

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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# High Voltage: Birds and Power Lines



**Matt Sleep**  
CEO

Thank you for being a member of Butte Electric Cooperative, Inc. We hope you all were able to make it to the Butte-Lawrence County Fair on Aug. 1 and enjoy the BBQ that we sponsored along with our friends at the West River Telephone Company. It's a great time to support the fair, enjoy all the fruits of the local 4-Her's hard work, and visit with old friends.

We have a great group of employees that work at the Cooperative. They come to work and do their very best for the members, every day. This past month they have been busy contending with the curve balls that mother nature throws at modern technology.

We have had some outages, and subsequently fires, that were caused by our feathered friend...the Starling. This is the time of the year that Starlings flock together. Small grains are being harvested, grass is seeding out, grasshoppers are ripe for the taking...it's like Christmas time for Starlings. As you all may have noticed, their favorite group vantage points are...power lines and poles! Due to their small size, sense of balance, and shear numbers they often work their ways into areas along the power lines that are not so pleasant for their intrepid spirits — which is where our problems begin.

One beautiful afternoon a couple weeks ago, a Starling was enjoying some time in a local corral when the little bugger ventured onto the power line. Unfortunately, the adventure caused a spark on the system that in turn caused the starling to burst into flame kind of like the Phoenix in the Harry Potter movies and plummet into a bank of dry grass and cause a grass fire. There may be some that are offended by this and believe me we don't like it either because it impacts all parties involved. Fortunately, the local fire department and our crews responded quickly and extinguished the fire before it became uncontrollable.

The next outage, or string of outages, was/were caused by birds getting into the wrong spot around the top of a transformer, which over a period of two weeks caused numerous outages. Members would call in and report an outage. We would send a crew out. They would find the cause, or at least, what

they thought was the cause and fix it. Then a few days would pass, and the same thing would happen. Finally, we were determined to root out the cause, so it was 'all hands-on deck' to find it, which ended up being a transformer at a water well, that was evidently something like the equivalent of the best seat in town for the local starlings to gather and socialize. The problem was fixed. And, fortunately, there was/were no fire(s)!

Then, as I write this article, we had the second flaming bird fire this morning. Fortunately, the fire was small and put out very quickly. I have since heard from other co-ops that they, too, have been experiencing the same things with birds this year.

There are a few key points to this story. First, electricity is dangerous. Second, even our feathered friends can cause outages. Third, it's dry out and there is a tremendous fire hazard this time of year. Fourth, please be aware of where power lines and poles are located. If something doesn't look right...call us at 605-456-2494 and let us know.

A lot of things can happen around power lines. Starting in early fall of 2023 to early July we have been fortunate to have two timber contractors working diligently at cutting trees around our power lines. The weather during the winter and spring months finally gave us a large window for the crews to continue their work virtually uninterrupted. It's important for all that we keep those lines clear to minimize the fire danger. If you see trees that look like they would be a problem to the power line, please call us at 605-456-2494.

On July 19, all of the employees helped the Spearfish Lions Club unload and move vendors into their spots for the Festival in the park in Spearfish. This is a great event for the northern hills. The vendors love this and say that this is one of many reasons that make the Spearfish Festival in the Park the best Festival that they attend.

Thank you and be safe!

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### BUTTE ELECTRIC

(ISSN 1531-1031)

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# 84th Annual Meeting

Butte Electric Cooperative invites you to the 84th Annual Meeting on Friday, October 25, at the Belle Fourche Area Community Center. Registration and Dinner will start at 5:30 p.m. with the meeting to follow.

One of the primary matters of business will be to elect three directors to serve on the board for three-year terms. Current Directors up for re-election include:

District 1 – Travis Schenk, Spearfish  
District 2 – Tom Brunner, Nisland  
District 3 – Paul Winkler, Newell

If any Butte Electric member is interested in serving on the board, please request a petition from our office by calling (605) 456- 2494. The completed petition, signed by 15 or more members, is due back on September 16 by 4:00 p.m.

