

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Bringing the Light

Electric Cooperatives
Spread Holiday Cheer
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REED Fund: Powering
Your Community
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ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL



Dick Johnson
dick.johnson@
westriver.coop

ALIVE BLESSED GRATEFUL

Those three small words from an inspirational quote I received recently really struck me as I prepared for my November Thanksgiving column. I am alive, blessed, and grateful for many things this year. Let me highlight a few of those blessings.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

As I look at all the bad news, doom and gloom we read about in the papers, newsfeeds, and see on TV, we are still the greatest nation on earth. I don't care who you are, we all still enjoy a standard of living matched by few other nations. Yes, our lives are busier, our schedules more hectic, but much of this is due to our choices to do more, own more and squeeze more out of each day as we can. Take time for yourself, family, and friends.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

I am grateful for our not-for-profit cooperative form of business. Much like the republic we live in, where you, the members, vote for the Board members to serve on your behalf. That was especially on display at our recent annual meeting when Peter Blake was elected by the membership from District 1.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

How blessed all of us are to have so many brave men and women who serve, and have served, in our armed forces for us to preserve our freedoms. We are grateful to our first responders and public safety roles for their efforts to protect us and to ensure that we are safe and secure.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

I am blessed that our cooperative continues to grow with new members. We have seen an increase in residential accounts and commercial businesses with over 20,000 meters now; over 700 new services year to date.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

I am blessed and grateful for our employees who understand the importance of service to our members and that dedication and strong work ethic are things to be proud of. Our employees are committed to providing excellent service to the members at the end of the line. It is so easy for all of us to take having reliable, low-cost electric service for granted. You flip a switch, and the electricity is there; 24-7. I am so thankful our employees worked the past 12 months safely making sure they got home every night.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

I am blessed that I have such a great Board of Directors to work with. They have blessed me with their great vision and leadership as we move forward. I am grateful I had the opportunity to work with Jerry Hammerquist, who recently retired from his District 1 Board position. He always had the member at the end of the line in his mind while making sure the employees were taken care of.

ALIVE, BLESSED, GRATEFUL:

Finally, I am grateful and blessed to not only have my cooperative family and friends, but a wonderful wife and two daughters who bless me each day with their love and patience in a job that brings plenty of stresses home. 755801

From the Board of Directors, staff, and employees of West River Electric, our hope is that you step back this Thanksgiving season and look at how blessed we all have been, and how grateful we are to be alive. Yes, Alive, Blessed, Grateful!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

Our Mission:

We are safety conscious, community oriented, and the trusted energy expert for our member owners.

Our Vision:

We will achieve an ACSI score of 90 by 2024.

Our Values:

- 1. Safety
- 2. Accountability
- 3. Integrity
- 4. Innovation
- 5. Commitment to Community

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board President: Andy Moon

Board of Directors

- Stan Anders – Vice President
- Jamie Lewis – Secretary
- Chuck Sloan – Treasurer
- Larry Eisenbraun
- Peter Blake
- Marcia Arneson
- Howard Knuppe
- Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

Dick Johnson –
dick.johnson@westriver.coop

Editor

Amanda Haugen –
amanda.haugen@westriver.coop

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of West River Electric Association. Members subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership for \$6 a year. West River Electric Cooperative Connections purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better living. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 per year. Periodicals Postage paid at Wall, S.D., and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to West River Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 412, Wall, SD 57790-0412.

Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6519, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail robert.raker@westriver.coop.

NOW ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS!

High School Seniors and Current College Students

7, \$500 scholarships up for grabs!

Deadline to apply: Feb. 5th, 2024

More Information 605-393-1500
www.westriver.coop

Brightening your holidays is what we do best!

