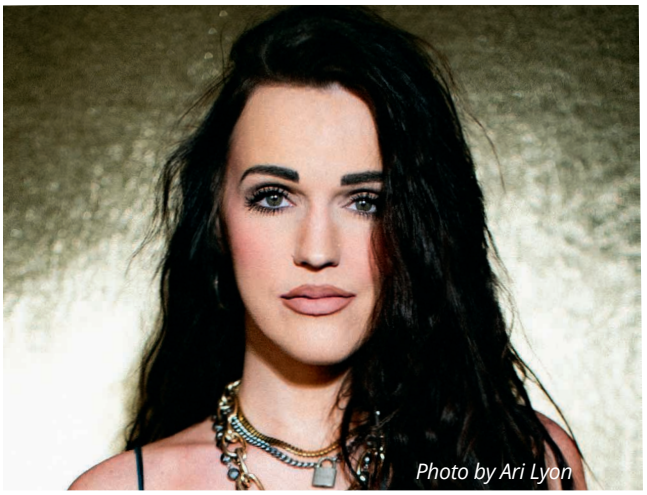


Photo by Ari Lyon

Amid the hustle and bustle of Nashville's legendary music scene, where neon lights shine over the iconic clubs of "Honky Tonk highway," a rising star from South Dakota is making her mark.

Known for songs including "On My Way to You" and "Two Truths & a Lie," Julie Eddy captivates the music scene with her distinctive voice, heartfelt songwriting and energizing performances.

But before the glamour of Music City came years of hard work, dedication and an unshakeable desire for doing what she loved.

Years ago, in the small eastern South Dakota town of Dell Rapids, 10-year old Julie Eddy discovered her love of music.

"My sister had come home after learning how to sing the national anthem at school, and she was singing it for me," Julie recalled. "And of course, as a big sister, I told her, 'You're doing it wrong, this is how you do it.' My mom came around the corner and asked which one of us was singing, and I told her it was me. She said, 'wait a second, that's actually pretty good!'"

With a little encouragement, Julie signed up to sing the national anthem at Dell Rapids high school basketball games.

"That was the first time I had ever sang in front of an audience," she said. "I just loved it – the adrenaline of it, the feeling of it."

It came as no surprise to Julie's mom, Teri, who says her daughter was never shy about performing, regularly enthralling the family living room with performances of Disney movie scenes.

Watching Julie's singing progress from basketball games, to church, to charities, then to weddings, Teri realized that Julie's performances weren't just a hobby anymore.

"That was when we really knew that she had kind of an amazing talent, and really the ability to get up in front of people and perform," Teri explained.

When Julie turned 21, she started singing in bars and restaurants across South Dakota a couple of weekends each month. In 2018, looking for more venues, she moved to Minneapolis.

"I was at every bar, every place that I knew that had music, like begging somebody to get me shows," Julie chuckled. "I was playing four, sometimes five nights a week on top of my day job."

Julie's lucky break came at a songwriting workshop when she entered a writing contest. As a winner, she was invited to Nashville to write with some of the industry's top writers.

In Music City, Julie knew she was home, and in 2021, she moved to pursue her singing career full time.

"I know it sounds corny, but I feel like I wasn't really given a choice," Julie added. "It was just in me, and I fell in love with it."

Since then, Julie has recorded an album, numerous singles, and has become a regular performer in the Nashville music scene.

But diving headfirst into the music industry wasn't without difficulty, Julie found.

"Where I grew up, everyone helps everyone," she explained. "Dell Rapids almost felt familial and you could trust everyone. The world outside Dell Rapids is not like that and sometimes you learn that the hard way."

Julie continued, "In this industry, they say you're going to hear 'no' 100 times before you hear one 'yes,' and you're going to get the door slammed in your face and the rug pulled out from underneath you. I took it with a grain of salt, but it's absolutely true. Those stories you hear about somebody making it overnight or being discovered in a bar have at least 10 or 15 years of work behind them."