Cooperatives' democratic model gives members a way to participate in the direction of their cooperative. Whether it's voting in an election, or serving on a local board of directors, members have a special ability to set the course for the cooperative they are a part of. If you're asked to sign a petition for a potential board candidate, consider the following questions:

1. Does the business record of the proposed petitioner and the management of their own affairs indicate sound business judgment?
2. Do they have a reputation for leadership, honesty, and integrity?

Belle Fourche Area  
Community Center

**October 25,**  
**2024**

**5:30 PM**

3. Do they work well with others?
4. Are their ideals and objectives related to the cooperative principles and philosophy?

A core value of the cooperative business model is democratic control. Members elect directors from the membership to serve on the cooperative's board. The board is responsible for guiding how the co-op's finances and assets are used to fulfill the cooperative's mission. They must do so in such a way that protects the cooperative and the interests of all its members.

Ultimately, the board of directors serves as the community pulse for the co-op and helps us keep on the right track.

We look forward to seeing you at the Annual Meeting.

# WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

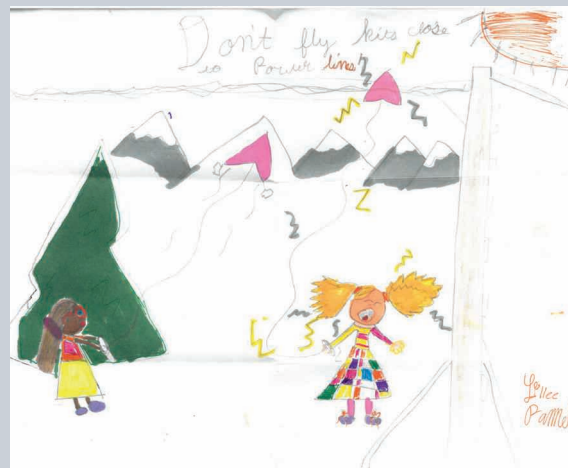
Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

## AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecasted.
- **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.

- **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

*Source: National Weather Service*



### Power Line Safety “Don’t Fly Kites Close to Power Lines”

#### Lillee Pannell, Age 11

Lillee Pannell cautions kite flyers to be careful around power lines. Great advice, Lillee! Hobie’s parents are Scottie and Kimberly Pannell, 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.



# Summertime SWEETS

## SUMMER FRUIT TART

### Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust  
1 egg white, lightly beaten  
1/3 cup sugar  
2 tbsps. cornstarch  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. ginger  
2 cups sliced peeled peaches,  
(about 3 peaches)  
1 cup blueberries  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

### Method

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Prepare crust as directed on package. Place on foil-lined 12-inch pizza pan. If necessary, press out any folds or creases. Brush crust with about 1/2 of the beaten egg white. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and ginger in medium bowl. Add fruit and vanilla; toss gently. Spoon into center of crust, spreading to within 2 inches of edges. Fold 2-inch edge of crust up over fruit, pleating or folding crust as needed. Brush crust with remaining egg white. Bake 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

McCormick

## RHUBARB PIE

### Crust

1-2 cups flour  
1/2 stick butter or margarine  
1/4 cup water

Add ingredients and knead to complete a pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

### Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine  
1 cup sugar  
3 eggs, separated  
2 tbsps. flour  
1/8 tsp. salt  
2 1/2 cups rhubarb  
Smucker's Caramel Sundae Syrup

Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 degrees until golden brown. You may also add more Caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

Lisa Soukup (Kummer)  
Tea, S.D.

