

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



**Cross country skiing is a way to keep moving and maintain physical and mental health during the winter months.**

## **Skiing for fun and health**

**Nordic skiers find paradise on the snow**  
Pages 8-9

**Car dealers adapt to EV market**  
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# A Poem For Christmas



**Dick Johnson**  
dick.johnson@  
westriver.coop

Another year has come and gone with glee,  
We felt how could it be as interesting as  
Twenty Twenty.  
But alas we found out,  
New challenges and opportunities would  
come about.

We all thought Covid would be like a TV  
show only one season long,  
But it stretched into several sequels strong.  
It reminded me of Hallmark Christmas  
movies showing many times on the screen.  
Many new policies and phrases came onto the  
scene.

Safety a big part of our culture it abounds,  
Just a few bumps and bruises no major  
injuries were found.  
Employees committed to safety each day,  
A Committee that is dedicated to make sure  
it stays too that way.

A hectic year for new services and construction  
made the year fun,  
Developers, builders and homeowners kept  
our employees on the run.  
Nearly one thousand services have been built  
year-to-date,  
Everything from new businesses, apartments  
and houses filled the slate.

Supply constraints made us jump and order  
material already for 2023,  
We feared we didn't know what we would see.  
Transformers, wire, and equipment in short  
supply,  
Making sure we had it here so our members  
wouldn't give us a black eye.

With all the challenges, opportunities didn't  
stall,  
We had good margins to give back to  
members this fall.  
More revenue, PPP loan forgiven, deferred  
revenue and expenses that were down,  
2.1 million in capital credits no one did frown.

Satisfied and engaged member owners we  
work hard to believe,  
Trying to show the importance and value of  
the electrons they receive.  
A member survey to make sure we were in the  
right space,  
A satisfaction score of 87 brought a smile to  
our face.

The Wall substation updated to be more  
modern designed,  
The new Eglin in 2022 by Exit 61 will be  
right behind.  
A new transmission line to be built from Box  
Elder to Ashland,  
We need to keep up with growth that we see is  
at hand.

Our employees spend many hours in the  
community, I couldn't be more proud,  
That day in Quinn to see painting, staining,  
and chain saws that were loud.  
Many other employee hours spent helping in  
local events,  
Another cooperative principle; our  
commitment to community is one of our  
main intents.

Our Board of Directors, a greater group of  
member-owners you won't find  
Always keeping the mission, vision, and values  
of the member in mind.  
And what would I do without a loving wife at  
home,  
My chance here to thank her for keeping the  
fires burning while meetings I roam.

**We hope this Christmas season finds you  
and your family in great cheer,  
And the reason for the season you hold in  
your heart dear.  
A Merry Christmas and Happy New Year we  
shout with glee,  
And that 2022 happiness and good cheer  
you too will agree!**

**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. 10093400

**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:**

Dick Johnson –  
dick.johnson@westriver.coop

**Editor**

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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.

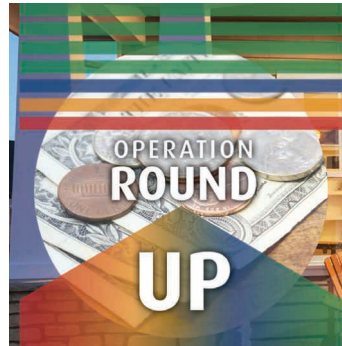
Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6519, 6517, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail robert.raker@westriver.coop.

**HOLIDAY CLOSURES**

West River Electric’s office will be closed on the following dates:

- Dec. 23:** Closed at 11 a.m. for Christmas Eve
- Dec. 24-25:** Closed for Christmas
- Dec. 30:** Closed at 11 a.m. for New Year’s Eve
- Dec. 31:** Closed for New Year’s Day

Please call 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 in the event of an outage or other emergency.



**OPERATION ROUND-UP APPLICATION DEADLINE FEB. 1, 2021**

Do you have a non-profit organization that you would like to see apply for Operation Round-up funds? You can visit westriver.coop to download the application or stop in either office.

**DID YOU CHANGE YOUR PHONE NUMBER OR EMAIL?**

It is important to keep your information updated with West River Electric. We would like to keep you updated on planned outages or other important information that may affect your service. Contact us at 279-2135 or 393-1500 to make changes to your information.

**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. Office hours are subject to change in response to COVID-19.

**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. 894400

# Crunch the numbers on New Year's savings in your home

If your New Year's resolution to spend less and save more always fizzles out by March, don't fret. With a few simple adjustments in your house, you can save money on your energy bill each month. Here's how:

