

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Crazy about Curling

Win or lose, there's
no bad curling
Pages 8-9

Saddle making
for the pros
Pages 12-13

Many curling enthusiasts
contend the world would
be a more peaceful place if
everyone "threw the stone."

The Electricity Super Highway



Russell Gall
Manager

In the early years of my employment here at Charles Mix Electric, way back in 1988, my morning drive between Pickstown and Lake Andes seemed to be a desolate stretch of highway. On any given day, I could count on one hand the number of cars I met, with a few digits left to spare. Back then, there was hardly anyone who commuted that segment of asphalt at the same time as I. In fact, if traffic at that time of the day was

used to calculate what type of roadway should be constructed, I would have likely been driving on a trail where grass grows up between the wheel ruts.

Power lines are the super highways that bring electricity to your home.

our motorcycle out east to see some friends. Inadvertently, I found myself on a five-lane superhighway at 5 pm on a Thursday, driving 70 to 80 miles per hour with scarcely a car length between the vehicles ahead of and behind me. It was quite harrowing, and I knew if something went wrong, we would have been merely a speed bump for the hurrying traffic, or worse yet, the condiment in a truck sandwich. I'm not sure, but I thought I heard my passenger praying through my helmet headset as we made our way through the worst of it. It seemed to me that the highway design of 10 lanes was woefully inadequate to accommodate the to-and-fro commuters of this typical day. As bad as it was, I could only hope that the engineers were planning to add another couple of trails with grass between the wheel ruts for those of us that are not used to this congestion.

My traffic fears aside, I realize we can all rest assured that both roadways were likely designed and built to safely accommodate the maximum

On the other hand, the opposite could be said about Interstate 270 leading into Columbus, Ohio. A few years back, my spouse Jackie and I rode

volume of traffic on any given day. That traffic handling design capability is referred to as its capacity. Maybe you can see where I'm going with this, and how it might relate to the power industry. Yes, everything in the delivery of power has a limit, also referred to as capacity. The engineers who continuously design this miraculously complex machine that delivers power to our members, know exactly the limits of each piece. From generators to distribution transformers, there is a limit to the amount of power that can be pushed through the system. That limit is referred to as the system capacity.

I started this article talking about highways because there is a direct comparison to be made between the parallel lines of an Interstate highway and the transmission lines of the power system. There needs to be a path, or electricity super highway, to get power from a generating plant to your home. Transmission and distribution power lines create that path between the two. In our area, there is a good example of this on display, as the large steel towers move electricity from the Ft. Randall Dam to our members here in Charles Mix County. There are other paths that exit our area to deliver energy to places like Omaha, Sioux Falls, and into the desolate west side of South Dakota. Each of these transmission lines were designed and built to move power based on the maximum amount of energy traffic on that transmission line. Each transmission line has a very specific capacity, limiting the amount of power it can carry. If built too small, the transformers and wires would likely fail if overloaded. If it was oversized, then customers would end up paying extra every month on their electric bill for something that was not needed.

Here is my opportunity to take the off-ramp onto a different highway to talk about the cost of capacity. As a customer of Charles Mix Electric, your electric bill consists of the service charge and the fee for the electricity you used. What you do not see on your bill are all the costs related to capacity. These costs include charges for the generating power plants at Basin Electric, the cost per megawatt rating of each East River substation, and even the size of the transformer hanging on the pole in your yard. The cost of each of these capacity assets is dispersed amongst all Charles Mix Electric customers, built into the service charge and price of electricity. *(Continued on page 3)*

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

**CHARLES MIX
ELECTRIC**

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Website: <http://www.cme.coop>

(continued from page 2)

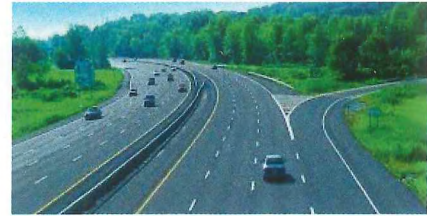
Everyone should appreciate that we can drive from Beulah, ND to Dante, SD on a highway without noticing extra costs. Yet, built into the price of every gallon of gasoline or diesel fuel, is a tax that pays for that same highway. The more you drive from here to there, the more you help pay for those same roads you travel. Similarly, the cost of the transmission lines to carry power from a coal-fired power plant in Beulah, ND to the television in your living room, is built into every electricity bill. This capacity cost is included in price of electricity to ensure that the power grid will handle every television on Super Bowl Sunday as Dr. Dre shows off his Snoop Dogg during the halftime show.