Our offices will be closed the following dates:

Friday Dec. 22nd | All day
Monday Dec. 25th | All day
Friday Dec. 29th | 11am-5pm
Monday Jan. 1st | All day

To report an outage please call 605.279.2135 or 605.393.1500

Be Prepared for Winter Driving

Prepare Your Car for Winter

In addition to annual maintenance, here are some tips to winterize your car:

- Test your battery; battery power drops as the temperature drops
- Make sure the cooling system is in good working order
- Have winter tires with a deeper, more flexible tread put on your car
- If using all-season tires, check the tread and replace if less than 2/32 of an inch
- Check the tire pressure; tire pressure drops as the temperature drops
- Check your wiper blades and replace if needed
- Add wiper fluid rated for -30 degrees
- Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas line freeze

Remember to keep your car's emergency preparedness kit fully stocked, too.

Before You Start Out

- Clean your car's external camera lenses and side mirrors
- Remove dirt, ice and snow from sensors to allow the assistive-driving features, like automatic emergency braking, to work
- In frigid weather, you may want to warm up the car before you drive
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never leave a vehicle running in your garage – even with the garage door up
- If the forecast looks iffy, wait out the storm; if you must travel, share your travel plans and route with someone before you leave

How to Avoid a Crash

AAA offers the following driving tips:

- Avoid using cruise control in wintry conditions
- Steer in the direction of a skid, so when your wheels regain traction, you don't have to overcorrect to stay in your lane
- Accelerate and decelerate slowly
- Increase following distance to 8 to 10 seconds
- If possible, don't stop when going uphill

If visibility is severely limited due to a whiteout, pull off the road to a safe place and do not drive until conditions improve.

Avoid pulling off onto the shoulder unless it is an absolute emergency. Limited visibility means other vehicles can't see yours on the shoulder.

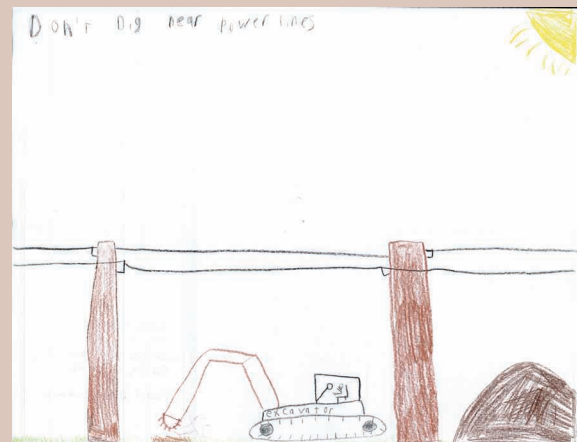
Know Your Car's Capabilities

My Car Does What? is a national campaign to help educate drivers about the safety features built into vehicles. Search for your car and find out what safety features are already built in.

Traction control is now standard on most new vehicles. This function helps your vehicle gain traction on snowy, icy or wet surfaces, particularly when accelerating from a stopped or slowed position, or when trying to make it up a slippery hill.

Anti-lock braking system (ABS) helps you steer in emergencies by restoring traction to your tires and is standard on most new vehicles. ABS may vibrate or pulse when engaged. This is normal. Continue to press and hold pressure to the brake pedal.

Remember, you are your car's best safety feature. Take precautions to ensure you arrive safely at your destination. If you become stranded in an unfamiliar area, do not leave your car. Light flares in front and behind the car and make sure the exhaust pipe is not blocked by snow, mud or objects.



Don't Dig Near Power Lines

Hayes Schomp, Age 10

Hayes Schomp cautions people to be careful where they dig. Hayes is the son of Thad and Devan Schomp from Eklton, S.D., 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.

HOLIDAY FAVORITES

OYSTER STEW

Ingredients:

- 1 qt. medium/large oysters
- 1 medium onion (diced)
- 2 qts. half and half
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 lb. real butter (no cheating here)
- 3 tbsps. Worcestershire Sauce

Method

Before you know it, Christmas Eve will be here so get ready the traditional Oyster Stew. In a saucepan, saute onions and oysters with the butter. Simmer until the oysters crinkle. In a crock pot, add half and half, cream of mushroom soup, and Worcestershire Sauce. Then, add the oysters, onion and butter. Season to taste with fresh ground black pepper and salt. Simmer for six hours on low heat (high heat will curdle the milk). Serve with oyster crackers.