## PEACH DELIGHT

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, melted  
1 3/4 cups flour  
Pinch of salt  
2 tbsps. sugar  
2 cups water  
2 cups sugar  
4 tbsps. cornstarch  
3 oz. package peach jello  
1 tbsp. butter  
10 fresh peaches

### Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine butter, flour, salt and 2 tbsps. sugar. Mix and pat in 9x13 inch pan which has been sprayed with Pam. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool when done baking. Combine 2 cups sugar and 2 cups water. Whisk in 4 tbsps. cornstarch until smooth. Cook until thickened in the microwave – stirring often. Remove from microwave and add 1 tbsp. butter and package of peach jello (do not add any water). Stir until dissolved and let cool. While cooling, dip fresh peaches in hot water and plunge in cold water bath. Remove skins and pits. Place back in cold water until all peaches are peeled. Drain peaches, slice into bite size pieces and mix into cooled peach glaze. Carefully pour the glaze over the crust and chill until firmly set. May be served with whip cream. You can substitute strawberry jello and sliced strawberries in place of the peaches. This makes a delicious cool summer dessert.

Shirley Fletcher  
Rapid City, S.D.

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Federal Tax Credits, Incentives and Rebates for Efficiency Upgrades



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** How do I use federal tax credits and rebates to upgrade my home?

**A:** Tax credits and rebates can help bridge the affordability gap to higher efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete energy efficiency upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money in years to come.

First, knowing the difference between a tax credit and rebate is important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the rebate program is set up, it may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation. Check with your electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates. Typically, the rebate is applied as a credit on your electric bill. In some cases, the rebate is provided a cash payment to those who complete eligible projects.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that taxpayers can report on their tax documents to reduce the amount of taxes owed. You apply for a tax credit when you file your tax documents, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than it does with a rebate.

According to ENERGY STAR®, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal tax credits are available for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps. Tax credits for ENERGY STAR®-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope – the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside – with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the

panel upgrade, up to \$600.

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the United States, not new construction.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 expanded available funding for many home upgrades. The act allocated \$8.8 billion for home rebate programs to be implemented at the state level, and this funding is offered in two different programs. The HOMES program allows up to \$8,000 per home for standard-income households. Higher rebates are available for low- to moderate-income households. The HEAR program offers rebates of up to \$14,000 per home for qualified, efficient electric equipment for low- to moderate-income households.

These programs are designed to bolster existing programs and should be available in late 2024 or early 2025. Check with your electric cooperative or state office to find out if they are being offered in your state.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. More than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents, according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. These programs can help people save money on their electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid.

I have had the privilege of working in energy efficiency rebate programs for many years and have seen the benefits of these programs firsthand. Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable – helping people save money and improve the overall comfort of their homes.

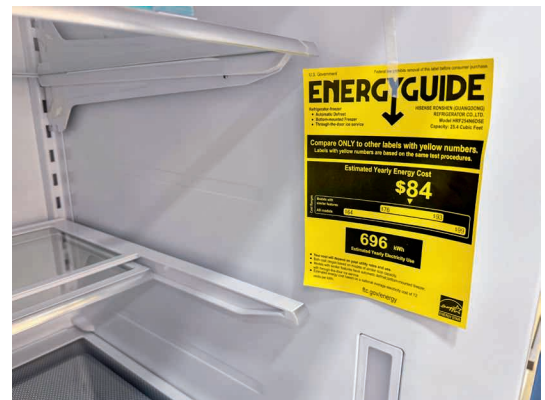






Photo credit: Jackie Jensen

# LISA LOCKHART

## Winning at What She Loves While Enjoying a Beloved American Pastime

Jocelyn Johnson

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It's been her hustle and passion since she was six years old, and it's made her one of the best competitors in the world. South Dakota's Lisa Lockhart is an elite barrel racer from Oelrichs, S.D., and in her own words, "There is no off-season."

Dandy was the little Shetland pony that gave Lockhart her start on her family farm in Montana. She recounted her memories of racing him around her parent's yard and signing up for local rodeo events with him.

"I was definitely a horse-crazy little girl from the get-go," Lockhart said. "My pony was my babysitter in the

front yard."