As I bring this road trip to an end, I want to mention that the GPS map for this trip may be incomplete. There are disrupting technologies which may create inequities between our members. Just as electric vehicle (EV) owners do not pay the fuel taxes that fund the upkeep of the highway system, EVs may also create deficits of electric capacity needed to charge these vehicles. New power plants, transmission lines, and improvements to the CME distribution system will be needed if the hyped wave of EV vehicles comes to garages everywhere. The capacity to generate and deliver the electricity needed to power the EV chargers that accompany every electric vehicle will require improvements to all systems, each with an added cost. This could easily shift costs from the EV owners to those who cannot afford to drive a new-fangled electric buggy.

Another concern is home generation technologies, such as wind and solar systems. Although these systems can offset the need for new transmission lines and power plants, there are caveats when the power is sold back on to the grid, especially when these systems become commonplace. Further, without kWh sales, the cost of distribution transformers and distribution lines used by these same customers to put power back on the grid may remain unrecovered under our current pricing design. This means that changes must be made to assess these costs based on a customer's capacity needs rather than spreading it out evenly between all customers. If done right, assessing the capacity costs to these customers is not an additional expense to the customer, it is a simply recouping the costs directly, based on sizing needs, instead of through the service charge or electricity sales.

Before I get too far off the highway and into the ditch, members should know that the CME management and Board of Directors will continue to care for the electricity superhighway. It is our job to ensure that electricity prices are fair, and we will continue to bring reliable and affordable electricity to every member who needs it.

Until next month, have a great February!



The steel towers of a transmission line can be compared to a "super highway" for electricity.

Make a plan before heading out in wintry road conditions

Though they may make for a pretty seasonal backdrop, snow and ice can complicate even modest travel plans. It's unsafe to drive when visibility is vastly reduced or when you can't fully control your car. According to AAA, wintry weather and its byproduct - hazardous road conditions - are a factor in nearly a half-million crashes and more than 2,000 road deaths each year. With those figures in mind, here are some tips to minimize the risk to yourself and other motorists during winter weather.

Don't drive unless you must. It really isn't worth the risk to your safety and that of others to venture out onto potentially unsafe roads for any circumstance that isn't urgent. Pay attention to weather reports so you can run any time-sensitive errands and stock up on supplies before adverse conditions arrive. If you must drive to work, that's one thing. But don't tempt fate if you can help it.

If you have to drive, eliminate distractions. Keep your phone out of reach or set it to airplane mode - a good practice year-round but especially important when roads are dicey.

Keep a bundle of cold-weather gear in your car, including water, nonperishable food, warm clothing, a flashlight, glass scraper, blankets and medications.

Before you set out, alert others to your route, destination and estimated time of arrival.

Make sure your tires are properly inflated and have plenty of tread.

Keep your gas tank at least half full to prevent a frozen fuel line, which could leave you stranded.

Don't use cruise control when driving on any slippery surface.

Drive slowly. Lower your speed to counteract the reduced traction that accompanies snow and ice. Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly can help avoid skids. Since it takes longer to slow down on icy roads, take your time to slow down for a stop sign or light.

A final note for winter driving: Never warm up a vehicle in an enclosed area such as a garage. Exercise caution and good judgment to stay safe as you negotiate whatever conditions winter brings this year.

POWERLINE SAFETY QUIZ

TRUE OR FALSE?

Power lines are insulated for contact.

False. While power lines may have a covering to protect against weather, they are not insulated for contact. Birds can sit on

power lines unhurt because they don't create a path to the ground. You and your ladder do.



I should keep myself and any equipment I'm using at least 10 feet away from any power lines.

True. You don't need to contact a power line to be in danger; electricity can jump, or arc, from a power line to a person who gets too close. The best insulator is space. Keep yourself and your equipment at least 10 feet away from power lines.

I can be electrocuted by a power line even if I am wearing gloves and rubber boots.

True. Work gloves and rubber boots offer no protection against contact with a power line. Once again, space - and lots of it - is the best insulator.



Don't touch power lines

Luke Walden

Luke Walden reminds co-op members that it's important to never touch power lines under any conditions. Luke is from Brandon, where he and his parents Blake and Jennifer are all members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

BRUNCH TIME!