Kari Larson- Reder
Warner, S.D.

BETTER THAN CANDY PIE

Ingredients:

- 1 nine in. chocolate ready crust
- 1 cup sliced bananas
- 1/4 cup chopped, dry roasted peanuts
- 1 small pkg. instant butterscotch pudding
- 2/3 cup dry milk
- 1 1/4 cups water
- 2 tbsps. peanut butter
- 3/4 cup whipped topping
- 2 chocolate graham crackers, chopped

Method

Mix together dry milk, pudding, and water with wire whisk. Add peanut butter. Cover bottom of pie crust with bananas. Spread pudding mixture over bananas. Spread whipped topping next. Sprinkle with chopped peanuts and chopped graham crackers.

Janet Ochsner
Box Elder, S.D.

CHRISTMAS CRACK BARK

Ingredients:

- 1 sleeve saltine crackers, (about 35 crackers)
- 1 cup unsalted butter
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/8 tsp. sea salt
- 1 1/2 tpsps. pure vanilla extract
- 1 pkg. (10 - 12 oz.) chocolate chips, semi-sweet, milk or dark chocolate

Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a large baking sheet with parchment paper or foil. Spray lightly with no-stick cooking spray. Arrange crackers on baking sheet in single layer so that the edges almost touch. Heat butter and brown sugar in two-quart saucepan on medium heat. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring frequently. Simmer two to three minutes. Remove from heat; stir in salt and vanilla. Pour caramel sauce over crackers and spread to evenly coat crackers. Bake six minutes. Remove pan from oven. Sprinkle chocolate chips over caramel layer. Let stand five minutes. Spread chocolate chips into an even layer on top of caramel. Refrigerate 2 hours or freeze 30 to 45 minutes or until firm. Break or cut into pieces to serve. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator up to one week.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Annual Meeting Recap



Amanda Haugen
Communications Specialist

West River Electric's 84th Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023, at the Wall Community Center. The meeting started with everyone standing and saluting the flag as Athena Simons, daughter of Sandan and Elaine Simons of Wall, sang our National Anthem. Our theme this year was Bridging the Gap: Energizing Generations. It is crucial for us to bridge the gap between long-standing members and the cooperative's future generations to ensure we collectively move forward towards a brighter future.

Board President Andy Moon guided the meeting through the normal business procedures. He highlighted the retirement of \$1.1 million in capital credits, the exponential growth we have seen over the last two years compared to what the average has been over the last 10 years, and the inevitable rate increase

projected for 2024. Moon ended with an update on our main power supplier – Basin Electric Power Cooperative.

Legal Counsel Greg Erlandson guided the membership through the board election process and the voting of District 1 director to fill the seat upon Jerry Hammerquist's retirement. The membership re-elected two incumbent directors on the Board of Directors, Charles "Chuck" Sloan, District 2, and Larry Eisenbraun, District 3. Peter Blake, of New Underwood, was elected to represent District 1. He will serve a three-year term which will run until October 2026. Peter's professional work experience has been designing and building electrical infrastructure in the Western U.S. and he is currently a licensed



CEO Dick Johnson gives an update on cooperative affairs.



A scholarship is presented to Cameron Shull.

Annual Meeting Recap, Continued

civil engineer. 3701

When he's not managing engineering projects, you may find him working on his family acreage, hiking, hunting or fishing in the area. Peter is active in his two young kid's lives and the local church they are a part of. He and his wife, Stephanie, homeschool their two children and are grateful to live in one of the best places in America. Peter understands that hard work and respect for people are the keys to success in any organization. He is eager to serve the co-op as District 1 Board of Director.

The Board would like to thank the other two candidates for their interest in the cooperative and running for the board.