But beyond all of the perks of Nashville's music industry, Julie's motivation to sing is a little bit closer to home. It's thinking back to when she was a little girl, driving with her dad in his red Chevy Trailblazer across the plains of eastern South Dakota listening to her old favorites – Shania Twain, Trisha Yearwood and Sarah Evans, for example – as she sang every word, feeling inexplicably happy in those precious moments.

"People will send me videos of my song playing through their car radio, and it's like the most surreal feeling in the world," Julie said. "And I wonder, what if there's a little girl doing that to my song, the same way I fell in love with music?"

There's also some surreality for Teri at times; moments like watching hometown neighbors load onto a bus to watch Julie perform on tour, or when a new single releases and she learns every word, singing along to a voice she cherishes so deeply.

"Julie inspires me, because no matter what anyone says, she has followed her heart and that has led her to the success she has," Teri said. "She's always believed in herself, even at hard moments in her life, but you just knew she would figure it out. That's a pretty amazing thing to see in your kid."

FROM CELEBRATION TO INSPIRATION

Megawatt welcomes members to the football tailgate party hosted by West River Electric. *Photo by Amanda Haugen*

How Electric Co-ops Are Powering the Next Generation

Frank Turner
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April marks Lineman Appreciation Month, the perfect time to spotlight the essential role that electric cooperative employees play in their communities. In line with their commitment to education and community involvement, electric cooperatives are celebrating lineworkers through youth engagement initiatives, and it all stems from one of the electric cooperatives' seven cooperative principles: concern for community. For years, programs such as Cooperatives in the Classroom have provided schoolchildren with innovative, hands-on learning opportunities, demonstrating the critical work electric cooperatives perform in their communities.

Whether it's engaging youth through a Neon Leon safety demonstration or taking students to explore Basin Electric's energy infrastructure during the SDREA Youth Excursion, electric cooperatives across the state are constantly finding new and exciting ways to engage the youth within their communities and inspire the next generation. Below are two new avenues for spurring youth engagement in cooperatives across the state:

Megawatt Mascot

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's Megawatt, Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative's newest lineman mascot. This summer, select electric cooperatives in western South Dakota are suiting up to introduce Megawatt – a friendly-faced lineman adorned with a hard hat, safety gloves and bright red cape – to their members.

"The goal is to get younger kids to start thinking about linemen in a certain way – almost larger than life and the backbone of the electric cooperative," said Rushmore Electric Chief Marketing Officer Matt Brunner. "The hope is that it translates into them considering the lineman profession when they get older."

Megawatt has already made his debut at several member appreciation events, bringing high-energy fun to parades and tailgates as a true champion of the cooperative spirit. So far, Brunner said the mascot has left a big impression.

"The kids and adults have loved it, and the interactions have been great," Brunner said. "If nothing else, it's unique. People are constantly asking, 'Who is that?' The costume does a great job of starting the conversation: what is a lineman, and what do they do?"

Beyond lineworkers, cooperatives offer a diverse range of career paths.

From engineers to accountants, the cooperative world is full of exciting roles that include opportunities in communications, where professionals share the cooperative's achievements and member services, where employees work directly with the community to meet their needs.

Brunner said he expects the idea to continue gaining momentum over the coming months with new avenues of appreciation for linemen and a better understanding of the day in the life of a lineman, as well as other exciting careers in the electric cooperative industry.

STEM Gains Steam

Jennifer Gross, education and outreach coordinator at East River Electric Power Cooperative, has inspired classrooms for years with a variety of engaging demonstrations, covering everything from science to safety. Last year, Gross introduced a new activity to spark curiosity while incorporating STEM – an approach to education that integrates science, technology, engineering and mathematics into learning. The result led to a crafting activity where kids use simple materials to fashion their own wind turbine.

"We are always trying to come up with new ideas for students," Gross said. "Incorporating STEM into this project seemed like a natural fit because both teachers and students are very receptive to it."