CHEESY SAUSAGE AND POTATO SKILLET CASSEROLE

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces bulk breakfast sausage, crumbled
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 6 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon McCormick® Oregano Leaves
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon McCormick® Coarse Ground Black Pepper
- 1 1/2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 package (20 oz) refrigerated shredded hash browns
- 3 tbsp fresh dill, parsley or green onion finely chopped

METHOD

Cook and stir sausage in large skillet on medium heat 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Add onion and bell pepper; cook and stir 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Set aside. Beat eggs in large bowl with wire whisk. Add milk, oregano, salt and pepper; mix well. Add sausage mixture, cheeses and tomatoes; mix well. Set aside. Pour oil into same skillet, swirling to coat the pan. Spread hash browns in bottom and up sides of pan. Pour egg mixture over potatoes. Cover. Cook on medium heat 10 to 15 minutes or until eggs are set.

mccormick.com

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

BRUNCH EGG BAKE

Ingredients:

- 12 slices, bread, crusts removed
- 2 cups diced ham or bacon, crisp and chopped
- 1 - 4 oz. can mushrooms, drained
- 1 green pepper, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 5 eggs
- 2-1/2 cups milk
- salt and pepper
- paprika

METHOD

Butter six slices of bread and put face down in 9 x 13 inch pan, lightly sprayed with cooking spray. Cover the bread with the ham, mushrooms, green pepper, onion and cheese. Dice the remaining bread and spread over the top. Beat eggs, milk, salt and pepper and pour over the top. Sprinkle with paprika. Cover the pan with foil and refrigerate overnight. In the morning, bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Serves 12.

Mary Jessen, Holabird

COLD OATMEAL MUESLI

Ingredients:

- 1 cup quick oats
- 1 cup old fashioned oats
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 cup milk

METHOD

Mix all ingredients together and let sit overnight in the refrigerator. Serve cold. May add walnuts and apples or other fresh berries when serving, if desired.

Elaine Rieck, Harrisburg

A New Face at CME

Office Manager brings previous co-op experience

Karen Soulek describes herself as “excited to be the newest employee at Charles Mix Electric”, as she stepped into the role of Office Manager on December 16, 2021.

As Office Manager, Karen will be responsible for overseeing many of the financial duties of the cooperative, including payroll and accounts payable, cash flow, budgeting, and investments. Karen will prepare monthly and yearly financial reports to satisfy the requirements of our lenders and independent auditors, and will report to the Board of Directors monthly on the financial condition of the co-op. She will also be closely involved with all of her co-workers as she manages the human resources

aspect of the employee group.

Karen is a licensed CPA who previously served as a financial investment officer at Commercial State Bank in Wagner. She has also gained experience at the Fort Randall Credit Union in Pickstown, and as the Office Manager of Country Pride Co-op in Wagner. Both of these businesses are cooperatives, and their business models are structured similarly to your rural electric co-op, which should aid Karen in quickly adapting to her new role. Karen says, “I am excited to be working once again with a member-owned cooperative.”

Karen and her husband Curt live and farm east of Lake Andes. They have three grown children and one granddaughter, Bryant (wife Brittney, daughter Luella); Dalton (wife Brooke), and Cole (significant other Brecken). She enjoys reading, camping, gardening, and spending time with family. She also does independent tax preparation and bookkeeping.

We welcome Karen to what we hope is a long and happy employment with CME!



Karen (left) has been getting the full immersion treatment in all things rural electric, as retiree Wanda Weber tries to impart 20 years' worth of knowledge in a two-week crash course.

Basin Electric Scholarship Contest A 30-year Tradition

CME granted its first “Basin Electric Scholarship” in 1992, making this year’s contest the 30th year of presenting this award to a deserving local high school student. Seniors, there’s still time to get your applications in for the 2022 competition! It’s your chance to earn “Cash for College” in the form of a \$1,000 scholarship.

Applicant must be a dependent of a Charles Mix Electric member.

Applicant must enroll in an accredited 2-year or 4-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

Applications are judged on academic performance including ACT score and GPA, work history, school/community activities and honors, career and educational goals essay, and a 3rd-party letter of recommendation.

Applications available online at www.cme.coop under “Community” and “Our Youth”, or contact CME at 1-800-208-8587. Applications must be in CME’s office no later than February 15th, 2022.

30
years of rewarding exceptional students through the Basin Electric Scholarship Program

Over **\$30K**
paid to help further the education of local students.

Swatek finds joy in helping others through art

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Art has always held a special spot in Johnny Swatek's soul. But when he discovered how much his work meant to others, he began developing an even deeper understanding of his passion for connecting with people through canvas.

Swatek recalls the time he received an urgent request for a portrait. The client was friends with a married couple and she wanted to commission a painting of the two...but it had to be soon because the husband was stricken with brain cancer and didn't have long to live.

"She came to my studio with a photo on Thursday, I stayed up all night and the next day doing the portrait, she gave it to them on Saturday, and he passed away Monday," Swatek recalled.



Since then, Swatek has made a conscious effort to put more of himself into every piece. For instance, many random requests come from those who have an emotional attachment to their farms and ranches that can reach back many generations. They'll ask for paintings of old barns and tractors or broken down cars or other images they associate with their homestead.

"It's very rewarding to help people capture their memories," he said. "Frankly, I didn't pay enough attention to the details before and I might take shortcuts, but now I realize every blade

of grass is important. I spend much more time getting those details right."