Dick Johnson, CEO of West River Electric, went over various happenings at your co-op. First, he pointed out how we were blessed with another clean audit and the exciting news of breaking 20,000 meters. He then touched on the cost increase of material to build the new services and how a rate increase is likely in 2024. Dick touched on solar output, reliability, and he recognized two long-term employees that retired earlier in the year; Cheryl Walker and Wayne Shull. He wrapped up with an update on the board, recognizing Jerry Hammerquist on his 39 years of service to the board, the employees, and their dedication to the members and helping to bridge the gap between the current and future members of West River Electric. 719200

Attendees of the meeting were able to receive a meal ticket to their favorite restaurant in Wall, have a chance to win some door prizes, and get updated on what is happening at their co-op. Every year, high school or current college students have a chance at one of six \$500 scholarships, just for attending the annual meeting. This year we gave out five as that is all that were in attendance this year for students. West River Electric has three opportunities for students to have a chance at one of these scholarships; Member Appreciation Day, Annual Meeting, and the end of the school year in the spring.

The board would like to thank everyone for attending your annual meeting. Please stay safe and healthy, and we will see you next year for the 85th Annual Meeting.



Jerry Hammerquist is honored for his 39 years of service to the WREA Board of Directors.



Chuck Sloan
District 2

Larry Eisenbraun
District 3

Peter Blake
District 1

Congratulations to Chuck and Larry on their re-election to the Board and welcome Peter for District 1 Director.

"The quality of a director is service before self."

Charles "Chuck" Sloan
Board of Director (District 2),
West River Electric

LIGHT PARADE



BRINGING THE LIGHT

Electric Cooperatives Spread Holiday Cheer

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

While Santa's elves are hard at work at the North Pole, South Dakota's electric cooperatives are working to bring their own magic to their local neighborhoods, illuminating local parades with festive lights. Black Hills Electric Cooperative is just one of many examples of how a co-op can not only bring light but also creativity to their community.

Every December, Black Hills Electric crafts an exceptional float for the annual Custer Parade of Lights. For Bill Brisk, the manager of operations at Black Hills Electric, the parade isn't merely an event – it's a cherished tradition for their co-op.

As the parade approaches, the Black Hills Electric workshop bustles with

activity, mirroring Santa's very own workshop. Guided by a design from Brisk, linemen and staff assemble their unique Christmas float – crafting, welding and fabricating many of their designs from scratch.

“Just a few nights before the parade, we host a family night where we bring out the families of our employees,”



said Brisk. “The co-op provides food and drinks and we all work together to finish the float.”

In just two weeks, the co-op repurposes discarded equipment and scrap parts into creative masterpieces. One year, the co-op created an oversized shopping cart from old pipe laying around the shop. The next, they used retired meter loop pipes, guy wires, and meter covers to create palm trees and coconuts for a beachside Santa scene. Even Willie Wirehand, the co-op’s safety mascot, has been outfitted for a festive float. Despite being fabricated from old parts, the end result is always something worthy of a debut at the North Pole.

“Most everything we do is built in our shop.” said Brisk. “We do all

of the fabrications ourselves, and we haven’t had a flop yet.”

Luckily, the co-op’s efforts haven’t gone unnoticed. Since 2015, they’ve clinched an award every year at the Custer Parade with the only exceptions being 2020 and 2021 when the pandemic halted festivities. Their trophy collection holds a wide range of awards, boasting awards like the Rudolph’s Choice Award, Best Light, Best Music and most recently, the Custer Fruit Cake Award.

Dawn Murray, the executive director of the Custer Chamber of Commerce, expressed her admiration. “They really go all out. Beyond the parade, they even participate in our scarecrow decorating contest. I remember one year they had a scarecrow up in a

bucket truck, which was really cool.”

Yet, for Black Hills Electric, Custer is just the beginning. The co-op has grand visions for a broader festive footprint. With a service area that stretches from just south of Terry Peak to Nebraska, Brisk sees even more opportunities to shower communities with holiday cheer.