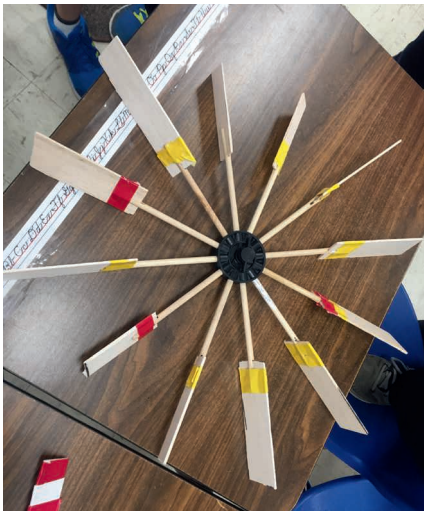
The idea is straightforward. Students construct a small-scale turbine from wooden dowels, fins, and a motor capable of generating power. Once completed, they connect their tiny turbine to a multimeter, which measures the energy generated. Instead of relying on natural wind, students use a fan to simulate a windy day. By altering their model turbines, students can find the optimal design for the best output of energy. And just like that, students can step into the role of engineers.

Megawatt is joined by U.S. Air Force personnel enjoying the Annual Base Picnic.
Photo by Amanda Haugen

Gross said the students and the project have a lot in common. Once the building begins, the students' minds begin to whirl – just like a turbine. The activity prompts question after question: Why does the wind blow? How does a wind turbine work? How does the shape and weight of the blade influence the experiment?

"The students enjoy being engineers for this project," Gross said. "They enjoy having the freedom to choose their materials and design. There's no right or wrong way to do it, and they enjoy that. I mention to the students that careers in wind energy are in high demand and some are 4-year degrees and others are fewer years, but the push for renewable energy sources is growing and our state produces plenty of wind."

Whether it's through a hands-on activity or an engaging mascot, cooperatives aim to not only educate but inspire, ensuring that today's students can become tomorrow's linemen, engineers, communicators or member service representatives. By sparking curiosity and introducing young people to the world of cooperatives early on, they're opening the door to careers that keep communities powered and connected.



This is just one example of how students create wind turbines using materials such as balsa wood, foam, card stock, cardboard and paper cups.
Photo by Jennifer Gross

A Heartfelt Thank You to the Linemen of Butte Electric Cooperative

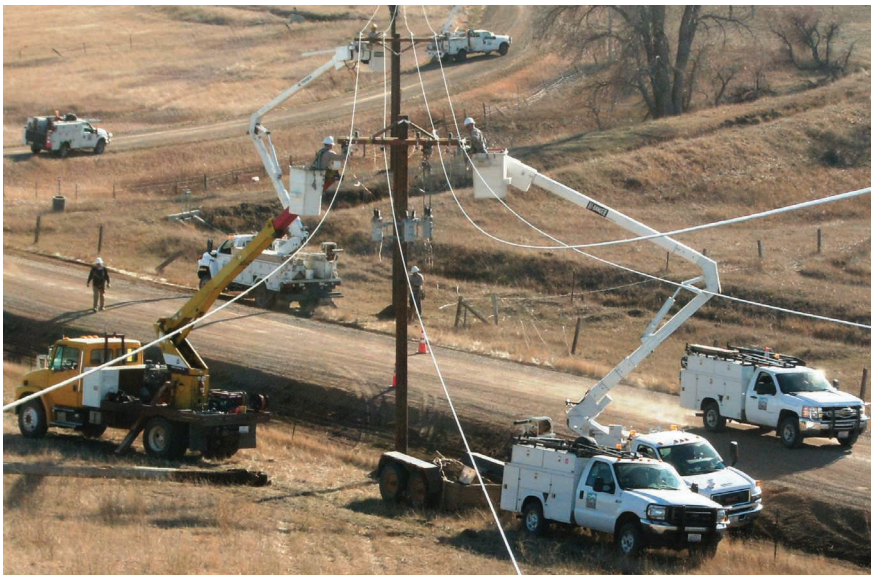
In the rugged landscape of western South Dakota, the linemen of Butte Electric Cooperative are the unsung heroes who keep our communities powered and connected. Working in all kinds of weather, from scorching heat to freezing cold, these dedicated professionals ensure the lights stay on, even in the most challenging conditions.

