

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Crisp Breezes and Corn Mazes

Autumn Family Fun
Pages 8-9

Rodeo Champions
Pages 12-13

A Little Shop of Horrors



Russell Gall
Manager

On a recent trip to Washington DC, I was privileged to attend a play at the famous Ford's Theatre. It is a nice facility. With the exception of the presidential balcony, there were no bad seats that I could see. The theater was far from packed, even though there are more than enough people in that town to fill a hundred Ford Theatres. The reason the seats were empty was likely because the play being presented was Little Shop of Horrors, a quirky sci-fi love-story, and it was a Tuesday evening. This musical comedy is about a young man named Seymour who finds an unusual plant, and he decides to capitalize on its rarity to gain fortune, fame, and of course the love of his life – Audrey. The twist to the story is that Audrey is already involved with a psycho dentist (aren't they all?), and the plant, aptly named Audrey II, turns out to

be a man-eating carnivore from outer space. It is a funny and entertaining show...something you definitely talk about with

family and friends, which I did.

So, it should have been no surprise to me when my eldest daughter shipped me a Lego version of Audrey II on my birthday. Although only around six inches in height, this puzzle has hundreds of pieces, and a booklet that reads like the assembly manual for a six-burner gas grill. Although my birthday was in April, I still have yet to pull all the pieces out and tackle this challenging play toy. It just seems like something I should save for a stint in prison, or better yet I should regift it to my granddaughter.

The reason I mention this Audrey II puzzle is because it brought to

mind other complicated assembly projects. For example, the difficulty in assembling appropriate electricity prices for our members. There is much to consider when building a fair and appropriate rate that correctly aligns with the CME power bill, but still captures the costs associated with just having an electric service. Presently, that is the task being undertaken at Charles Mix Electric as the employees and the board of directors look to revamp how we charge for electricity. It is a complicated puzzle that once assembled will affect each member differently based on your electricity use habits.

Let me start with all the costs that are built

into a typical CME member electricity bill. There are several, but I will start with the power bill from our wholesale power supplier East River Electric. The power bill makes up over 50% of the costs to the cooperative, and it is broken down into several components, each of which is designed to cover a cost related to that component. Here is a quick overview:

- **FIXED CHARGE:** A fixed monthly charge CME pays to cover costs associated with purchasing power from the East River Electric transmission system.

- **SUBSTATION CHARGE:** A fixed monthly charge CME pays to cover costs associated with

(continued on page 3)

If the Basin increase is fully implemented, members will be doubly impacted.



Instead of fame, fortune and love, Audrey II brought Seymour nothing but challenges and complications.

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**

**CHARLES MIX
ELECTRIC**

(ISSN) No. 1531-0922
MANAGER Russell A. Gall
cme@cme.coop

CME Board of Directors
President Richard Dvorak
Vice-President Sam Schuman
Secretary/Treasurer Don Krcil
Directors: Brice Bultje, Todd Link, Denise Soukup, Ron Samuelson

Regular meetings of the board of directors of this cooperative are held on the third Thursday of each month.

Office Staff

Office Manager Karen Soulek
Member Services Michael Dangel
Acctg/Work Orders Carol Dvorak
Secretary/Cashier Sally Florey
Line Supt Chad Loeffler

Line Crew

Foreman Ryan Frederick
Foreman Jared VanDerWerff
Journeyman Aaron Vandenhoeck
Journeyman Joe Michael
Journeyman Wade Wright
Journeyman Alex Evans
Journeyman Cole Christopherson

This institution is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections is published monthly by Charles Mix Electric Association, PO Box 10, 210 S. 9th Ave, Lake Andes, SD 57356 for its members. Families subscribe as part of their electric cooperative membership. Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better rural living. Subscription information: Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Lake Andes Post Office, Lake Andes, SD 57356 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Charles Mix Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 10, Lake Andes, SD 57356; Telephone (605) 487-7321; Toll Free 1-800-208-8587; FAX (605) 487-7868; email cme@cme.coop.

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

Manager's Column

continued from page 2

having an East River Electric substation. CME uses six substations, two of which are shared with our neighbors Douglas Electric and the city of Pickstown.

- **CAPACITY CHARGE:** A fixed monthly charge CME pays based on the size of the transformers in our substations. This covers the cost of the equipment installed to supply reliable power at the maximum level needed by the CME members.

- **DEMAND CHARGE:** A variable cost CME pays based on the instantaneous use of electricity by the CME members at the time when the load on the electric grid is at its maximum point. The variability of this charge is largely dependent on the weather since hot, dry months or cold, windy months drive electricity use in South Dakota.

- **ENERGY CHARGE:** A variable cost CME pays based on the consumption of electricity by the CME members throughout a given month. It is a per kilowatt-hour (kWh) charge for energy used, exactly like what a CME member pays.