“It’s a festive time of year and something that we want to extend out to different towns in our service territory,” said Brisk. “Seeing the kids’ eyes brighten when we light up our float for the first time really makes the whole thing worth it, and if we can spread that to more of our members, all the better.”



Enning Area Line Rebuild



Matt Schmahl
Construction
Project Manager

At West River Electric, our commitment to providing dependable power to our community leads us to a much-needed reconstruction project. This carefully planned project is an important component of our work plan budget, representing a pivotal step in the continued enhancement of our power distribution network. The force behind our commitment to dependable power is in the reconstruction of an aging single-phase power line just on the north side of Enning.

The existing power line, initially installed in the 1950s, has faithfully supplied power to the community for generations. However, as time progresses, the need for transformation becomes clear. We are dedicated to modernizing this essential piece of infrastructure ensuring the sustained reliability and stability of our power supply. To achieve this, our innovative approach involves the construction of a new single-phase line within the boundaries of the existing right of way.

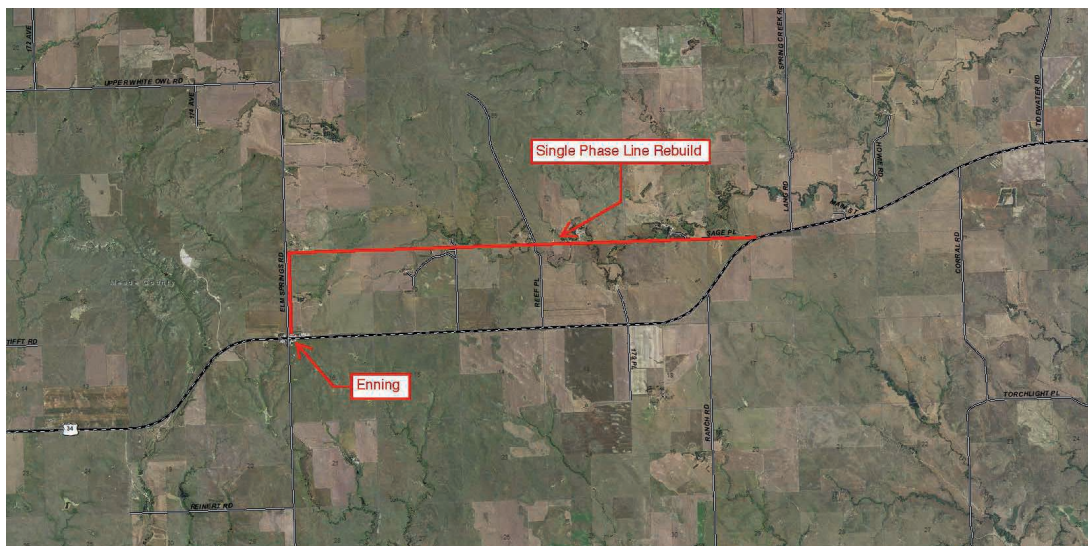
The project's starting point

takes place at the intersection of Highway 34 and Elm Springs Road, extending northward for a mile. It then takes an eastern turn, covering a 5.5-mile distance reaching an intersection of Highway 34 and just before Lang Road. Two noteworthy aspects of our design strategy is the reduction of span length and the selection to T2 wire. Span length is the distance between two poles and the reduction of that significantly enhances the line's structural resilience. The T2 wire is a twisted conductor that will help to mitigate the effects of ice loading and wire disturbances during inclement weather conditions. The decision to include these two improvements listed above stemmed from a history of success and an established track record of reliability. Our commitment to a dependable and resilient power infrastructure is a commitment to you, the member-owner.

As a testament to our thorough planning and forward-thinking, West River Electric has successfully finished the essential right-of-way preparations. This included the

removal of trees and brush; a proactive step taken to anticipate and address potential clearance problems. Our comprehensive strategy not only prioritizes operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness but also emphasizes the reduction of concerns related to power outages as well as the safety of our linemen and the public.