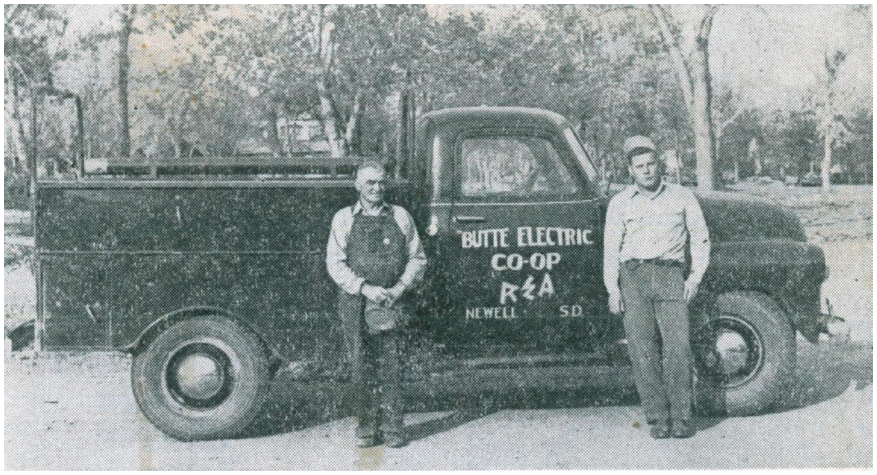
The work of a lineman is physically demanding and requires precision and expertise. Whether they're responding to power outages caused by storms or performing routine maintenance, linemen show up without hesitation, ready to tackle whatever obstacles come their way. In remote areas with harsh weather, their commitment is especially evident as they repair equipment, climb utility poles, and ensure that every job is completed safely and effectively.

Beyond their technical skills, the linemen of Butte Electric Cooperative take great pride in knowing how vital their work is to the community. Without them, everyday life would be disrupted, from keeping homes warm in winter to powering essential services. Their role as first responders during outages ensures that power is restored as quickly and safely as possible.

Teamwork is essential to their success. Linemen collaborate closely to troubleshoot systems, support each other in dangerous conditions, and keep safety a top priority. It's their sense of camaraderie and shared responsibility that makes Butte Electric Cooperative a dependable provider.

To the linemen of Butte Electric Cooperative, we express our deepest gratitude. Your hard work, dedication, and commitment to service are invaluable, and our communities are fortunate to have you.





Technical School Scholarship & Apprenticeship Program

What is the Technical School Scholarship and Apprenticeship Program?

Butte Electric Cooperative will award one scholarship in the amount of $1000 and provide an apprenticeship for 1000 hours. The scholarship check will be made payable to the school and will be distributed by Butte Electric Cooperative.

Who is eligible to receive the Scholarship and Apprenticeship?

Students residing in Butte, Lawrence, and Meade Counties are eligible to receive this scholarship. Butte Electric Cooperative will award a $1000 scholarship and a 1000-hour apprenticeship to a student currently enrolled in or planning to attend a qualified program below:

- Electrical Utilities & Substation Technology
- Power Line Construction & Maintenance
- Utilities Technology-Power Line
- Electrical Construction & Maintenance
- Information Systems Technology
- Telecommunications

The applicant must also be a U.S. citizen. The scholarship will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans, or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

