

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Mitchell Technical College launches careers in a wide range of fields including training for linemen like Lacreek Electric's Matt Kruid.
Photo by Billy Gibson

Tech Training

Mitchell Technical College
Pages 8-9

Promoting tribal tourism
Pages 12-13

A Very Merry Christmas



Dick Johnson
General Manager

What a December, at least on the east end of our system! We had four days of snow and wind and then turned around less than a week later and unleashed an even more furious wind and snow squall. As far as WREA, we were extremely fortunate to only have minimal issues. However, there is a lot of winter left and our linemen are ready and willing to take on Mother Nature's wrath. My hat is off to all the first responders, City, County and State employees that worked many hours trying to keep ahead of the previous deluge. Many Wall, New Underwood, and Wicksville members helped to take care of stranded motorists in the second storm. They all went above and beyond. Thanks, from all of us.

In my first column of the year, I gave a quick update on our budget and work plan. Dawn had quite a challenge on her hands this year. With our growth, inflation, and increased interest rates, she had to really, "knead the bread," so to speak to get a balanced budget. Fortunately, for the members there will be no rate increase in 2023. Our power costs were mostly flat, which was great news. However, the items listed above put a pinch on our margin levels. We have revenue deferral from our RUS approved revenue deferral plan to bring back in revenue to help stabilize the rates in 2023.

The Board recently approved our budget and workplan for 2023 in the amount of \$27 million. That is about the size of our entire last 4-year work plan. In the interests of fairness, most of these projects won't be completed until late in 2023 or even 2024 and 2025. Major projects are the completion of the Eglin Substation at Exit 61, the transmission line from the Box Elder sub to the Haines substation, the rebuild of the transmission line from the Rapid City sub through the Eglin sub east, and the start of the Ashland Sub north of Rapid City. Those projects are 40 percent of

the total budget. We know we won't be able to complete those projects in 2023, but we needed to have them approved by the Board so we can begin ordering materials as they are well over a year out. We have over 30% of the total for new service costs for poles, wires, transformers, meters and service upgrades. We have line rebuilds in the Enning and Union Center areas. We have projects between Box Elder and New Underwood that are part of a FEMA hazard mitigation grant we applied for several years ago. Much of the increase in the work plan is due to price increases; very large price increases in some cases. 768100

Most of our office projects are normal technology, vehicle, and equipment replacements, and we will also be looking at a project to add a small solar array in front of our office in Rapid City. The purpose would be to show the true picture on renewable energy so our members have a go-to trusted energy advisor to show what solar produces and the cost to own and operate it.

On a final note, we did set a new peak record of over 84 MW on the night of Dec. 21. That is about 8 percent over our previous peak. Luckily, we had the generation available from our generation and transmission providers to avoid rolling blackouts. However, rolling blackouts did happen in the southeastern part of the US and Midwest systems were one level below calling for rolling blackouts. These were due to inadequate baseload generation. Again, a sign I have been preaching about since February 2021; we need more baseload generation and a smoother, slower transition to intermittent renewable energy.

I hope you all have a wonderful 2023. Stay safe, please!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dick Johnson".

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
 Larry Eisenbraun – Treasurer
 Jerry Hammerquist
 Howard Knuppe
 Marcia Arneson
 Chuck Sloan
 Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

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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.

Cooperative Principle 1: Voluntary and Open Membership



Amanda Haugen
 Communications
 Specialist

Electric cooperatives have been practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) long before these concepts became more widely recognized and embraced. This is because the first electric cooperative principle is “Voluntary and Open Membership.”

In the next couple of months, I plan to discuss and break down the 7 cooperative principles. The following article breaks down that principle starting with the Open Membership part.

During our birth in 1939 and still today, membership at West River Electric is open to anyone who is interested in becoming a member. So, rather than being exclusive or selective in its membership, West River Electric has and will be welcoming and inclusive to any member of the community that wants to join.

It is worth noting that, although membership in West River Electric is open to anyone who is interested, there may be certain requirements or criteria that potential members must meet to join. For example, potential members must live in the communities we serve and be able to pay their electric bill. 746700

Expanding on voluntary, the term “voluntary” refers to the fact that members may choose whether to participate in the cooperative’s decision-making processes by electing the board of directors, who are responsible for setting policies and overseeing the management of the cooperative. This is not required but it is completely up to you, the member.

Overall, anyone who is interested in joining the cooperative can do so and participation in the cooperative is voluntary. Members of the cooperative have the right to vote in elections for the board of directors and participate in decision-making processes, thus giving them a say in how the cooperative is run. It allows them to have a direct impact on the services they receive. Stay tuned for next month’s article on the second cooperative principle.

Murphy



Check out this handy electrical fire check list

Electrical Fires do not have to happen. Use this checklist to help you find and fix electrical fire hazards in your home before they can start a fire.

Smoke Alarms – Smoke alarms save lives!

- ✓ Do you have enough smoke alarms?
- ✓ Are they working?
- ✓ Do you test them?