The next part of rate formulation is figuring out the cost of just having an electric service at your location. Every member who receives electricity from CME can see this charge on their monthly bill, which is listed as the Service Charge. The service charge should reflect the cost to bring electricity to every location and provide the supporting services relating to billing, maintenance and operations. This has been calculated

in the recent rate study to be around \$82 per month per service for a residential customer. However, since CME currently charges only \$42 per month, the remainder is recouped in the price of the first-rate blocks of kWh sold to the members.

The last part of the rate formulation is setting the price for each kilowatt-hour. There is a lot built into this because of all the costs that were tossed into this since the beginning of time. For example, all the items listed under the power bill go into this price, most significant is the cost of coincidental demand. There is also the cost of supplying different-sized service capacity for individual members, like the cost of wire, transformers, and gear used at a member's location. Since all these costs are bundled together in the price per kWh, it is the most complicated part of properly setting the price of electricity, especially since the time of electricity use is as important as the amount of electricity use by members. Individual members can greatly affect the cost of electricity through the variable parts of the power bill, but these costs do not correlate with the prices charged. The trick is to figure out who should be paying for what.

Going forward, the board has directed me and the CME team to do exactly that: figure out who should be paying for what and apply it in fair and impartial manner. The problem is that we do not have *(continued on page 10)*

CALENDAR RAFFLE WINNERS - JULY

9mm pistol - Melanie Mammenga, Border States Electric
Drone - Jarad Deters, East River Electric

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.

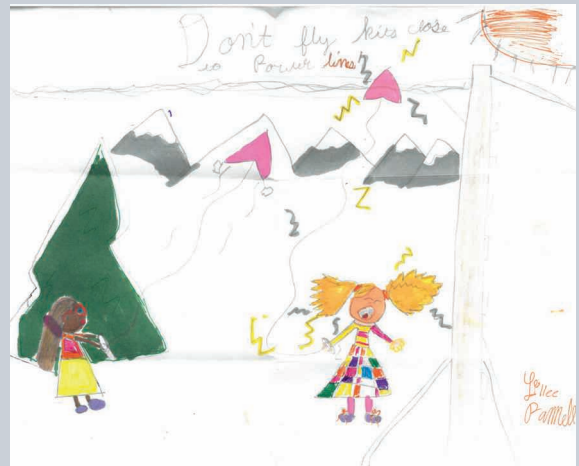
Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

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.

Mail Delay Causes Billing Concerns

Late fees forgiven for July

An unexplained mailing delay of several days caused approximately 90% of CME's billing statements to arrive much later than usual in July. Due to the fact that so many members received their statements with virtually no time to return payment by the due date, no late fees were assessed for the month of July.

Since 2010, CME billing statements have been prepared by our software provider, National Information Solutions Cooperative (NISC). NISC is headquartered in St. Louis, MO. Under normal circumstances, billing data is submitted to NISC around the 8th or 9th of each month. The statements are printed in St. Louis, sorted and trayed, and then trucked to a U.S. Postal distribution facility to begin their delivery to members' mailboxes. This journey normally takes about five days, and payments are due by the 20th of each month.

As it became apparent that the July billing statements were not appearing in mailboxes as expected, CME immediately began the process of tracking the mailing within the U.S. Postal system to determine the location of the mass mailing and/or the cause for the delay. We were able to determine that the mailing left St. Louis on July 10th. From there, two trays of mail, or approximately 162 items, were delivered as expected. The remaining almost-1700 pieces of mail then went "off-the-radar", with no tracking information available, for seven days. Just as CME was beginning to consider alternative options, such as a complete bill re-print and second mailing, the missing mail arrived at a mail processing center in Sioux Falls, SD on July 17th. Most members received their statements in their mailboxes within a few days after that.

Although this delay was an extreme abnormal occurrence, it is a good reminder that unforeseen circumstances beyond CME's control can and do happen. We realize that the late statement delivery caused an inconvenience to many of you, and we thank you for your patience as we worked to resolve the issue.

This is a great time to remind everyone of other available payment options, such as our "SmartHub" app. This app allows members to receive an email when their bill is ready, and provides the ability to view statements online, compare monthly usage, and make online payments. Electronic Funds Transfer, or EFT, is another payment option for members, which allows members to have their payments automatically withdrawn from a checking or savings account, or charged to a credit or debit card.



Find a link to the SmartHub app on our website, www.cme.coop, or visit charlesmix.smarthub.coop.

Please Return This Stub With Your Payment

Tear Stub Along This Dotted Line

Recurring (Automatic) Bank Account Draft Authorization	
Name of Financial Institution	
Routing Number: (first 9 digits on bottom of check)	Account Number:
Signature:	
<small>Important: Please attach a voided check, if selecting the Automatic Draft Option</small>	

Use the back of your bill remittance stub to sign up for EFT payments, or call our office for an enrollment form.



Photo credit: Jackie Jensen

LISA LOCKHART

Winning at What She Loves While Enjoying a Beloved American Pastime

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sarea.coop

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

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

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.