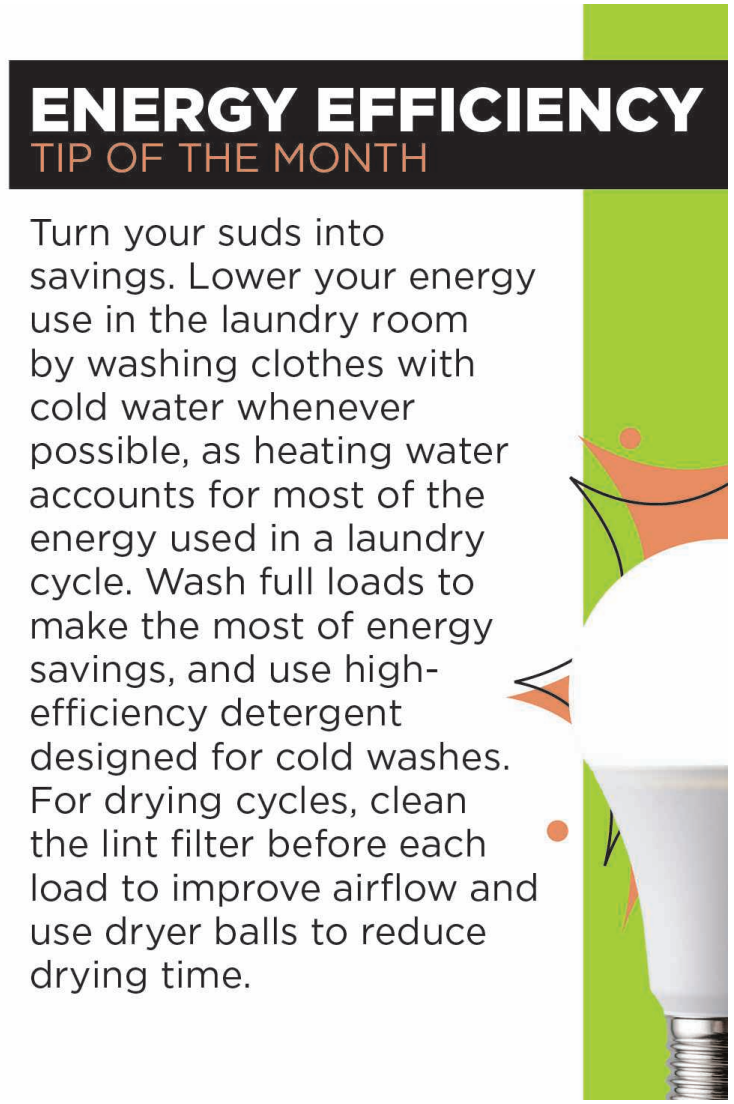
How is the recipient selected?

Applications are judged primarily based on work experience, community involvement, future plans, a letter of recommendation and a written essay. The Scholarship Committee that determines recipients includes three BEC Board Members and three BEC employees.

How Can I Apply?

1. Complete the application below (attach additional sheets if necessary). Please include name and address should be on all attachments. Completeness and neatness ensure your application will be evaluated appropriately.
2. Submit an essay answering the following question: "How does the electricity provided by your electric cooperative improve the quality of life in your community?"
3. Request a Letter of Recommendation have it sent on your behalf to PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760 or to butte@butteelectric.com
4. Send this application and all supporting documentation to Butte Electric Cooperative by April 30, 2025. Butte Electric Cooperative, PO Box 137, Newell, SD 57760

Please contact Angie Alexander at angie@butteelectric.com or (605)456-2494 or contact the Guidance Counselor at your school for more information.



DIGGING SAFELY

Call 811 Before You Dig Every Dig. Every Time.

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Every year, underground utility lines are damaged by homeowners and contractors who dig without calling 811. This single call is a crucial step in any project. Striking a water, gas or power line can cause serious injuries, costly repairs and service outages for an entire neighborhood. Whether you're beginning construction on a major project or are simply planting a tree, calling 811 before you dig is a free and simple solution to what could potentially be considerable damage.