Swatek considers himself on a lifelong quest to improve his craft. Largely self-taught, the 58-year-old identifies a certain skill to hone every year. For example, in 2021 he focused on texture, in 2020 he concentrated on contrast, in 2019 he emphasized composition.

Born in Wyoming into a military family, Swatek grew up in Garden Grove, Calif., where he started learning to airbrush t-shirts on the carnival circuit. He showed up at Citizen Band jamborees where the radio buffs would line up to have their CB handles air-brushed onto their vests. It was all an education for Swatek as he perfected his artistic skills but also learned the art of working with people.

In 1992, he made his way back to his father's native town of Wagner and later settled in Avon where he lives with his wife and business partner, Jennifer. The two travel to art shows and festivals around the region, including Winterfest in Aberdeen and the "granddaddy" Augustana Art Show in Sioux Falls.

Taking much of his inspiration and influence from the 15th century Baroque stylist Caravaggio, Swatek's studio work is done in an old two-story bank building. Along with portraits, he does wildlife paintings, landscapes and other subjects that reflect his interpretation of the rural Upper Midwestern lifestyle. Scenes range from boats in a harbor in Nova Scotia to horses running wild across the plains.

While Swatek enjoys his quiet time in the studio, he looks forward to the next art show where he can rub elbows with his fellow artists.

"The shows are so much fun. There's so much camaraderie," he said. "You get to see people you may not get to see often, and when you sell a piece everybody's happy. There's no arrogance or conceit, and everybody encourages each other to succeed."



STICKS AND STONES

Members of the Aberdeen Curling Club hold a public instructional session to teach both the young and old the finer points of their sport.

Curling clubs seek to educate the public and spread the word about the joy of throwing stones

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Looking for a sure-fire way to achieve permanent world peace and lasting harmony?

Make curling mandatory.

At least Bryan Rau thinks that's just the ticket to putting an end to international animosity. Rau serves on the board of the Aberdeen Curling Club and describes being hooked the moment he threw his first stone in competition eight years ago.

"When I touched that first stone it was like 10,000 volts going through me. I kicked out the hack and threw that stone down the ice and it was just incredible," he said. "I think if everybody curled, the whole world would be different. Everybody would get along. There's no bad curling. No matter where you play, whether you win or lose, it's all good curling. It's a game that's played with honor and pride. You don't have to be a jock or a talented athlete. It's a sport that's

made for everyone. I've seen people play from 8 to 85."

Bryan and his fellow board member, Steve Gascoigne, spent a recent afternoon in Gascoigne's garage taking in a documentary called "Sticks and Stones: Battle for the Soul of Curling." When they're not playing the game, they enjoy talking about it.

As for his role as the club's ice master, Gascoigne can wax eloquently about how to prepare the perfect sheet of competition ice. He describes the tedious and exacting process that involves various measures of zammung, scraping, mopping, pebbling (twice), watering and nipping.

And if you can't control your stone after Gascoigne and his crew have spent 45 minutes working their magic, more practice may be in order.

The job of a stone hitting its target largely falls on the shoulders of the skip. A typical four-member team includes the lead, second, vice skip and skip. Each player throws two 44-pound stones and the vice skip



Aberdeen Curling Club members Danny Wolfgram, John Hilton, Alex Wolfgram and John Peterson recently completed an "eight ender," which is often compared to a perfect game in baseball.

Curling club contacts

Sioux Falls Curling Club
605-271-7539
www.scheelsiceplex.com

Aberdeen Curling Club
605-228-1717
www.curlaberdeen.com

Rushmore Curling Club
605-484-4477
www.rushmorecurling.org

Yankton Curling Club
(605) 665-0229
www.yanktonice.org

MN Curling Association
www.mncurling.org



Many curling clubs have two common goals: dedicated ice and a desire to teach others the rules and techniques of their sport.

stands in when it's the skip's turn to throw. The direction of the stone's path can be altered by sweepers who brush the surface in a way that can make the stone lose speed, gain speed or curl left or right.

The last stone is called the hammer and can be used to earn points with a favorable position near "the button" or knock the opponent's stone out of the target area.

But beyond the technical aspects of the sport or tallying wins or losses, each of the four most active clubs across the state share the same goal of educating the public about the sport and getting younger folks hooked on curling.

Rau, for instance, is a long-time Scout master and is working with his local troop to get the kids involved. He and Gascoigne and other members of the club visit the Boys and Girls club, school groups and others to

teach youngsters how to play the sport, share their positive experiences and answer their questions.

The same spirit of advocacy is also found at the Yankton Curling Club, which was started last winter by Mike and Julianna Ford along with a small group of other enthusiasts.