Switches and Outlets – Be on the look-out for signs of trouble.

- ✓ Are they working?
- ✓ Do they make crackling, buzzing, or sizzling sounds?
- ✓ Are they warm to the touch?
- ✓ Do plugs fit snugly?

Cords – Never use damaged cords.

- ✓ Is there fraying or cracking?
- ✓ Are they pinched or pierced?
- ✓ Do you use extension cords all the time?
- ✓ Are cords getting enough air?

Lamps and Appliances – Use them safely.

- ✓ Are you using the right bulbs?
- ✓ Do you use space heaters safely?
- ✓ Are appliance cords protected from damage?

Electrical Panel – Know the basics.

- ✓ Do you have AFCIs?
- ✓ Have you tested your AFCIs?
- ✓ Are all circuit breakers and fuses the proper size?



KEEPING UP WITH ELECTRIC METERING TECHNOLOGY



South Dakota's electric cooperatives recently held an electric meter school in Pierre where more than 45 co-op employees learned about the latest technology in residential and industrial kilowatt hour metering processes. Metering is a key component of providing reliable, safe and affordable power to cooperative members all across the state.

To view scenes from this important training program and learn more about how electric cooperatives work to improve our communities, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Take care when flying kites

Jaclyn Koistinen

Jaclyn Koistinen, 11, is already thinking ahead to spring when kite-flying is a popular activity. She warns kids and adults both to take care when putting that kite in the air. Jaclyn is the daughter of Patrick and Jenilee Koistinen, members of H-D Electric based in Clear Lake.

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 SWEET BRUNCH

CRAB QUICHE

Ingredients:

- 1 (6 oz.) can crab meat (rinsed and drained)
- 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 c. chopped green onion (or fresh chives)
- 4 eggs.
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- 1 c. milk (or half-n-half)

METHOD

Grease or spray pie pan. Combine crab, cheese and onion. Press into pie pan and up the sides. Whisk together the milk, eggs, salt and mustard. Pour mixture into pan. Sprinkle with paprika. Bake in 400 degree oven about 30 minutes or until set. Let set 5 minutes before cutting and serving.

Elaine Rowett, Sturgis

PRALINE PECAN CRUNCH

Ingredients:

- 1 (21 oz.) box Quaker Oat Squares cereal (about 8 c.)
- 2 c. pecans
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 c. light corn syrup
- 1/4 c. margarine
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda

METHOD

Heat oven to 250 degrees. Mix cereal and pecans in 9x13 inch pan. Set aside. Mix corn syrup, brown sugar and margarine in glass bowl. Microwave on high 1-1/2 minutes. Stir. Microwave 1 to 1-1/2 minutes more or until boiling. Stir in vanilla and baking soda and pour over cereal mixture. Stir to coat evenly. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 20 minutes. Spread on baking sheet to cool. Break into pieces and store in airtight container.

Nancy Stenson, Fort Pierre

CINNAMON APPLE BRUNCH BAKE

Ingredients:

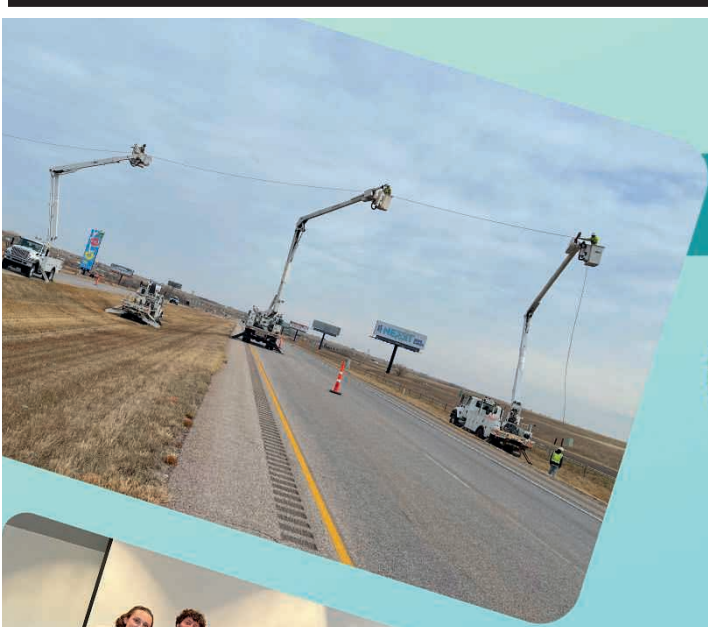
- 1 can (21 oz.) apple pie filling
- 1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 3 tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 tsp. McCormick® Ground Cinnamon
- 1 1/2 tbsp. McCormick® All Natural Pure Vanilla Extract
- 1 can (12 oz.) refrigerated biscuits
- 1/2 cup chopped nuts

METHOD

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix apple pie filling, brown sugar, butter, cinnamon and vanilla in medium bowl. Spread 1/2 of the apple mixture in 2-quart shallow baking dish. Cut each biscuit into quarters. Arrange biscuit pieces, points up, over apple mixture. Spread remaining apple mixture over biscuits. Sprinkle with nuts. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

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.