What is 811?

The South Dakota One-Call System, or 811, is a mandatory statewide one-call notification system that was established by South Dakota Statute in 1993. 811 is now recognized as the national "Call Before You Dig" number in the U.S., designed to safeguard people and protect underground utilities. It's a free service that coordinates with your utility providers to help locate and mark underground lines.

Codi Gregg, executive director for South Dakota 811, said, "The main purpose of the program is to avoid digging into any utility and potentially causing a loss of life, loss of property, or any infrastructure buried in the ground."

"We are fully funded by the utilities who want to protect the services they provide," Gregg continued. "It is

South Dakota state law that you contact 811 two business days before you dig."

South Dakota has underground utility lines for electricity, gas, water, sewage and telecommunications. Inadvertently hitting one of these lines could cause power outages, property damage, water contamination, gas leaks, legal liabilities and injury.

Gregg explained that when an excavator makes the 811 call before they dig, utilities receive the locate and have 48 hours to mark all lines in the designated area with color-coded flags or paint.

"If you happen to dig into a utility or find one that was not located while excavating, you have to report that to 811. If you happen to dig into a gas line or anything toxic, you must call 911 first, then 811."

How It Works

Contractors, homeowners, ranchers and farmers can easily make a request for underground utility lines to be marked by following these steps before every project.

1. Call 811 or submit an online request at least 48 hours prior to your project.
   - Information can be found online at www.sdonecall.com.
2. Wait for utility markings.
   - Utility companies will send professionals to mark buried lines using color-coded paint or flags.
3. Get locates on secondary or privately-owned lines if needed.
4. Check markings.
   - Confirm all utility companies listed on your ticket have responded to the request after the two-business days have passed.
5. Dig safely.

Real-Life Examples of Hitting Underground Utility Lines

Contractor Hits Unmarked Secondary Line

Tom Lundberg, member services manager from H-D Electric Cooperative in Clear Lake, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made to a secondary line:

"Normal situations start out like this – South Dakota 811 calls are made from an excavator or member (persons doing the work), and flags and paint go on the ground marking the underground services. This is a normal occurrence. However, some digs are more complicated, and there may be what we call secondary wires, pipes, sewer lines, etc. located in the dig area as well. The words primary and secondary are confusing to some people and they assume that all is well after the 811 call is made. Primary lines are owned and operated by the utility. Secondary lines are member-owned lines that are not marked by any utility. They must be marked by the member-owner of the property.

Unfortunately, we have had many of these lines hit during a dig, which makes it an emergency service call. One example is when we had a 600-amp service for a member that was damaged by a contractor. The call came in to us, and we responded to the site. We realized it could have been a very dangerous situation if the contractor would have entered the dig. Luckily, they guarded the hole until we arrived. The underground wires were extremely damaged, and the contact did not take out the transformer fuse or any kind of overcurrent protection. When I arrived, there was water in the hole, and I could hear the muddy water boiling. At that time, I assumed it was still energized. The first thing I did was turn the power off and assess the extent of the damage. The mud and water were so hot that I had to wait for a while for it to cool off. Repairs were made and everything was put back together. I double checked my work, then turned the power back on. This happened because secondary locates were not completed – resulting in a three-hour delay for the business and a costly repair.

We have had many of these calls over the years, and we want to communicate that anyone digging for a project must ensure all the dig area is marked for primary and secondary functions (wire, pipe, gas, telephone, sewer).

Long story short, the impact of not marking all the dig area can cost you time, loss of production, money and even worse – injury or death."