- Save up to 20 percent on heating by installing a programmable thermostat and setting it to automatically lower the heat when you leave the house for more than five hours and when the family goes to bed for the night.
- Save 1–3 percent on heating costs for each degree you turn the thermostat down. For optimal savings, set the thermostat at 68 degrees while at home and 65 degrees at night and before you leave the house for an extended period.
- Save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills by sealing air leaks around doors and windows with caulk and weatherstripping. This inexpensive energy saver will pay for itself within a year.
- Save at least 25 percent on air conditioning when you replace your old, inefficient central AC with one that has a seasonal energy-efficiency ratio of 14 or higher.
- Save up to 40 percent on what you spend to run your refrigerator by replacing an old unit with a new Energy Star-certified model.
- Save more than 50 percent on energy for cooking when you use a microwave oven instead of a conventional oven to heat meals.
- Save more than 10 percent on your water heating bill by lowering the water heater temperature from 140 degrees to 120.
- Save 75 percent or more on energy for lighting by replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs. They also last about 25 times longer. Switching out CFLs for LEDs will reduce lighting costs as much as 50 percent.
- Consistently turning off lights when not in use or when natural light is sufficient can reduce lighting expenses 10–40 percent.
- Enable the power management function on computers and sleep setting on appliances.

## CO-OPS IN ACTION



South Dakota's electric cooperatives deliver affordable, reliable power to our members in every corner of the state. But we do so much more!

Visit our Co-op Connections Plus YouTube channel and you'll see co-ops in action at local community events, youth leadership programs and charitable fundraising events like the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride. We've got South Dakota covered!

Simply scan the QR code to the right and be sure to subscribe!



## Keep out of power boxes

### Trinity Kurtenbach

Trinity knows that those green "power boxes" that are often seen near homes or along roadways contain electrical equipment that can pose a hazard. Trinity is the child of Cory Kurtenbach and Tonya Buchholz-Froehlich of Nunda and attends Sioux Valley Elementary in Volga. They are 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.

# SOUPS FOR THE SOUL

## SMASHED POTATO SOUP

**Ingredients:**  
 1/2 cup coarsely chopped carrot  
 1/2 cup coarsely chopped celery  
 1 pkg 14 oz refrigerated mashed potatoes  
 1 14.5 oz can chicken broth  
 1/2 cup milk  
 1 garlic clove pressed  
 1/4 tsp salt  
 1/8 tsp pepper  
 1/2 cup sour cream  
 2 Tbsp fresh parsley

### METHOD

Place mashed potatoes in medium saucepan. Gradually add broth and milk, whisking until mixture is smooth. Stir in carrot, celery, garlic and salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in sour cream and parsley. Top with desired toppings. 4 servings; 5 cups. Optional toppings: sliced green onion, shredded cheddar cheese, cooked, crumbled bacon.

**Becki Hausser, Tripp**

## CREAMY CHICKEN GNOCCHI SOUP

**Ingredients:**  
 6 Tbsp butter  
 2 Tbsp olive oil  
 2 cups onion  
 1 cup diced celery  
 4 garlic cloves (minced)  
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
 4 cups half and half  
 1 (32 oz) container chicken broth (add more for a thinner soup)  
 1 Tbsp thyme  
 2 cups carrots  
 2 cups spinach or kale  
 3 cups diced, cooked chicken  
 2 (16 oz) packages potato gnocchi  
 Salt and pepper to taste

### METHOD

Add butter and olive oil to large pot over medium heat. Sauté onions, celery, and garlic until tender. Add flour to create a roux and stir for one minute. Slowly add the half and half and chicken broth. Stir until it thickens. Add the thyme, carrots, spinach, chicken and gnocchi. Cook for 5-10 minutes until gnocchi is cooked and soup thickened. If soup gets too thick just add more chicken broth. Salt and pepper to taste.

**Tracey Burkett, Olivet**

## CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

**Ingredients:**  
 1-1.5 lbs chicken thighs bone in or boneless (skinless)  
 3 bay leaves  
 5 peppercorns, whole  
 1 small whole onion peeled, hairy end intact  
 3 large garlic cloves  
 12 cups chicken stock low sodium  
 2 large carrots diced  
 2 cups potatoes diced  
 1 1/2 cups egg noodles or any short pasta  
 1 1/2 tsp salt  
 1 tsp olive oil  
 3 tsp fresh dill, parsley or green onion finely chopped

### METHOD

In a large Dutch oven or pot, add chicken thighs, bay leaves, peppercorns, onion, 2 garlic cloves and stock. On high heat, bring soup to a boil covered then move lid to the side a bit to keep soup clear. Cook for 20 minutes, removing foam as it rises to the top with a mesh strainer. Dice potatoes and carrots. Chop dill and grate garlic. Add potatoes and carrots, stir and reduce heat to medium. Cook with half lid open for 5 minutes. Add pasta, stir and cook for another 5 minutes. Discard onion, bay leaves and peppercorns with mesh strainer. Add salt, olive oil, grated garlic clove, dill and ground black pepper to taste. You can also shred chicken right in the pot. Let sit covered for 5 minutes.

**ifoodreal.com**

**Please send your favorite soup recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**

# TWO THINGS ARE CERTAIN IN LIFE: DEATH AND TAXES



**Robert Raker**  
robert.raker@  
westriver.coop

Ben Franklin, the man who supposedly flew a kite with a key to learn about lightning is also credited with saying, “Two things are certain in life, death and taxes.” Soon, many of us will start thinking about the upcoming tax season and traditionally not-for-profit organizations do not pay taxes. However, that is not the case with your electric cooperative.