Year in Review



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"
this instituion is an equal opportunity provider and employer

\$2.1M

in **CAPITAL CREDITS** returned back to the WREA membership

\$15k

in **OPERATION ROUNDUP** funds awarded to 16 local nonprofits

\$7k

in **SCHOLARSHIP** funds awarded to 12 WREA member students

2,200

WREA members attended our **MEMBER APPRECIATION DAYS**

\$46.5M

will be invested over the next four years to continue **IMPROVING OUR ELECTRIC INFRASTRUCTURE**

84.7 MW

set a new **ALL-TIME PEAK DEMAND** with an 8% increase from the last

2016

is how long it has been since our last **RATE INCREASE**



The Dirty Boot Band has entertained thousands of music lovers across the state and region. *Photo by DBB*

Dirty Boot Band makes music a joyful family affair

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Even The Grinch gets into the groove when the Dirty Boot Band takes the stage.

The family-based musical septet was playing a gig last December at Tiger's Tap in Fort Pierre when a fellow clad in a luminous green Grinch costume got up and danced a little jig.

That was okay with lead singer Sheridan Nickolas, who grinned at the gyrating Grinch while she kept strumming her Taylor six-string.

This particular set was one of about 50 gigs the DBB played last year with dates that found them venturing from one end of the state to the other. Audiences in places like Platte, Hayes, Mitchell and more heard the band belting out a blend of vintage country hits like Delta Dawn, Momma Tried and The Highway Song along with originals like Little Black Pickup Truck and To the Man I Loved.

They've played atop long-bed trailers, in hayfields, in senior citizen centers, shopping malls, bars and restaurants, and consider it an honor to respond to

invitations and play music for anyone wanting to have a fun time.

Hailing from the Onida and Fort Pierre area, the DBB is made up of cousins from the Weinheimer and Nickolas families who decided to form a group in the winter of 2020. The current line-up includes Jacob, Sam and Simon Weinheimer collaborating with Sheridan, Adelynn, Jace and Ty Nickolas.

Together, they work hard on honing their musical chops, memorizing lyrics, smoothing out their chord progressions, tightening their harmonies and even working on original tunes. When they're not touring around the state, the band mates are busy doing farm chores and tackling their academic subjects as students of the Seton Home Study School.

Somehow, they still find the time to compete in sports and pursue a side hustle of making baked goods and selling homemade jewelry.

Sheridan, a senior, is an ace softball pitcher and also likes to hunt.

"During hunting season, we do chores on the farm and do our school work, but



In lieu of a traditional gratuity for entertaining their audience at the Trader Days festival in Fort Pierre, members of the band received a free helicopter ride sponsored by an anonymous supporter. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

we also clean pheasants at the lodge," she said, referring to a family-owned hunting lodge, preserve and skeet range. "And in the spring it's calving season, so we're always checking on the cows."

She said the group plans on continuing to play more gigs and entertain more people as long as their limited time allows. And as they keep developing their chops, they're taking inspiration in the knowledge that their music is good enough to make a grinchy heart grow a few sizes when they play.



Mitchell Tech facilities were used for the annual electric cooperative rubber gloving school last summer. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Mitchell Tech prepares linemen to deliver the ‘right stuff’ for members

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

It’s rare that you find a cooperative lineman in the state of South Dakota who hasn’t been through the training program at Mitchell Technical College.

Mike Puetz doesn’t remember all the names and faces, but his mentorship has played a key role in turning loads of wannabe linemen into highly skilled craftsmen over the past 25 years.

Puetz serves as head of the lineman training department at MTC and is giving some thought to hanging up his hooks in the next year or so. When he reflects on his teaching career, he swells with pride at how the program has improved exponentially over time.

There have been many milestones in the emergence of the lineman education program rising to become one of the best of its kind in the country.

Back in 2018, for instance, the power line construction and maintenance school was named winner of the inaugural Siemens-Aspen Community College

STEM award. The honor is given by the Aspen Institute to eight colleges nationwide that provide “outstanding preparation” for students in high-demand jobs and provides selected schools with \$50,000 to apply toward scholarships and other forms of financial assistance.

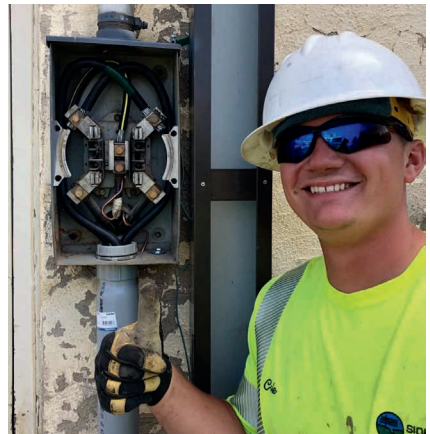
“That was definitely a shock,” Puetz said. “There’s a lot of good programs out there, and for us to be chosen for that prestigious award was unbelievable. We work hard to be able to say we have a very strong program, and that just gave us some validation that we’re moving in the right direction. It’s icing on the cake.”