Julianna serves as president of the group and fell in love with the sport when she was a high school student in her native Alberta. She describes failing to make the roster of the volleyball and basketball teams but eventually finding a home with the curling squad.

"Our gym class went to the local ice rink and I loved it," she recalled. "It was a lot more strategic than physical and it was something I could compete in."

She later moved to Sioux Falls, married Mike, and the two helped create the existing club in that city.

Several years later they moved to Yankton for Mike's work and soon started another club. The Yankton group lists about 45 members and is also heavily involved in growing the sport in their community.

"We're reaching out to schools, clubs and nursing homes," Julianna said. "There are handicapped leagues and elderly people can play by using a stick to throw the stone. It's a sport that's literally for everyone."

The Fords don't often find themselves on different sides of the ice, but when they do they try to keep the competitive fires closer to an ember than a raging flame.

So, bottom line... who's better?

"No comment," Julianna said, before commenting with a chuckle, "but I'm the one who went to Arena Nationals."



OUR HEARTS ARE IN IT

Five reasons we love serving our members

February may be the shortest month, but it's packed with special observances like Presidents' Day, Black History Month and Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day may seem like an observance originally created by a greeting card company, but over time, it's become a widely celebrated day, generating millions of dollars spent on flowers, candy and of course, greeting cards professing our love. But Valentine's Day isn't just for the lovebirds. It's also the perfect time to let our friends, family, co-workers and other special people in our lives know we care about them—with or without that store-bought greeting card. So, in that vein, we've created our list of top five reasons why we love serving you, the members of CME.

1. We love serving our members because without you, the co-op wouldn't exist. Our purpose is to provide you with reliable,

responsible and safe electricity. Simply put, CME exists to serve you. That's why we were formed in 1945—to bring power to our local area when for-profit utilities would not.

2. You enable us to complete our mission by supporting our efforts to give back. A major part of our mission is to serve our community and look after the greater good. With your assistance, we're able to award scholarships to school students, sponsor teens on the educational Youth Tour, and provide educational and/or safety-minded presentations to community members.

3. Members of our co-op also serve on the Board of Directors. They provide guidance for setting co-op priorities and helping make big decisions. Because our board members live in the area, they're able

to serve as the pulse of the larger community and identify immediate and long-term needs. The broader co-op membership provides helpful input through their vote on director elections and by weighing in on co-op and community issues.

4. You help us get it right. CME members are great about keeping us in the know. We do our best to avoid power outages, but Mother Nature can occasionally throw us a curve ball; our members are quick to report any power disruptions and are patient as our crews work to safely restore power. We know outages are frustrating, and your support as we work through storms means so much to our employees. We also appreciate your feedback. Your opinions are critical for the co-op's success, and we thank you for that.

5. You and other CME members make up the community we serve—and for us, it's all about community. Our employees live and work here too and care about our community the same way you do. We're invested and work to help it thrive. That's why CME participates in local events as much as possible. You're likely to see us at anything from a community clean-up to the school homecoming parade. You'll see us helping to install lights at the local ballfield, or a scoreboard at the football stadium. It's also why we invest in economic development, and why you'll see our employees participating at job fairs and school career days.

As a co-op, our mission is to enhance the quality of life in our community and look after its long-term interests. We love serving our members and our local community, and just like you, want to see it continue to thrive.



CALLING ALL TEENS:

Visit Washington, D.C., this summer for **FREE!**

Attention all area high school sophomores or juniors:

An all-expenses-paid opportunity of a lifetime to Washington, D.C., is happening this year on **June 18-24**.

What makes electric cooperatives different from other utilities is that "giving something back to the community" is part of their business plan. So, why do electric cooperatives bring high school students to Washington? Because they're committed to giving our next generation of community leaders the political insight and hands-on leadership experience they need to flourish. The student who wins this trip will return from D.C. as a stronger leader, and well-equipped to make a difference.

The Rural Electric Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the late 1950s. Students compete for this unique opportunity and are selected for this program by their local electric cooperative.

If you want to be part of the fun...

Pick up a "study packet" from your school counselor, and study, study, study! Take the test in your school over the history of CME and cooperatives in general, along with basic civics and government.

How the participant is chosen...

Two winners will be chosen according to top test scores.

The featured speakers during National Youth Day provide insight to the important roles electric cooperatives play in their community. Students gain a personal understanding of American history and their role as a citizen by meeting their representative and senators and explore the sights around the nation's capitol.

During the trip, you'll see tons of sites, meet teens from across the country and gain perspective on community and cooperatives! So – what are you waiting for? Apply today!