Our vision for the successful completion of this project is set for mid to late December. It is essential to acknowledge that this timeline is contingent on the prevailing weather conditions during that period, mirroring our steadfast dedication to a safe and high-quality project. West River Electric remains committed to serving the community by providing an unwavering, resilient, and dependable power infrastructure that stands as a testament to our enduring commitment to the region's growth and prosperity. We're here to ensure that Enning continues to thrive, powered by our commitment to delivering a better and brighter future. 1295100



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

SHINING THE LIGHT ON WEST RIVER ELECTRICS DEDICATED EMPLOYEES



MATT KRUSE
JOURNEYMAN
LINEMAN

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I have been with WREA for 8 years and before that I worked power line construction for 4 1/2 years

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

I am a Journeyman Lineman and what I do at my job is maintain power lines and keep the power on to the members.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

The thing I like most about WREA is the teamwork everyone displays.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I have made a lot of great memories at WREA most of those memories have a common theme and that's working together as a team to keep the power on for the members.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

Safe, reliable, and family oriented.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

What motivates me to succeed daily is my family!



STACEY PARKIS
MEMBER SERVICE
REPRESENTATIVE

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

I've been working for West River for 10 years.

WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

Member Service Representative/answering the phone. Helping members connect and disconnect service. Assist them with billing questions and payment options. Alerting owners of properties transferring or disconnected for non-pay.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

Being able to serve our member/owners. I take pride in being able to help them with what they need. I also love when we can surpass their expectations with our member service. A lot of people are so happy when we answer the phone.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?

When a past member called in wanting to thank the person who makes the Capital Credit checks. She then explained to me how happy she was to receive the check and how it is such a blessing at this time in her life. She just wanted to express to us how much she appreciated it.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?

Reliable electricity service

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GET UP AND GO TO WORK EVERY DAY?

My family. I want to provide a decent life for them and be a good role model.



Garretson Childcare helpers are getting ready to help grow their daycare.

REED FUND

Powering Your Community

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@srea.coop

The community development financial institution powered by rural electric cooperatives in South Dakota is about to reach a major milestone.

The (Rural Electric Economic Development) Fund's total dollar amount in projects impacted is anticipated to reach \$1 billion by the end of 2023, according to Eric Fosheim, Economic Development Manager for REED.

REED also exceeded 10,000 in jobs impacted (created or retained) since its creation in 1996.

"Currently, we sit at just over \$998 million in total projects impacted," Fosheim said in October.

The REED Fund is a 501(c)3

corporation and operates as a revolving loan fund that provides financing for economic development projects in rural areas.

Those projects that receive REED Fund dollars must promote growth and be a catalyst in creating more business, wealth and job opportunities within the rural community. The projects are also expected to improve infrastructure and economic base in rural areas.

The REED Fund provides financing from the federal government and other lender, in addition to revolving interest payments collected over the years. The REED Fund does not use money generated by electric rate charges.

Fosheim said that as of September 30, REED has issued 401 loans for a total of \$125.26 million.

"This includes \$104,174,418 in loans made using REED dollars and \$21,082,793 from the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant program," Fosheim said.



Central Electric General Manager Ken Schlimgen, left, delivers REED funding to Mitchell Technical College.

Fosheim said it isn't entirely surprising that the \$1 billion was hit this year.

"REED has seen steady growth over the years, but typically sees higher than normal application volume in times of rising interest rates. In addition, costs are rising as well, so total project costs for each individual project have been higher as well.

Dakota Energy General Manager Chad Felderman has been on the REED Fund board since 2018.

He said the impact the REED Fund has on local communities is unique, noting that the businesses the fund helps aren't necessarily ones that Dakota Energy provides electricity to, but are ones that help our communities, "which in turn helps our members where they live," he said.