Mark Patterson, manager of loss control services at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association based in Pierre, has worked with Puetz for 15 years. He’s hard-pressed to find many co-op linemen who haven’t trained under Puetz.

“Mike has been around so long, and I’d estimate about 80 percent of the electric co-op linemen out there today have been trained by him,” Patterson said. “They do a fantastic job of teaching the fundamentals, whether a student ends

up at a municipal, an investor-owned or a co-op. And our superintendents do an exceptional job of working with the graduates to help them gain the field experience they need to serve our members with a mindset of safety and efficiency.”

Over the years, Puetz said, MTC has not only distinguished itself among similar programs but has also greatly expanded its array of academic and technical career tracks. There are tracks for construction and manufacturing, business and service industries, health sciences, engineering technologies and agriculture and transportation.



Sioux Valley Energy’s Cole Anderson learned his trade at MTC.



At left, Mike Puetz has trained hundreds of future linemen. Above, Mitchell Technical College is well equipped to give electric linemen the real-world skills they need to succeed. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Cole Anderson is a lineman at Sioux Valley Energy based in Madison. He graduated from the training program four years ago and recalls why he selected MTC to learn the ropes of line work.

“I had an uncle who was a lineman in another state and I knew that’s what I always wanted to do,” said Anderson, a graduate of Chester Area High School. “I started looking at schools and noticed they had limited positions open and they were always taken very quickly. That told me how good their reputation was.”

Anderson received his certification in May of 2018, joined the cooperative as a 1,000 hour lineman, and eventually worked his way into a journeyman position.

Oddly enough, he met Puetz a year before he enrolled at MTC. While still in high school, Anderson was on a tour of the facility when he happened to encounter Puetz in the hallway. The two shook hands and after a brief conversation, Puetz said: “If I don’t see you here next year, I’m coming to track you down.”

Anderson said he finds himself frequently relying on his lineman education and remembering the things Puetz taught him, including those lessons that don’t necessarily have to do with line work.

“I think he’s awesome. He’s big on work ethic and he always told us that no matter what we did in life, a good work ethic will allow you to accomplish your goals and stand out from the rest,” Anderson said. “He also had a thing about belts. You had to wear a belt. If he saw you and you didn’t have one on, he’d take his off and give it to you.”

Anderson and his wife, Sarah, recently built a new home outside of Madison and are expecting a baby boy in March. He said he’s grateful for the outstanding

instruction he received during his education phase and is also thankful to have a position at an outstanding organization within the electric cooperative system.

“I just feel fortunate. It’s been a great experience all the way through,” he said. “I think it’s a privilege to be able to do a job I enjoy and to work with professionals who know their craft, and an organization that is focused on delivering the highest quality service to its members.”

For more information about MTC, visit www.mitchelltech.edu.



MTC is a prime training ground for future co-op linemen. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Blast From the Past



WEST RIVER REFLECTOR

WALL and RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Volume 10, Issue 2 — February, 1975

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS IN WALL

Construction work started on the Wall apartment complex for the elderly in August 1974. As of this writing, the complex is now about 50% completed according to Francis McMasters, Project Superintendent. Tentative completion of the apartment complex is scheduled for June 1.



Wall apartment complex for the elderly.

The general contractor for this project is Development Contractors, Inc., of Rapid City and is being built for the Pennington County Housing Authority. The new apartment complex will consist of 27 one bedroom apartments that will be rented, and one two bedroom apartment for the manager's living quarters. In addition to the 28 apartments, there will be a community room with an attached kitchen that can

be used by the tenants for special occasions, or by outside groups, such as senior citizen groups, if none of the tenants are using the room.

The entire structure will be heated electrically. The individual apartments will have baseboard units installed to provide individual room control; and, the community room and manager's apartment will be heated with an electric furnace. Provisions have been made in all

of the apartments for air-conditioning units, if individuals want to install them at a later date.

After the building is completed, the surrounding area will be landscaped and will have grass and trees planted, sidewalks with curb and guttering and blacktop parking area for tenants and visitors. When this project is completed, it will truly be attractive for those who have their abode there.

THE FARMER 1975 STYLE

The farmer cannot fertilize, or burn the trash from his cane. To spray his pasture invites disaster, his cattle must not eat grain. He should not drain his lot and coyotes may not be trapped or starlings "zapped" to ease the cost of production. Rootworms are free to devour as they watch the hour of hydrocarbon derision on colored television. All the farmer can legally do is to stand in his field and quietly "shoo" between ten and two at his weeks and pests, bugs and diseases on alternate Thursdays, or when OSIA takes the notion. Then, though he is tired and the man that he hired took off in an unknown direction, he must roll up his sleeves and feed the world good, fresh, clean, wholesome, and above all cheap food.