Even though opportunities were limited in the early '70s when she started rodeo, Lockhart became a success story through dedication, lots of practice and the help of her family. She credits her sisters, Debbie and Angela, for being the pioneers of barrel racing in her own family as well as her husband, Grady, for his ongoing support.

"We enjoy it as a family," Lockhart said. "Grady was a calf roper, and we actually met at a rodeo. We're best friends and have like interests...it takes a village, and I am thankful for the village. It's definitely a team effort. I couldn't do it by myself."

Along with their kids – Alyssa,

Thane and Cade – the Lockharts have enjoyed rodeo and bonded over the experiences, conversations and goals they share.

Lockhart trains and buys her competitive horses but explains that having history and longevity with a horse impacts the level of success she has with them. She noted that having a personal bond with each horse not only impacts their performance but is also something she enjoys.

"They are such unique individuals, just like humans are," Lockhart explained. "Being able to tap into that personal relationship with each horse has an impact on our level of success. I love these equine athletes."

She's pocketed a handful of reserve world championships, three American Rodeo championships and more than \$3.1 million in career earnings; but Lockhart's current goal is to make it to her 18th consecutive National Finals Rodeo.

"I have a passion for the horses and am a competitive person by nature," Lockhart noted. "Your horsepower dictates where you go and how successful you may be. I'm always going to ride horses and I'm always going to train horses – I love it, but the level of competition I can attain depends on my horsepower. Sometimes, you got to go through a lot of horses to try and find the next champion."

Lockhart expounded that success is earned through training and passion. The horse matters, but the dedication of the racer will dictate how far they go.

When asked what her advice would be to young racers, Lockhart stated: "I think there is a lot of opportunity out there for people to learn – with technology. Educate yourself and spend the time practicing it. Knowledge is at your fingertips. Just like everything in life, if you want it, you have to work for it. It's not handed to you."





# CRISP BREEZES AND CORN MAZES

A broken-down 1950s-style Chevrolet pickup welcomes visitors to the Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

## Celebrating Autumn on the Family Farm

**Frank Turner**

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The first signs of autumn sweep across the plains as daylight dwindles and treetops wither into amber. For some, the nostalgia of fall is evoked by the first crisp breeze at a football game or the taste of a freshly picked apple from the orchard. But for Clint and Kelly Brandlee, Lake Region Electric members living in rural Pierpont, the magic of the harvest season begins with the opening of their family-owned corn maze.

The Brandlee family homesteaded their land in 1886 on the western edge of the Coteau Hills, an area characterized by rolling hills, fertile ground and native pastures. With deep roots extending through five generations of ranching and farming, Clint and Kelly's daughters, Jaycee

and Kylie, represent the sixth generation on the farm.

Over the years, the family has maintained their commitment to traditional farming values while embracing innovation. In 2020, Clint and Kelly

transformed their operation into a direct-to-consumer agriculture business, launching Back Forty Beef, LLC. Their new venture allowed them to provide locally raised beef at a fair price while giving customers the opportunity to see



Back Forty Beef hosts a number of family-friendly events including duck races. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*



how their animals and crops are raised, from farm to table.

“During the pandemic, people were looking for a direct source for their beef, and we wanted to provide that,” Kelly said.

Through Back Forty Beef, Clint and Kelly supplied their area with local beef and discovered new ways to engage their community. Just last year, the two started an annual tradition by planting a 12-acre, agriculture-themed corn maze as a way to bring something new to their part of the state. In just a year, the maze has become a hub for families to come together and celebrate agriculture and the harvest season.

“We wanted to do something really fun and get families outside in northeastern South Dakota during the fall, and what better way to do that than through a corn maze?” Kelly said. “It’s a way for us to share our passion for agriculture and our story. As a population, we are getting two to three generations removed from the farm. There is less of a connection to rural life, so any time we can provide people an opportunity to get out onto the farm and learn something, that benefits the whole of agriculture.”