Out-of-State Contractor Hits Underground Power Line

Mike Stadler, manager of electric operations from Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., gives the following account of a contact made by company digging gravel:

"We had a dig-in a couple of years ago at a gravel pit. The county contracted a crushing company out of state to mine more gravel from an existing pit they had rights to. The crushing company started by digging test holes with a bulldozer. They would take the bulldozer and dig a hole about eight feet deep, just one dozer width wide, to see how good the gravel was before they committed to mining the whole area. We had underground cable around the pit. When they were exploring new areas to mine, they dug right through our cable and didn't know it (keep in mind the test holes are 8 feet deep, and our cable is four feet deep). They dug the hole, went in and looked at the gravel, decided it wasn't worth it, and covered the hole back up. Meanwhile, we had an outage.

When our crew began searching for the cause of the outage, they discovered the fresh dirt which was moved and had to dig it back up to fix it. When I asked the contractor why he didn't call a locate, he stated the county superintendent said he didn't have to because there was nothing there. They were very reluctant to pay the bill and thought the county should be liable. When I explained to them it was the law that all contractors are required to call 811, and it didn't matter what the county told them, they paid the bill. We have since educated the county on 811 laws."

A Greenhouse Tunnel at Cedar Creek Garden. *Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek*

POWERING LOCAL FOOD

Reliable Energy Keeps Greenhouses Growing

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For agricultural producers in tumultuous climates like South Dakota's, a little bit of electricity goes a long way.

Across rural areas of the state, some producers are using greenhouses as a way to extend their growing season, protect their crops from wind and hail, and provide their communities with fresh produce throughout the year.

Cedar Creek Gardens, co-owned by Cherry-Todd Electric members Bud Manke and Peggy Martin, is one such producer utilizing season-extending greenhouse structures. At the site in Mellette County, Martin is able to grow a variety of vegetables throughout much of the year by utilizing greenhouse tunnels.

"We're in growing zone 4, but our tunnels add another zone of warmth," Martin explained. "With the thermal mass of the ground, plus with vegetables like cabbage being very cold resistant, we've sometimes harvested after December 1."

Cedar Creek Gardens wasn't always the green prairie oasis it is today, with its dozen greenhouses and more than 1,000 free-range chickens. The operation started off small – just enough to feed the family, but as they discovered their passion for gardening, its scale kept creeping up.

"The demand was there, so the operation just kept getting bigger and bigger," Martin said.

Local greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens play an integral role in communities across South Dakota, ensuring food security for rural communities by providing locally-sourced produce for grocery stores, hospitals and restaurants.

"Local food and direct-to-consumer sales have seen a significant surge in popularity here in South Dakota," Martin added. "There's a clear trend of consumers wanting to know where their food comes from."

But without the extensive systems of grow lights, heating, irrigation – and the electricity that powers all of that – Martin says her operation wouldn't be sustainable.

Cedar Creek Gardens relies on electricity for several key aspects of the operation: irrigation to ensure crops get consistent water, grow lights to create optimal growing environment for transplants in the spring, and cooling

systems and storage facilities for the harvest.

"Reliable electricity from our rural electric cooperative is absolutely essential for Cedar Creek Gardens," Martin said.

With electricity being so critical in every operation at the greenhouse, so too is the reliability. Any outage – summer or winter – risks an entire season of work.

"Cherry-Todd Electric is very aware of the amount of produce that we have, and they don't think of us as 'the middle of nowhere,'" Martin explained. "Cherry-Todd Electric is really good about calling us and saying they're going to be working and let us know when the power will be off so we know to get stuff in the cooler and not open and close the doors."

Cherry-Todd Electric's manager, Tim Grablander, recognizes his members' need for reliable and continuous energy, noting the co-op's stringent practices including line patrolling, hazard recognition and line maintenance procedures to avert potential future problems.

"Cherry-Todd Electric's mission is to not only assure that our power is available to each member, but that we are delivering power at the highest level of reliability as is physically possible," Grablander said. "Our members depend on a consistent and reliable source of energy when and where it is needed. We also recognize the critical nature of power reliability for our healthcare providers, business owners, and our members with assistive medical needs. Reliability is our mission."

But not every outage comes with the luxury of an advanced notice. When severe weather strikes, unexpected outages require quick thinking.