By Michael Graznak
Field Editor
Farmland News

STORM CAUSES OUTAGES

The first major winter storm of the year, accompanied by unusually strong winds caused scattered outages for WREA member-consumers. The first outage call came on Friday evening of January 10, and it was Saturday afternoon of January 11 before all of the trouble was repaired and the last consumer energized.

Most of the interruptions were in the Wall-Interior-Enning area along with scattered outages throughout the entire system.

The strong winds, gusting up to 60 M.P.H., along with the cold temperatures hampered crews from getting to the affected areas and repairing the trouble because of blowing snow and extremely poor visibility.

All of the outages were caused by broken phase wires, tie wires, bad hot line clamps, and bad breakers. No poles were lost in the storm.

WALNUT TREES

The difference between a \$100 and a \$1,000 black walnut tree is what you do with it when the tree is an infant, says Larry Helwig, Extension forester at South Dakota State University.

Though South Dakota is not considered to be in the natural growing range of black walnut trees, it is surprising the number of this species that have been planted, he said. The disappointing feature is that many lack the quality of wood that brings high prices from walnut utilization industries. The lumber from this "blue ribbon tree" is very valuable if the tree receives early life management and improvement.

What the industry looks for is a tree that has a straight and round trunk. The trunk should contain a minimum of branches for the first 16 to 20 feet. A log with these features is considered a veneer log. The log is placed in a lathe-like machine and many linear feet of veneer are peeled from the log.

How do you increase the value of walnut trees? Here's some tips from Helwig: Start guiding the growth when the tree is young. Allow only one trunk to develop. Very often the tree will fork when only about 6 to 10 feet tall. Remove the poorer forked branch by pruning flush with the remaining trunk. Also remove the lower side branches from the main trunk for the first 16 to 20 feet. The branches cause knots in the wood, which takes it out of the veneer class.

Early attention can increase the value of the black walnut tree many times, says Helwig. For example, a 23-foot veneer log with a 20-inch diameter sold for \$1,000 in a recent Kansas sale.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC ASS'N.
Wall, South Dakota

Entered as
Second Class Mail at
Wall, S. Dak. 57790

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Do you have a home office? Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life.

Another way to save in the home office is to use energy efficient lamps for task lighting. Small lamps use less energy than whole-room lighting.



Pole Inspections and Replacements

Matt Schmahl
Staking Foreman

You may have seen EXO Services, formerly Ram Pole Testing, testing poles around the northern portion of West River Electric's service territory recently. West River Electric conducts a line patrol of the system each year to locate and document any visual defects that may need to be addressed with our power lines. A more detailed ground line inspection is also performed to locate poles that have started to decay internally. Often, poles that are identified for replacement appear to be fine on the visual inspection but fail the internal inspection. 443600

West River Electric is dedicated to providing our members with safe, reliable electric service. The inspection process is part of that commitment to inspect our facilities and replace any equipment that needs attention. This practice provides the safest system possible, and it aids in providing the most reliable system. Our line crews spend countless hours conducting detailed inspections and making necessary repairs on equipment to keep our infrastructure dependable and to improve its resilience when the weather decides to put the system to the test.

West River Electric line crews have begun the process of changing these poles that were found during the inspection and testing process.

This is done to increase the strength of the system and is referred to in the industry as "storm hardening." EXO Pole Testing inspected over 3,500 poles this year; finding less than a 3 percent failure rate of the poles evaluated. This is the reason as you're driving down the road, you may notice the crews working on one or two poles on a particular line and then moving to a different location to continue work. The poles that are required to be replaced are typically a considerable distance from one another. 10061900

The next time you notice West River Electric crews conducting inspections, making repairs, or replacing poles, please know that we are doing our best to "storm harden" the system to increase reliability. So that way, when the weather decides to test the system's strength, we avoid similar situations like the picture below.



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



"Powering You For A Brighter Future"
this institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Payment Options

We offer several different options for members to pay the electric bill:



SmartHub: Pay online or through the SmartHub app! You can also view detailed info on energy use, report outages, and manage your account on the go.



Drop Box: Our drop box is located out front at both of our locations and is checked daily during business hours.



Pay Now: Pay online without creating an account. Click the green "One-time Payment" button at the top of our website. Enter your account number & name so you can quickly pay your bill online.



Auto Pay: Payments can be made automatically through a checking or savings account or debited from a credit or debit card. Check out SmartHub or contact our office to sign up today!



Office: Pay in person at 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD or 1200 W Fourth Ave. Wall, SD



Mailbox: Mail payments to: West River Electric 3250 E Hwy 44 Rapid City, SD 57703 or P.O. Box 412 Wall, SD 57790

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NATIVE TOURISM

Native Tourism Alliance shines spotlight on tribal nation culture

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Sure, many of the 15 million travelers who visit South Dakota each year may have marveled at the Mount Rushmore Memorial, snapped a selfie at Wall Drug or beheld the fast-moving waters in Falls Park.