This fall, Clint and Kelly are again inviting their surrounding communities to visit their homestead and explore this year’s newly designed maze. The maze is set to be open to the public every weekend after



A bird's-eye view of last year's Back Forty Beef corn maze. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

Labor Day to the last week of October. The theme is pollinators, featuring images of a corn cob, flower, bee and barn. Several twists and turns will be embellished with fun facts about pollinators and crop production in South Dakota, making it an educational experience for all ages.

Along with the corn maze, Back Forty Beef is planning to incorporate other family-friendly activities, including duck races, farm animal exhibits, farm basketball, a straw mountain slide and more. Back Forty Beef will also host a farm store where customers can buy everything from local pumpkins to their homegrown beef.

Other local businesses are also joining

in the fun. A different local food truck is scheduled to attend each weekend during the open season, and local businesses are offering small discounts and deals for participants who complete the maze.

“There are checkpoints in the maze, and each checkpoint is equipped with a fun fact and a partnered local business,” said Kelly. “For example, Dairy Queen is offering a buy one, get one free offer for those who hole punch their card at their checkpoint and read the fun fact about pollinators and production agriculture.”

Clint and Kelly’s efforts to engage the community have resulted in a community that engages with their business. Like many other direct-to-consumer operations, Back Forty Beef has its own website and online shop for its brand of beef, dairy products, merchandise and even hand-poured tallow candles. The Brandlee family has also found success through their beef subscription club where boxes are regularly delivered to the doorsteps of customers every month. Whether it’s through the corn maze or the subscription beef boxes, Kelly said the local community has fully embraced Back Forty Beef.

“We had a lot of people who attended that had never done a corn maze before, so a lot of people were excited to do something new and different,” said Kelly. “We had a great turnout to our maze last year, and that’s why we decided to do it again.”



Owner-operators of Back Forty Beef, Kelly and Clint Brandlee and their two daughters, Jaycee and Kylie. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.





# MANAGING THE ELECTRIC GRID DURING THE EV TRANSITION

**Jennah Denney**

Electric vehicles (EVs) are more than just a trend; they're a shift towards a new era of transportation and energy use.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, data indicates a steady increase in EV adoption, with EVs and hybrid vehicles surpassing 16% of total 2023 U.S. light-duty vehicle sales. Additionally, as of March 2024, 17 states have exceeded 10% of the EV market share, highlighting the regional variations and potential hotspots for EV market penetration. As EVs continue to become more common, electric cooperatives will face new challenges and opportunities to continue providing reliable, affordable energy to our consumer-members.

Imagine traffic during rush hour – it's crowded and slow. Our nation's electric grid can become just as crowded when everyone charges their EVs at the same

time. This major spike in energy use can lead to power outages or expensive updates to our system. But as we prepare for increased electricity demand from EV use, we remain dedicated to solving these challenges and keeping the lights on for everyone.

Smart charging is like a traffic light for electricity – it helps manage the demand for power from EVs. Here's how you can help if you own an EV:

- Charge during off-peak hours. Charge your EV when electricity demand is low, such as late at night or early in the morning, to help prevent grid overload and save on your energy bills.
- Use delayed charging. Modern EV chargers can wait to charge your car until there's less demand for power. This helps keep the grid stable and ensures you have power when you need it.
- Adopt grid-friendly charging. Some

EV chargers can adjust how fast they charge your vehicle based on how much power is available. This helps avoid grid congestion and the need for expensive upgrades.

Managing the EV transition on our electric grid brings many challenges as well as many opportunities for growth and working together. We're talking with our members to help everyone understand how EVs and the grid affect each other. Additionally, it's crucial for our cooperative to identify and track the EVs within our local network. Knowing how many EVs are charging on our system allows for better planning and helps ensure a more stable supply of electricity. When we can predict EV charging patterns, we can maintain a more efficient and reliable power grid.