"It is gratifying to help our hospitals, fire departments, and schools purchase equipment so our small communities can provide those essential services," Felderman said.

One of those projects funded by REED is the Huron Regional Medical Center dialysis building.

"We are proud to support HRMC in sustaining and expanding local access to critical medical services right here in our community," Felderman said.

Douglas Electric Cooperative General Manager Jay Spaans echoed Felderman's sentiment, noting that the REED Fund is special because co-ops get to loan money to businesses that they don't always serve.

"For us, it is just about making

improvements in the community. Sure, we would like to serve the load, but even if the new load doesn't reside in our territory, we still will fund the loan," Spaans said. "It is all about the greater good for our communities."

West River Electric CEO Dick Johnson also serves on the REED Fund board. He's one of the first board members to represent a co-op in the western part of the state. The REED Fund was originally set up by co-ops in eastern South Dakota. After two decades of successful growth and development, the REED Fund decided to allow co-ops in western South Dakota to join in 2017. Johnson said West River Electric was one of the first western co-ops to be accepted into the REED Fund.

"It was one of the best things we could ask for. We were struggling with our own revolving loan fund but we had primarily loaned to government entities, no businesses," Johnson said.

"When we became members of REED that gave us another tool in our toolbox to offer our members who were interested in our area or needed to expand their businesses or infrastructure."

West River Electric hasn't had many loans, but Johnson is still encouraged by what he's seen as a board member.

"Sitting on the Board and seeing the applications and the impact we are having on the economy of small towns all over South Dakota is phenomenal," Johnson said.

Johnson had high praise for the folks at the REED Fund office in Madison, calling

them a "class act" who really understand the region's rural areas.

"They work hard to say yes and somehow make it work. The fact that the local co-op board can help make the decision to move a project forward is unheard of – real boots on the ground who are in the communities we serve and understand what is needed to thrive," Johnson said. "It is a unique model just like the cooperative business model."

Did You Know

From 2018 to 2022, electric cooperatives in South Dakota spent \$5.7 Billion on capital investment, operations, and maintenance activities and retired \$102.8 Million in capital credits paid to consumer-members.

Through these expenditures, co-ops drive economic benefits in their local communities and throughout the state.

Over the five-year period, electric co-ops in South Dakota are responsible for:

STATEWIDE IMPACT

- \$4.2 Billion to South Dakota's Gross State Product (GSP)
- An average of 5,848 jobs in South Dakota each year
- \$2 Billion in labor income in South Dakota
- \$194.1 Million in federal taxes
- \$423 Million in state taxes
- \$418.4 Million in local taxes

All of these impacts occur in counties where electric cooperatives operate, showcasing the substantial local economic benefits that co-ops provide in the communities they serve.



Participants celebrate the groundbreaking for the National Music Museum in Vermillion.

OPERATION ROUND UP



Operation Round Up

In today's fast-paced world, community service and giving back to society hold great significance. The 7th Cooperative Principle is Concern for Community and West River Electric leans on that with full force. We have recognized the importance of community support and that is why we launched Operation Round Up in 2001. This initiative is a testament to our mission statement, "We are safety conscious, community oriented, and the trusted energy experts for our member owners," and our commitment to making a positive impact on the lives of our members and the local communities we serve.

What is Operation Round Up?

Operation Round Up is a program designed to empower West River Electric members to contribute to their local communities. The program involves "rounding up" members' monthly electric bills to the nearest dollar, with the extra change going directly to a

charitable fund. The average contribution per member is usually 50 cents per month or \$6.00 a year, but when pooled together, these small donations can make a significant difference in the community. 2478800

How Does It Work?

Participation in Operation Round Up is completely voluntary, allowing

members to opt in or out at any time. Members who choose to participate will see their monthly bills rounded up to the nearest dollar, and the extra change is then automatically transferred to a designated trust fund. For example, if a member's electric bill is \$78.50, it would be rounded up to \$79.00, and the additional 50 cents would be donated to the fund.