Manager's Column

continued from page 3

an assembly manual like the Lego Audrey II toy to go by to determine fairness. What we do have is all the components listed above, with a pretty good idea of the electricity use habits of the members who create these costs. With that information in hand, we can unbundle these costs and create a new rate structure that is just and fair. This rate structure is going to look something like the following:

1. The Service Charge will likely move to actual cost of service, somewhere around \$82 per month for each single-phase service and \$150 for each three-phase service.

2. The price per kWh will be changed to a flat rate and reduced to something under 10¢. Substantially down from the present-day 13.65¢ per kWh. This price will be parallel to the price CME pays per kWh to our power supplier.

3. A charge for Coincidental Demand will be added, likely around \$18 per kilowatt, mirroring the power bill and assigning demand costs to the members that cause that cost.

4. Finally, the capacity costs will be pulled out of the kWh charge to create a Capacity Charge. This will be added to appropriately cover the cost for individual member's service requirements for power. For example, a member with a large service to run a grain drying operation or supply a group of camper sites will be charged based on the maximum load. This will be somewhere around \$2 per kilowatt.

This may all sound very confusing, but please understand that although

some members will see a drastic rise in their monthly costs, there also an opportunity for members to reduce their electricity bill. As of now, this is a preliminary design, and some things will likely change as more information is garnered from the rate study consultant. Just how it impacts each member will largely depend on energy use, demand, and the schedule that the member keeps to manage both.

Lastly and probably the most impactful message of this entire article is the recent news I received regarding power costs from our power supplier Basin Electric. Basin Electric's management has proposed a 9% increase in the price of power, largely driven by significant capital investments to maintain reliability, support growing demand for electricity, and to offset increased operating costs. This unexpected increase is set to take effect on January 1st, 2025. And although Basin's rate change is still being discussed amongst its members in hope of tamping it down, I believe we will still see a substantial increase next year in power costs from Basin Electric.

Moreover, since last fall, I have been forecasting a price increase of 4% to 6% from Charles Mix Electric during that same time

period. As one of the few suppliers who did not raise rates during the pandemic, the cost of everything has caught up to us, and the board must take action if we are to keep your cooperative financially stable. If the Basin increase is fully implemented, the members will be doubly impacted.

In conclusion, this news will certainly be distressing to every CME member. The change in the rate structure and the price increases may stir members to feel they are in their own Little Shop of Horrors. However, before you throw yourself into the mouth of Audrey II, rest assured that the employees of CME intend to do what we can to educate and assist members so they may understand and adapt to these changes. We will also continue to advocate on your behalf where and when we can.

Please look for more information in future issues of the Cooperative Connections magazine. Until next month, stay safe and God Bless you.



CME's office will be closed on September 2 in observance of Labor Day. To all who labor, we hope you enjoy a well-deserved break!

Road Trippin'



The wheels on the bus went round and round, and this group of travelers on our bi-annual trip to North Dakota returned home just in time for us to squeeze a few sneak-peek preview photos in this issue. CME and Douglas Electric invited members to “Get on the Bus, With Us!” in the jointly-sponsored two-day trip. Look for more photos and details in next month’s issue of “Cooperative Connections”.



Sam Schuman and this group of tourists cram into the elevator as they ascend to the top of Antelope Valley Station, the Basin Electric power plant that generates electricity for much of the upper midwest region.

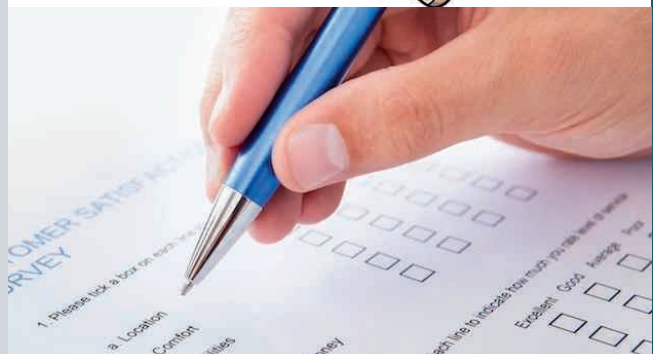
Your Electric Cooperative needs YOUR HELP

Your electric cooperative works hard to provide safe, reliable and convenient electric power for you and your family. We also provide programs to help you use energy efficiently.

To help us plan for the future and determine what programs will benefit you most, your cooperative needs your help.

This fall, we will be conducting a survey of our residential consumers. If you receive a survey, please help us by taking a few minutes to complete it. Your answers are very important, so please respond as best as possible and return it promptly. A postage-paid envelope will be included for your convenience. The survey will also be available to complete online.

We need YOU!





RODEO CHAMPIONS

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

Jocelyn Johnson

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

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

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 Meadow's 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

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

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

AUG. 28-SEPT. 2 **South Dakota State Fair**

7 a.m.-8 p.m.
Huron, SD
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

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

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.

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