**For More Information,
Contact:**
Mike Dangel
dangel@cme.coop
Charles Mix Electric
PO Box 10
Lake Andes SD 57356
1-800-208-8587



STILL IN THE SADDLE

At age 77, Dave Dahl of Fort Pierre is nearing the completion of his 2,000th saddle and has no plans to slow down anytime soon. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Saddle-maker Dave Dahl of Fort Pierre delights in helping bronc riders bring home championship buckles and purses

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Dave Dahl will probably never win a hand model contest. Dahl's digits are gnarled, bent and puffy after nearly a half-century of hard labor producing bronc saddles for dozens of rodeo champions.

Dahl is quick to point out, however, that looks can be very deceiving: his mitts are as strong and dependable and productive as they've ever been, seasoned with decades of experience. At the age of 77, Dahl is still going strong creating saddles out of his shop in downtown Fort Pierre. Incredibly, he's still keeping his customary pace of hand-crafting nearly 60 high-

performance saddles a year.

"Somebody once said if your hands aren't moving, you ain't making money," Dahl chuckled.

During the last week of December, Dahl was busy dashing out his 56th saddle of 2021. That saddle, commissioned by a Canadian bronc riding champion, was No. 1,924 of Dahl's career. Yes, Dahl does keep count, stamping every saddle that leaves the shop. He's already anticipating reaching the 2,000 mark.

He's considering loaning that milestone saddle to Fort Pierre's Casey Tibbs Museum so that visitors can see the brand that's catapulted dozens of rodeo competitors to the top.

"There's actually two that are marked 1,000," Dahl said. Turns out that Glen

O'Neill ended up with the first one, but then Dahl's daughter Darcy Harper also received a commemorative version for roping events. Incidentally, No. 1,800 is displayed in the North Dakota Rodeo Hall of Fame where Dahl was inducted in 2017 for both his riding and his other contributions to the sport.

The list of riders who have won titles from the swells of a Dahl saddle is endless and includes champions from Alberta to Aberdeen to Australia: CoBurn Bradshaw, Cody DeMoss, Clay Elliott, Chuck Schmidt, Jake Watson, Tom Reeves, Jeff Willert, Taos Muncy, Zeke Thurston, Cort Scheer, Wade Sundell, Kyle Whitaker and so many more that Dahl can hardly keep up. Eight Dahl saddles were at the 2021 PRCA Nationals in Las Vegas.

Pro riders enjoy collecting purses and Dahl delights in helping them reach their goals. He knows how hard it is not only to stay on a spirited bucking bronc

for a few seconds but also how difficult it is to make a dollar at it.

Dahl recalls his own limited days as a card-carrying professional when he won several buckles on the PRCA circuit before taking his saddle-making business full-time in the summer of 1974.

Bronc riding set a fire in Dahl's soul at an early age, growing up on the family farm in Keene, N.D., as one of 11 children. He competed for New Town High School and later went on to claim a national collegiate title as team captain for Black Hills State in 1967. A year after graduating with a bachelor's degree, Dahl also won the South Dakota Rodeo Association's saddle bronc title.

While he taught school for three years, Dahl eventually decided to make saddle-crafting his life's work. Dahl's friend and fellow rider Dick Jones got him interested in the craft and the two set up shop in an old abandoned drug store building next to the bank in Fort Pierre. In 1986, the bank decided to open a drive-through lane so the business moved across the street to its present location where Dahl runs Diamond D Saddle Shop and also manages a western clothing store adjacent to the shop.

Dahl plans on keeping his hands hard at work with no end in sight. He stays



Dahl's phone number is on the speed-dial list of collegiate rodeo coaches in several states across the country. At left, Dahl applies his trademark stamp to one of his saddles.

as busy as ever while participation in rodeo continues on an upward growth trajectory. College rodeo coaches in Missouri, Texas, Oklahoma, California and other states have Dahl on their speed-dial lists. He said he recently received a call from someone wanting him to fit a saddle for her 11-year-old child.

"It's just really a booming sport," he

said. "The training is better, there are better horses, there's better TV coverage of the sport and there's more money out there to be made. There are still a lot of ranch kids who grew up on horses and know how to ride. And they like to compete to see who's the best. There's so much work and I still enjoy it, so I don't plan on jumping out of the saddle anytime soon."

THE FUTURE OF ENERGY STORAGE

A new form of battery storage technology, known as the iron-air battery, could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundreds of hours. Long-duration energy storage will be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the electric grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be available when needed.



New Tech Alert: Iron-Air batteries hold the promise of providing long-term energy storage capability

Maria Kanevsky

As the electric grid continues to evolve, new technologies are being developed to help advance the grid of the future. One of these technologies is a new form of battery storage technology called the iron-air battery, which could potentially provide long-duration energy storage for hundreds of hours.