But how many of them have witnessed the whirling splendor of a wacipi, the traditional Native American celebration of life? How many have paused to watch a Native artist crafting a colorful piece of beaded jewelry?

Several years ago, a blind spot was noticed in the Department of Tourism's efforts to attract visitors – not much attention was being focused on the state's nine federally-recognized tribal nations.

In an effort to address that oversight, the department teamed up with the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies

and the tribes to develop a sustainable indigenous tourism industry by letting visitors know there are many points of interest available for exploration far beyond the beaten paths.

The five-year plan has been described as a “groundbreaking endeavor” and is one of the first initiatives of its kind under the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act and was unveiled in August of 2021. More than 60 state, local and federal organizations collaborated to formulate the strategy as a catalyst for economic growth.

“I think the Alliance is a potential revenue source for our tribes, and it’s a way for us to generate income, alleviate poverty and help conserve our natural resources and culture,” said Dew Bad Warrior-Ganje, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

The plan identified five guiding principles:

Native Tourism Alliance

CHEYENNE RIVER SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 590, Eagle Butte, SD 57625
605-964-4155

CROW CREEK SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 50, Fort Thompson, SD 57339
605-245-2221

FLANDREAU SANTEE SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 283, Flandreau, SD 57028-0283
605-997-3891

LOWER BRULE SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 187, Lower Brule, SD 57548
605-473-5561

OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 2070, Pine Ridge, SD 57770
605-867-5821

ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 430, Rosebud, SD 57570
605-747-2381

SISSETON WAHPETON OYATE
PO Box 509, Agency Village, SD 57262
605-698-3911

STANDING ROCK SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box D, Fort Yates, ND 58538
701-854-8500

YANKTON SIOUX TRIBE
PO Box 1153, Wagner, SD 57380
605-384-3641

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- Unity - Reunification of the Očhéthi Šakówi Oyate through shared history, commonalities, and collaboration on developing regional tourism.
 - Preservation - Promotion of art and culture in order to enhance self-identity and pride as well as preserve the culture, including language and traditional knowledge.
 - Woksape - Recognition of Elders as the driving force of traditional knowledge and wisdom in the development of regional tourism and educating the youth to be stewards of the language and culture.
 - Education - Creation of cross-cultural bridges and educating the World about Native American communities.
 - Self-sufficiency - Development of opportunities for Tribal Nations to become self-sufficient and create pathways to enhance livelihood.

Organizers gathered together and developed detailed goals and methods to achieve those goals. Planners were forced to start from the ground floor as not much data existed to determine the present status of Indigenous tourism.

They initially identified a “rich mix” of 145 existing natural, cultural and heritage attractions and special events to promote, in addition to potential agritourism initiatives.

Nearing the halfway point in the plan’s prescribed timetable, stakeholders report substantial progress and greater interest from visitors seeking an authentic cultural experience.

Calvin Bloemendaal, who has represented the South Dakota Department of Tourism in the Alliance from its inception, pointed out several specific measures of success.

Chief among them is the creation of a nine-day motorcoach tour of tribal territory that starts in Rapid City and terminates in Bismarck. The tour, coordinated with assistance by the tourism department, will begin this summer and will be operated through Destination America and Trafalgar Tours.

“It’s one of the first tours of its kind,” Bloemendaal said. “Destination America caters to an upscale clientele of individuals who like to travel a lot and have been to a lot of places. They’re looking for something unique and interesting they haven’t seen before.”

He also mentioned the progress that has been made in building a network of support for tribal tourism and the development of themed destination experiences.

There’s also a marketing guide that is part of the department’s general ongoing promotional efforts. More than 30,000 of the helpful guides were printed and are being distributed at visitor centers, trade shows and other industry events.

“I was at a trade show in Denver and people were extremely interested in this idea and gravitating toward it. The guide is an effective tool that inspires people to visit,” he said. “We’re making a lot of headway as far as putting together pitches and itineraries to attract more tour operators to the state.”