Additionally, when we have local, detailed data, the co-op can design EV programs that fit our community's specific needs, encourage responsible energy use and offer additional cost savings to our members. If you're considering an EV and have questions about home charging, contact your local electric cooperative for guidance.



# NAVIGATING SUPPLY CHAIN CHALLENGES

Scott Flood

From grocery store shelves to repair parts for vehicles, we've all had firsthand experiences with supply chain issues in recent years. So much so that the supply chain has become a convenient scapegoat anytime a business falls short of our expectations. But when it comes to your local electric cooperative, supply chain challenges are very real and often troubling.

Parts and components electric co-ops use every day are in short supply, which delays planned upgrades for power reliability and increases the costs of parts and labor.

Electric co-ops are working together to find innovative ways to deal with supply chain issues. This year, those efforts resulted in a major win regarding updated federal efficiency standards for distribution transformers that has co-op leaders breathing more easily.

Electric transformers are critical pieces of equipment that help deliver power to consumers. These essential devices adjust electricity voltage, either up or down, to enable safe and efficient power flow.

Late in 2022, the Department of Energy (DOE) proposed new efficiency requirements for the distribution transformers that deliver power to every home, school and business in America. Among other provisions, the proposal would have required manufacturers of those transformers switch to amorphous steel within three years, in place of the grain oriented electrical steel (GOES) that has long been used. Amorphous steel is chemically altered in ways that may make transformers more efficient.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national trade association that represents more than 900 co-ops, is wary of DOE's expectations for this change in material, and especially at a time when transformer manufacturers are already struggling to keep up with demand. Currently, there is only one U.S. producer of this specialty steel.

The availability of federal infrastructure funding is making it possible for co-ops to invest in the capacity, safety and reliability of the systems delivering electricity

to co-op communities. That's a good thing for co-ops and their members, but it's increasing pressure on the supply chain.

"The domestic supply chain hasn't caught up with demand, and the industry is going through a learning curve," notes Stephanie Crawford, NRECA regulatory affairs director. "It's going to take some time for manufacturers to retool their production and producers to make enough amorphous steel to meet the need."

While co-op leaders appreciate the significant amount of federal money being made available to update local energy infrastructure, that's also putting the squeeze on supply.

"Everyone across the country is making these investments at the same time, creating demand not just for new transformers, but for all the basic materials and equipment cooperatives need," Crawford adds. "Amid all the challenges co-ops are already facing, it presents a big problem to ask the industry to make a 100% switch in just three years when the sole supplier only produces enough for about 5% of today's market."

NRECA and electric co-ops joined others in the power industry to educate key contacts in Congress, the White House and DOE about supply chain challenges, particularly the requirements for the quick shift to amorphous steel.

"After more than a year of advocacy efforts, the DOE issued its final rule, which allows continued use of GOES in smaller-sized transformers," Crawford explains. "This provides greater certainty with the transformer sizes cooperatives use the most, particularly in the residential segment."

The DOE rule also includes a longer compliance timeframe for shifting to amorphous steel.

"Extending the deadline to 2029 will help manufacturers adapt for the future," Crawford said. "The extension allows transformer manufacturers more time to adjust to the new standard and focus on output that electric cooperatives need."

For the foreseeable future, electric co-ops will continue to face challenges in securing the supplies and equipment they need. The good news is that most have initiated processes to mitigate and manage those risks so they can continue to meet their members' needs. While the future availability of larger transformers remains a cause for concern, co-ops are pleased to see investments in U.S. manufacturing facilities, and that's a hopeful sign.

# RODEO CHAMPIONS

## Short Go Finalists Win Touchstone Energy Shirts During the State Competition in Ft. Pierre

**Jocelyn Johnson**

[jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop)

South Dakota's electric cooperatives united in celebrating rodeo on June 15 during the state high school competition in Ft. Pierre, S.D. Cowboys and cowgirls competed in events that mimic the daily chores of a typical rancher, racing to place in the Short Go.