"When we had a blizzard and we lost electricity, we put the cows in with the plants to produce enough body heat so the plants didn't freeze," Martin recalled. "If we lose power on our electric heaters, we could lose all of our plants and not have anything to put into production. Power outages are also a significant risk to our cold storage facilities in the summer, any disruption can cause the produce to spoil, which is a financial loss."

Luckily, those outages are rare; Cherry-Todd Electric and its generation and transmission cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, emphasize reliable energy generation while other areas of the United States face strain on their electric grid, resorting to costly measures like rolling brown-outs.

"At Basin Electric, our all-of-the-above energy strategy ensures members have reliable, affordable power when they need it most by prioritizing dispatchable resources like coal and natural gas, alongside wind and solar," said Chris Baumgartner, senior vice president of Member and External Relations for Basin Electric Power Cooperative. "We continue to invest in new generation while maintaining and optimizing our existing resources to meet demand, even during extreme weather conditions. These investments provide the baseload power and stability that businesses like Cedar Creek Gardens depend on – helping to sustain local economies and keep food on tables across the region."

For greenhouses like Cedar Creek Gardens, energy rates directly impact the wholesale cost of her products that businesses and communities rely on. Utilizing efficient LED lighting, temperature sensors, timers and energy-efficient cooling methods help Cedar Creek Gardens further reduce their operational costs, passing the savings onto hungry diners.

By continuing to supply low-cost, reliable energy to producers like Cedar Creek Gardens, co-ops aren't just powering rural America, but helping ensure food availability for communities across the region.

"People don't realize we can grow for so long and so early," Martin said. "We have tomatoes by the Fourth of July and people are shocked because they're used to getting their tomatoes in August. The greenhouses allow us to do that."

Peggy Martin, co-owner of Cedar Creek Garden.
Photo courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens

Cedar Creek Gardens reports their one-day record for a tomato harvest at over three tons.
Photo Courtesy of Cedar Creek Gardens

APRIL 11-12
Forks, Corks & Kegs Food, Wine & Beer Festival
Deadwood, SD
605-578-1876

Photo courtesy of Travel South Dakota

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.

APRIL 3
Viva Las Vegas McCrossan Banquet Auction
5:30 p.m.
Sioux Falls Arena
Single Ticket $100
Tables Available
Sioux Falls, SD
605-339-1203

APRIL 3
Bachelors of Broadway: Gentlemen of the Theatre
7 p.m.
NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College 2025 Alumni Gathering Cornhole Tournament
5 p.m. Social
6:30 p.m. Tournament
The World's Only Corn Palace
Mitchell, SD
605-995-7342

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
German Heritage Celebration
748 S Main St.
Freeman, SD
605-925-4237

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
Mighty Corson Art Players
Corson, SD
www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
Sun. 12-4 p.m.
The Monument
Rapid City, SD
605-342-4195

APRIL 6
Hay County Jamboree
2 p.m. Matinee
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring Market
Fri. 4-7 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
Sioux Falls, SD
www.junkinmarketdays.com

APRIL 24-26
HuntSAFE Course
Davison County Fairgrounds & Mitchell Trap Club
Mitchell, SD
605-770-5555
gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education

APRIL 27
Country Roads
2 p.m. Matinee
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

MAY 2-3
SD Spring Square Dance Festival
Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.
Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
Faith Lutheran Church
601 N. Cliff Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD
Call for events & times
605-360-2524

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
Sat. Consignment Auction
Sun. Season Opening
Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

MAY 3
West River Pheasants Forever Banquet
5 p.m. Central Time
Draper Auditorium
Draper, SD
605-516-0143

MAY 3
American Legion Post 15 Just Because It's Time to Dance
6-10:30 p.m.
Tables Available
El Riad Shrine
Sioux Falls, SD
605-336-3470

MAY 31
Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show
8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Brown County Fairgrounds
Aberdeen, SD

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