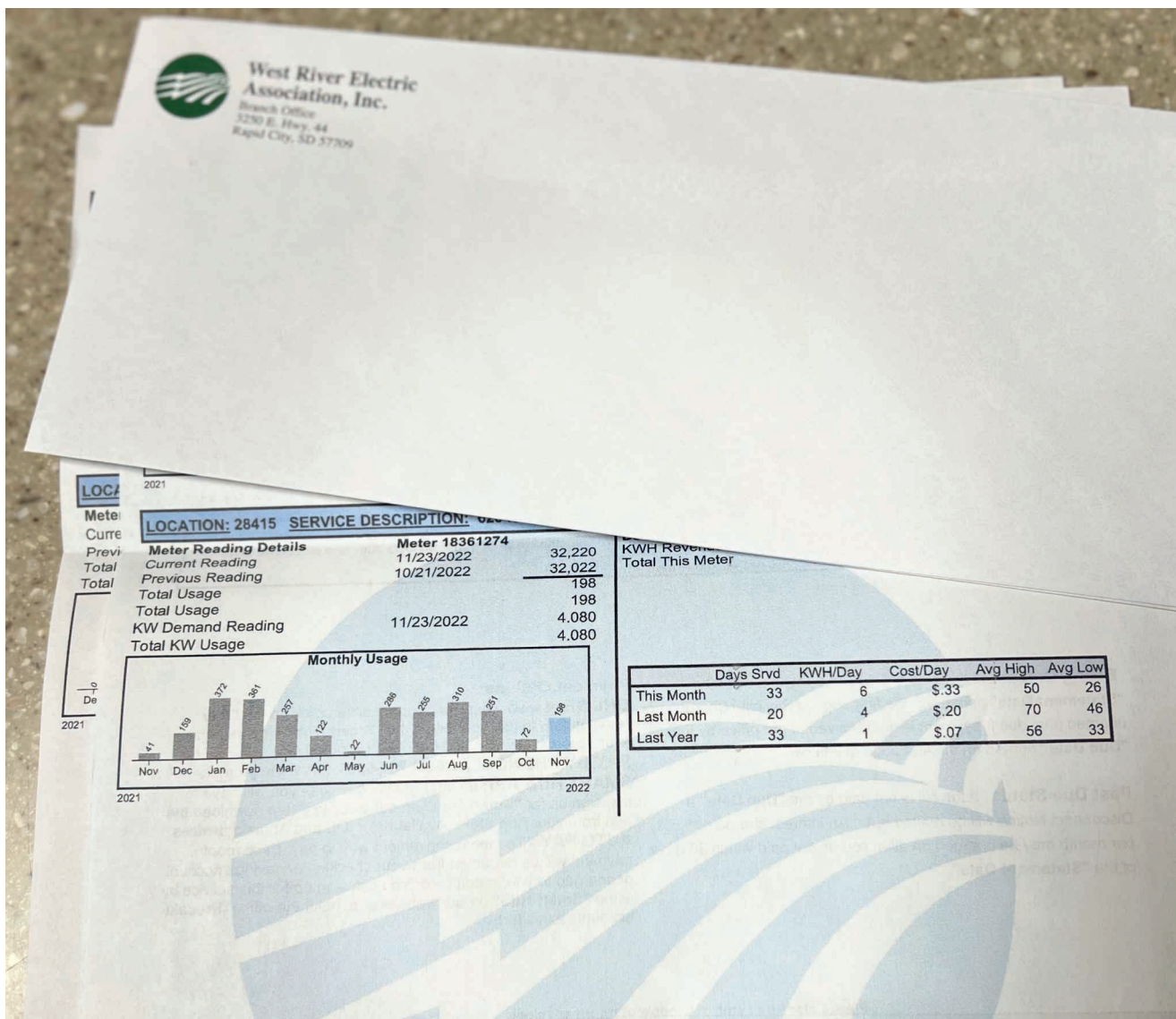


Bills More Than You Can Handle?

Have you noticed an increase in your electric bills lately? Don't worry, it's not a rate increase but a kWh increase! The extreme cold weather we have been experiencing can cause an increase in energy usage (kWhs) as we rely on our heating systems to keep our homes and businesses warm. This increased usage can lead to higher bills, but rest assured that West River Electric is working to stabilize bills as much as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about your bill, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at 605.393.1500 or 605.279.2135. We are here to assist you and help you understand your usage. 8050701

Area Agencies May Offer Help

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| South Dakota 211 | 211 |
| St. Vincet Paull | 605-431-8072 |
| Western SD Community Action (CAP) | 1-800-327-1703
or 348-1460 |
| Church Response | 605-342-5360 |
| Health and Human Resources. | 605-394-2156 |
| Salvation Army | 605-342-0982 |
| Energy Assistance | 1-800-233-8503 |



New WREA Hire

Brandon Arnold started work for West River Electric on Dec. 3, 2022, as a Staking Technician. Prior to coming to WREA, Brandon worked for High West Energy in Cheyenne, Wyo., and has also been a part of the cooperative world for more than 17 years.



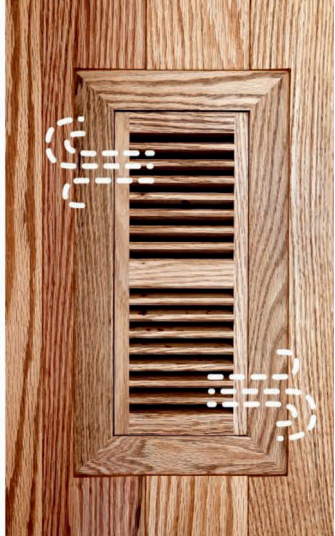
Brandon graduated from Bennett County High School in Martin, S.D., and attended Western Dakota Technical College where he graduated with a degree in Industrial Electronics.

He enjoys spending time with his wife, Jennifer, and two children, Kadence and Cannon. They enjoy camping, fishing and hunting.