Short Go state finalists earned the coveted Touchstone Energy shirts that mark them as the top competitors of a beloved rural pastime. After a season of competing, the visual representation of wearing this shirt is

more than a fashion statement.

"These shirts are almost like a trophy," said Kylee Ellerton, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D. "It's something you can keep and look back on to remember."

Ellerton earned the Short Go shirt, sponsored by Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives. She won 10th place in goat tying at state.

"My grandpa and dad grew up rodeoing," Ellerton said. "So, I got started in rodeo pretty young."

High school rodeo events began in 1949, and by 1951, South Dakota was among five states that established the National High School Rodeo

Mataya Ward keeps her eyes on a goat she tied during the Short Go.  
*Photo credit: Charles Minor*

Association.

It's a shared heritage for many in the state, and electric cooperatives have a 22-year history of celebrating rodeo by sponsoring the Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirt program. More than \$150,000 has been given to this program since 2002, and these funds are used to honor the contestants who make it to the Short Go round



*Photo credit: Charles Minor*





Kailey Deknikker rounds a Touchstone Energy barrel during the state Short Go in barrel racing.  
Photo credit: 4-C Photography

of the state finals competition in their respective events.

Kailey Deknikker, member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Lennox, S.D., has a passion for rodeo and wishes to go as far as she can in the sport. She will be attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for business management and joining

the college rodeo team in barrel racing and pole bending.

“The shirt shows that your hard work paid off,” explained Deknikker after placing in the Short Go and winning a Touchstone Energy Short Go shirt. “It shows your accomplishment.”

Decknikker placed 7th in barrel

racing after running a time of 18.246 seconds in the 1st Go, 17.802 seconds in the 2nd Go, and 18.078 seconds in the Short Go.

Leighton Sander, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., won 6th place in the bareback riding Short Go competition. Sander works with his family on a cow/calf operation outside of Custer, S.D.

“There’s some pride that goes with wearing that Short Go shirt,” said Sander. “You go to a rodeo and see a couple people wearing those shirts outside of the high school season, and you think, ‘they must have been good enough to make it to the Short Go – I better watch that guy.’”

Sander explained that his draw to one of the toughest events in the sport of rodeo is the adrenaline rush. He hopes to use his bareback riding skills in future horse training efforts while noting, “being able to stick to a horse is important.”

“I don’t know how to explain it,” Sander said. “It’s super scary before you start, but once you climb into that chute and they open up the gate, it’s like eating your favorite cake.”



Finalists wear Touchstone Energy Short Go shirts. Photo credit: Charles Minor





# FROM FARM TO LODGE

A group of hunters showcase their success after a day of hunting on Larry Schecher's land. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

## Prairie Meadows Lodge Fuels Economy and Conservation

**Frank Turner**

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When a pheasant hunter travels to South Dakota, dons an orange hunting vest and steps out onto one of the state's many acres of pristine hunting land, they are doing more than just participating in local recreation and tradition; they are bolstering one of South Dakota's cornerstone industries. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks estimates that hunting alone contributes \$683 million to the

state's economy, far exceeding the contributions from fishing and state park visitation.

Many producers across the state are enthusiastically welcoming these outdoor recreationists, including landowner Larry Schecher. Schecher is a fourth-generation, lifelong rancher, farmer and member of Grand Electric in Bison, S.D., who recently made the savvy decision to develop a private hunting lodge and accommodate hunters on his land.

So what prompted the lodge? In 2019, Schecher expanded his



Fourth-generation farmer and rancher Larry Schecher. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.



operation, taking the usual steps to purchase land that he had previously been leasing. The land came with one interesting perk: an outbuilding that the previous owner had used to repair and rebuild classic cars. The outbuilding became the perfect avenue for him to not only expand his operation physically but also add an entirely new revenue stream by transforming the old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge.