Current battery technologies can only offer storage for tens of hours, meaning the innovative iron-air battery could provide energy for roughly 10 times longer than existing grid-scale batteries. This new technology could help ensure grid reliability even with extreme weather, such as hurricanes or powerful thunderstorms. Long-duration energy storage will also be crucial for adding more solar and wind energy to the grid since renewable energy is dependent on the weather and may not always be

available when we need it. New iron-air batteries could provide the missing link by storing excess energy to be used when the sun isn't shining or the wind isn't blowing.

The battery technology itself is made up of thousands of small iron pellets that develop rust when exposed to oxygen. This process discharges the battery. When the oxygen is removed, the pellets revert back to iron, which then charges the battery. According to Form Energy, the startup company developing this new technology, this process is known as the principle of "reversible rusting." Since the battery technology mainly uses the abundant and cheap resources of water, air and iron, the technology is relatively low-cost. These resources also make the technology relatively safe since there are no heavy metals, and also make the batteries simpler to recycle.

A key feature of these batteries is their

low cost, with Form Energy promising a price of less than \$20 per kWh. That price is about one-tenth the cost of lithium-ion battery technology, which is currently the cheapest battery technology on the market.

Individual iron-air batteries are about the size of a washing machine, making it easy to group many batteries together into a larger, scalable system. The size of the battery module group can vary, depending on the storage needed at a specific site. This means the batteries can be placed in a variety of areas, from rural to urban, to meet energy needs.

While this technology may be a solution for long-duration energy storage, the battery is not yet ready at the commercial level - although it is close. Form Energy estimates the battery should be ready by 2025.

Given the importance of long-duration energy storage for future of the grid, other start-ups are also looking to develop long-duration battery storage technology.

In the meantime, electric utilities can start to understand where this technology may potentially fit within their own systems to make the grid more resilient.

Electric co-ops hold discussions with lawmakers and community leaders

Billy Gibson

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In preparing for the 2022 Legislative Session, electric cooperative leaders from across the state held several local forums to engage in wide-ranging discussions with elected officials.

Representatives from Basin Electric, East River, Rushmore Electric, the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and many distribution cooperatives invited lawmakers and community leaders to engage in a dialogue focusing on the latest developments in the electric utility industry.

Electric cooperatives will continue to participate in meetings and forums throughout the Legislative Session, which is scheduled to conclude on March 10.

Ken Schlimgen, general manager of Central Electric in Mitchell, served as host of the last of the pre-session forums. Schlimgen welcomed the local lawmakers in attendance and went over some of the programs the co-op is pursuing to provide better service to its members.

Schlimgen showed a slide of the cooperative's small solar array constructed outside the headquarters office. He said the array allows the cooperative to offer members a first-hand look at how solar energy works. Members are also shown statistical data on how much electricity the array is producing at any given time.

This kind of real-time information



Ken Schlimgen, general manager of Central Electric based in Mitchell, describes how the cooperative is investing in an electric all-terrain vehicle to educate members about how EVs work and their potential for curbing greenhouse gas emissions. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

is important for members to understand how renewable resources such as solar and wind produce clean power, Schlimgen said. It's also important for members to understand the limitations of these sources.

"We discovered the first year we had this array that it performed at about 20 percent below the projections that were given by the manufacturer," he said.

Schlimgen also shared photos of the cooperative's Polaris Electric Ranger XP Kinetic UTV. He said the vehicle is rated at 110 horsepower and has a towing capacity of 2,500 lbs.: "This is something we can use on a practical level and also show members when they request more information about electric-powered vehicles."

House Majority Leader Kent Peterson was in attendance and noted lawmakers have considered presenting a bill regarding the licensing of electric UTVs.

"Given the rapid growth of the EV industry, this is something we'll have to consider at some point. It's great to have an opportunity like this to talk with the co-ops directly and get the useful information we need to make the right decisions," Peterson said.

Trevor Jones, general manager of SDREA, previewed some of the legislative issues that could be addressed during the 2022 session, including

issues surrounding the expansion of a network of electric vehicle charging stations and tax exemptions for data centers that consume large amounts of electrical power.