Welcome, Brandon, to the WREA team!


Heating Efficiency Tip:

Keep floor vents and other heating elements unobstructed from furniture, rugs and additional items.



Operation Round-up Application Deadline Feb. 15, 2023 by 5pm

Do you know of a non-profit organization that is in need of funding? Tell them to apply for Operation Round-up funds! You can visit westriver.coop for more information and to submit an application online or download and drop it off at either office.



West River Electric Association, Inc.
Member of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

<p>Rapid City Office 3250 E Hwy 44 Rapid City, SD 57703</p>	<p>Wall Office 1200 W Fourth Ave PO Box 412 Wall, SD 57790</p>
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Office hours: Mon-Fri | 7am-5pm

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

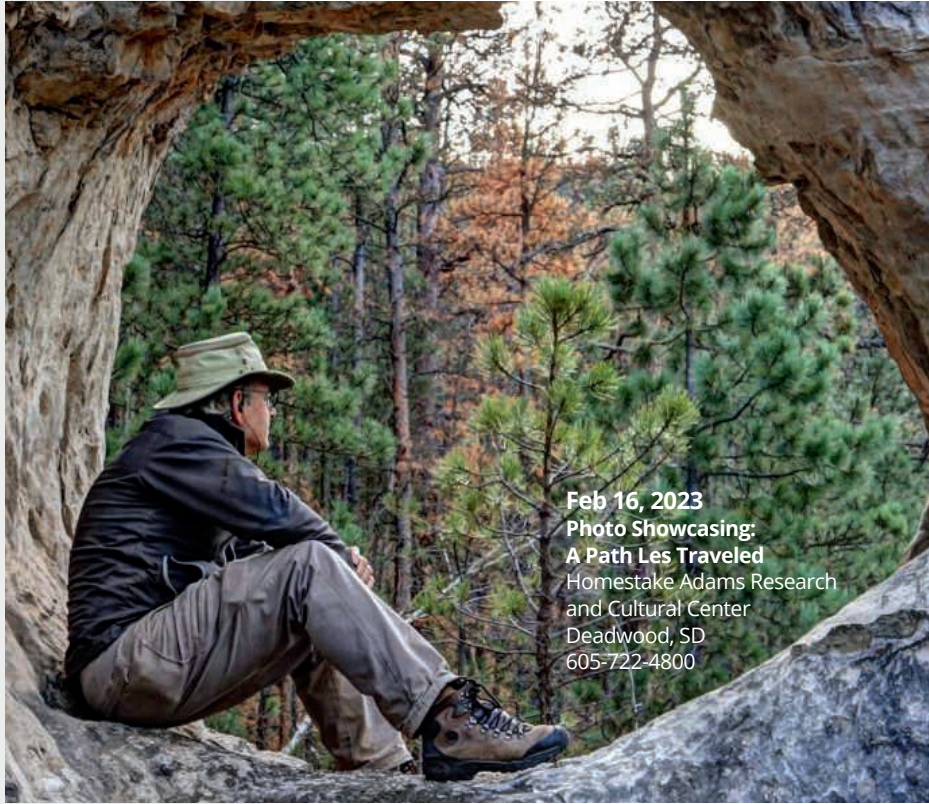
A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience.

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.



Feb 16, 2023
Photo Showcasing:
A Path Les Traveled
 Homestake Adams Research
 and Cultural Center
 Deadwood, SD
 605-722-4800

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.

FEB. 3-4
TOOTSIE
 Show Dates:
 Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.
 Feb. 4, 2 p.m.
 Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

FEB. 4
Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby
 9 a.m. registration
 Hendricks City Public
 Lake Access
 Hendricks, MN
 507-828-2113

FEB. 4
James River Gobblers
Hunting Heritage Banquet
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD
 605-999-3208

FEB. 10-11
Mardi Gras Weekend
 Mardi Gras Events & Parade
 Sponsored by Deadwood
 Chamber of Commerce
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD

FEB. 11
Songs of Romance
 7:30 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

FEB. 16
Photo Showcasing:
A Path Les Traveled
 12 p.m.-1 p.m.
 Homestake Adams Research
 and Cultural Center
 Deadwood, SD
 605-722-4800

FEB. 24
Calamity's Shindig
 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Homestake Adams Research
 and Cultural Center
 Deadwood, SD
 605-722-4800

FEB. 28
BIG Career & Internship Fair
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Ramkota Hotel
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 4
Annual Ag Day
 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

MARCH 18
Shamrock Shuffle Fun Run
 12 p.m.
 Main Street
 Presho, SD

MARCH 25-26
Greater Sioux Falls Model
Train Show
 Multi-Cultural Center
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 30
"The Wildest Banquet
Auction in the Midwest"
 5:30 p.m.
 South Dakota Military
 Heritage Alliance
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-339-1203

APRIL 1
Mozart Requiem
 7:30 p.m.
 Washington Pavilion
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-6000

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