“It wasn’t insulated or anything, but it was a nice enough building,” said Schecher. “We just took it to the next level and remodeled the entire interior.”

What started as a car garage quickly became a private hunting lodge on Schecher’s land, equipped with a complete kitchen and living space, two bedrooms with four beds each, an electric fireplace, and even a washer and dryer.

Yet, accommodations are only half the equation. Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts are self-guided, meaning hunters can explore the plentiful food plots, thick shelter belts and acres of brush that adorn Schecher’s land and plan their hunt accordingly. The producer estimates that he owns more than 300 acres of premier hunting land for Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts, scattered across almost 3,000 acres of farm and ranch land. The land, he said, harbors a healthy population of wild pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse and partridge.

Since starting Prairie Meadows Lodge, Schecher said he and his son, Bradley, have begun planting food plots specifically to promote healthy habitat and food sources for the wild birds on their land.

“We planted a few food plots this year with a ‘pheasant mix,’” said Schecher. “The mix includes



Prairie Meadows Lodge welcomes pheasant hunters from across the nation. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

flowering species that attract insects and milo, millet and sunflowers to produce seeds for the birds to eat. We plan to continue adding more food plots in the future to enhance our bird numbers, which have been steadily increasing over the past few years. It’s been great for being in the business of letting people hunt.”

A year after purchasing the outbuilding and preparing the land, Schecher invited hunters to test the newly renovated operation. The launch was a success, and Prairie Meadows Lodge has since hosted hunters from all over the country, including those from surrounding states and as far away as Washington, Texas and Pennsylvania, many of whom are repeat customers.

“Adding wildlife into the equation has just become another facet of being a producer,” said Schecher. “In many ways, it’s like adding another crop to the mix. It gives an incentive to create more habitat and include more conservation techniques into my operation, enhancing the ability of the wildlife to thrive and prosper.”



In 2019, Larry Schecher renovated an old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge, a private hunting lodge for unguided pheasant hunts. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

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

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Photo Credit: SDStateFair

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.

**AUG. 28-SEPT. 2**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
7 a.m.-8 p.m.  
Huron, SD  
[www.SDStateFair.com](http://www.SDStateFair.com)

**SEPT. 1**  
**Studebaker Car Show**  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Custer, SD  
605-673-2244

**SEPT. 2**  
**Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show**  
Starts at 1 p.m.  
Clear Lake, SD  
605-881-8405

**SEPT. 6-7**  
**Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll**  
Vermillion, SD  
[www.sdbbq.us](http://www.sdbbq.us)

**SEPT. 8**  
**Homesteader Day**  
1-4 p.m.  
Valley Springs, SD  
Beaver Creek Nature Area

**SEPT. 12-15**  
**South Dakota Film Festival**  
Downtown Capitol Theatre  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-226-5494

**SEPT. 13-14**  
**Black Hills Polkapalooza**  
Each Night at 4-10 p.m.  
Palmer Gulch  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2525

**SEPT. 13-14**  
**Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show**  
Davison County Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-359-2049

**SEPT. 14-15**  
**2024 Kuchen & Harvest Festival**  
Delmont, SD  
605-928-3792

**SEPT. 17**  
**EV Expo**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Sioux Falls, SD

**SEPT. 20-22**  
**South Dakota Festival of Books**  
Various Locations  
Brookings, SD  
605-688-6113

**SEPT. 27-29**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2299

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Run Crazy Horse Marathons**  
Crazy Horse  
605-390-6137  
[www.runcrazyhorse.com](http://www.runcrazyhorse.com)

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Show**  
Codington County Extension Complex  
Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 5-6**  
**The Black Market**  
Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Expo Building  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

**OCT. 6**  
**Giant Pumpkin Festival**  
Bentley Memorial Building  
Bison, SD  
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.  
605-244-5475

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Rural Women Conference**  
The Lodge of Deadwood  
Deadwood, SD  
[SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com](http://SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com)

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