Operation Round-up Application deadline

April 1, 2024 by 5pm



Rapid City Office
3250 E Hwy 44
Rapid City, SD 57703



Wall Office
1200 W Fourth Ave
PO Box 412
Wall, SD 57790



Operation Round Up, Continued

Where Does the Money Go?

All Operation Roundup donations are placed in a trust that is administered by an independent Board of Directors. This Board of Directors is made up of community leaders who serve on the Board on a voluntary basis. They are responsible in receiving the funds, evaluate all requests for funds, and decide how to distribute the funds.

When the Board of Directors meet every June, they look at the trust and determine how much can be given out to charitable organizations, groups, families, or individuals who have submitted an application requesting funds.

The Impact

Operation Round Up is an example of how small change can make a big difference. Over time, these seemingly small contributions have added up to thousands of dollars, benefiting communities across the region served by West River Electric.

If you are not signed up and wish to have your bill rounded up to the next whole dollar, you can contact either office at 605.279.2135 or 605.393.1500, or sign up at www.westriver.coop. The deadline for applications in 2024, is April 1, 2024.

IS YOUR CONTACT INFO UP TO DATE?
 WANT TO RECEIVE YOUR COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS ELECTRONICALLY?

It is important that West River Electric Association has the most updated contact information on your account. We may need to contact you for various reasons including planned or unplanned outages, billing information or Cooperative news and events.



West River Electric Association, Inc.
 Your Tomorrow's Energy Cooperative

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

Scan the QR code or call us at 605.393.1500 or 605.279.2135 to update your phone and email address.



visit www.westriver.coop for more info



LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of West River Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, you will be a winner. There will be five account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you spot your account number and notify our office before the 10th of the next month, you will receive a \$10 credit on your next bill.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD
 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 605-393-1500

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave, Wall, SD
 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 605-279-2135

A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience.

SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 during office hours. E-mail us at info@westriver.coop for questions on your account.

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 in the event of an outage or other emergency. Our calls are answered 24/7.



Dec. 14-17
Christmas at the Cathedral
 521 N Duluth Avenue,
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-988-3765

DEC. 2
Julefest Scandinavian Christmas Festival and Bazaar
 8 a.m.
 Our Saviors Lutheran Church
 Spearfish, SD

DEC. 3
Hartford's Hometown Christmas
 7:30 a.m.
 Hartford, SD

DEC. 8-9
Alexandria's Winter Festival
 5 p.m.
 Alexandria, SD

DEC. 8-9
Junkin' Market Days
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

DEC. 9
Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Wessington, SD

DEC. 9
Christmas on the Prairie Craft Show
 9 a.m.
 Douglas High School
 Box Elder, SD

DEC. 10
Hill City Senior Saturday Breakfast
 Hill City Center
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 17
Christmas Cantata
 3 p.m.
 Hermosa United Church of Christ
 Hermosa, SD

NOV. 24
Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Dakota Avenue
 Huron, SD

NOV. 25
Mid-Winter Fair
 Gregory Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

NOV. 30
Christmas on the Prairie
 5 p.m.
 Miller, SD

NOV. 30-DEC. 3
Hatchery Holidays
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

DEC. 1
Santa's Thrift Village
 8 a.m.
 Minneluzahan Senior Center
 315 N. Fourth St.
 Rapid City, SD

DEC. 1-2
Christmas in the Hills
 Hot Springs, SD

DEC. 1-30
Trees and Trains Exhibit
 SD State Railroad Museum
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 1-30
Holiday Express and Holiday Express Spiked
 1880 Train
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 2
Rapid City Garden Club's 62nd Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale
 8 a.m.
 Central States Fairgrounds
 Rapid City, SD

DEC. 2
Parade of Lights
 6 p.m.
 Redfield, SD

DEC. 2
Tabor Parade of Lights
 5:30 p.m.
 Tabor, 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.