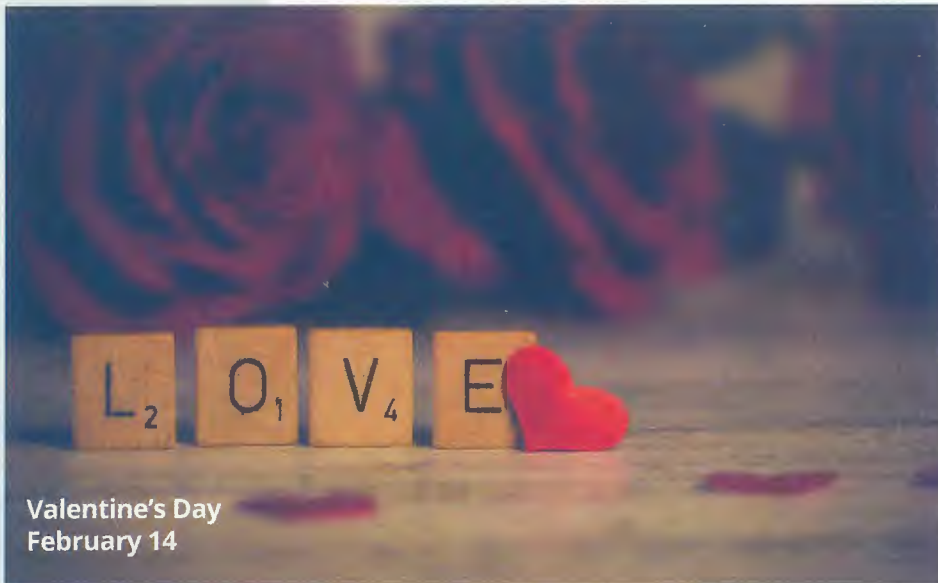
Chris Studer of East River Electric provided an overview of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Credit program. Participating consumers can sign up to receive credits or Green Tags for using renewable energy that comes from several wind farms that supply energy to the cooperative. Studer said the cost of participating in the program can vary among distribution co-ops.

Sen. Josh Klumb of Dist. 20 expressed his thanks to the co-op for organizing and hosting the forum.

"The application of these new technologies is something that will have a direct impact on our citizens for generations to come. In terms of doing our jobs as legislators, there's simply no substitute for this kind of interaction."



Chris Studer of East River Electric details the cooperative's REC Program.



Valentine's Day
February 14

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

JANUARY 22
Reba McEntire
Denny Sanford Premier Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

JANUARY 28-29
Deadwood Pro Snocross Races
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

JANUARY 28-29
27th Annual Dinner Theater
Reliance Legion Hall, Reliance,
SD, call 605-730-0553 for
more info and tickets

JANUARY 28-31
Lead Winterfest
Various Locations, Lead, SD,
call 605-584-1100

**JANUARY 28-
FEBRUARY 6**
**Black Hills Stock Show &
Rodeo**
Central States Fairgrounds &
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center,
Rapid City, SD, 605-355-3861

JANUARY 29-30
DTGCA Gun Show
National Field Archery Building,
Yankton, SD, 605-731-9154

FEBRUARY 4-6
Fiddler on the Roof
Washington Pavilion, Sioux
Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

FEBRUARY 5
**Lake Hendricks
Improvement Association
Ice Fishing Derby**
Hendricks, MN, contact Tim at
507-828-2113 for registration
and more information

FEBRUARY 9-12
**Watertown Winter Farm
Show**
Codington County Extension
Complex, Watertown, SD,
605-886-5814

FEBRUARY 11
Calamity's Shindig
Homestake Adams Research
& Cultural Center, Deadwood,
SD, 605-722-4800

FEBRUARY 11-12
Bulls & Broncs
Expo Center at the W.H. Lyon
Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD,
605-367-7178

FEBRUARY 11-13
**Black Hills Sports Show &
Outdoor Expo**
Monument Arena, Rapid City,
SD, visit bhsportsshow.com
for more information

FEBRUARY 12
Lakota Games on Ice
3200 Indian Village Road,
Mitchell, SD, 605-996-5473

FEBRUARY 12-13
**DTGCA Sioux Falls Trophy
Show (The Big One)**
Sioux Falls Convention Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-280-2438

FEBRUARY 18-28
Black Hills Film Festival
Various Locations in Rapid
City, Hot Springs, Hill City and
Spearfish, SD, visit www.blackhillsfilmfestival.org for more
information

FEBRUARY 19
Sioux Empire on Tap
Denny Sanford Premier
Center, Sioux Falls, SD, visit
siouxempireontap.com for
more info and tickets

FEBRUARY 25-26
Mardi Gras Weekend
Main Street, Deadwood, SD,
605-578-1876

**FEBRUARY 25-27,
MARCH 3-5**
Making God Laugh
Grand Opera House, Pierre,
SD, 605-224-7826

FEBRUARY 26
The Music of John Williams
Washington Pavilion, Sioux
Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 3-5
The 39 Steps
Orpheum Theater Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

MARCH 10-13
**Annual Sioux Empire
Sportsmen's Show**
Sioux Falls Arena &
Convention Center, Sioux
Falls, SD, visit www.siouxfalls-sportsshow.com for more
info and tickets

APRIL 22
**River Rat 1/2 Marathon,
10K, and 5K**
Yankton, SD,
www.allsportscentral.com

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