Electric cooperatives are a large economic driver for rural America and one way they do this is by paying taxes. There are several types of taxes that your cooperative pays, and one is a kWh tax. The kWh tax displaces the co-op’s infrastructure property tax, and this article will explain this tax a little more in-depth. 2298300

In 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act which offer low to zero interest loans to Rural Electric Cooperatives. The intent behind this legislation was to get electricity to rural America because it was not economically feasible for the investor-owned utilities (IOU) electric companies to build lines to serve so few customers. In other words, for-profit IOUs would not see a good enough return on their investment to build the infrastructure to get electricity to rural America. So, the not-for-profit electric cooperative was born and so was another tax.

Regardless of whether an IOU or a co-op both pay taxes on infrastructure, e.g. poles, wire, and transformer. IOU’s infrastructure is taxed like a property tax because they are more localized. Dis-

tinguishable, South Dakota’s Cooperatives cover large areas of land and pay a flat kWh tax that is allocated to the school where the kWh was used. South Dakota law’s formula to calculate the kWh tax equates to about \$2.40 a month for a house that uses 1,000 kWhs for the average member. In 2020, WREA’s kWh tax returned just over half-million dollars to the area schools.

Today’s electric cooperative look vastly different than its origination, but it is still a not-for-profit and looking out for rural America’s best interest. As West River Electric continues to grow the rural communities see benefits. In 2021, WREA returned close to \$4 million in the form of Capital Credits/margins and lowered the rates for three months to all the members, including the schools we serve.

I recently discussed the importance of a good relationship between the federal government and local control, as well as South Dakota’s autonomy to implement and allocate this tax exhibit a good balance. Although taxes are not something many of us look forward to, they are a necessary way of life because communities need good schools to power us for a brighter future.

**ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS**

# SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

**DEADLINE**  
**JANUARY 17TH**  
go to [westriver.coop](http://westriver.coop) for more details

The image shows a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a white t-shirt with a green logo and text that says "River Electric Association" and "One Energy Cooperative". She is also wearing a light-colored jacket and blue jeans. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a railing.



## WEST RIVER ELECTRIC'S AMERICAN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION INDEX (ACSI) SCORE HITS 87

ACSI measures the satisfaction of U.S. household consumers with the quality of products and services offered by various industries in U.S. markets. This is one way that we can get a measurement of how you think your co-op is performing. This is not only for

co-ops all different industries use ACSI as their unit of measurement, including for-profit companies because those with higher ACSI scores typically do very well in the stock market. 2449900

You have likely heard that West River Electric has set a vision statement that we will score an ACSI score of 90 by 2024. So, the increase from 86 to 87 was music to our ears but there is no time to rest on our laurels. The board set the audacious goal of 90 by 2024 but as the saying goes, if your goals do not scare you a little bit, they are not big enough. Thank you to everyone that took the time to take the survey. It helps us know where we are falling short and what we need to work on. There are always ways we can improve because the best we will ever be is human.



# NEW EV RATE

# \$30/MONTH

ALL YOU CAN CHARGE

ON NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS

Please Call for Details. Some limitations apply.



ALL YOU CAN CHARGE

ON NIGHTS AND WEEKENDS



West River Electric Association, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"



# FUN AND FITNESS ON THE SNOW

An estimated 5.2 million Americans participate in cross country skiing while reaping the rewards of being active during the winter months.

## Nordic Ski Club promotes the benefits of cross country skiing on mind, body and soul

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Many winter sports enthusiasts are firm in their belief that snow skis are meant to travel in one direction only – downhill.

But members of the Black Hills Nordic Ski Club use their skinny skis to take them wherever the trail may lead.

The club's winter playground is located at Big Hills XC Trails seven miles southwest of Spearfish where its

members have frolicked in the snow since the 1970s. Early prospectors named the area after they encountered steep grades in their pursuit of gold and fortune, but these days people flock to Big Hill for fitness and fun.

With more than 1,200 Facebook followers, the group invites not only cross country skiers to enjoy the 13.6 miles of trails but also skate skiers, fat bikers, snow shoers and even snow man makers.

Immediate past president Josh Wangeman explains there are an

estimated 5.2 million Nordic skiing enthusiasts throughout the country who seek both physical and mental health restoration along the trails.

After spending his day teaching science to his eighth graders at Spearfish Middle School, Wangeman likes to unwind in the woods.

"I've found that it's a good way to escape the crowds and participate in the wonders of nature," he said. "It's a great sport if you're looking to find some solace, enjoy the outdoors and get a good workout at the same time."

Wangeman, who also enjoys swimming and cross country running, fell into the sport after joining the National Guard six years ago. He began training for the biathlon, a competition where skiers travel from check point to check point with a .22 caliber rifle and shoot at targets. He has represented the Guard at competitions in Minnesota, Wyoming, Vermont and Utah.

Like many outdoor activities, cross country skiing has seen a significant surge in interest in the past year. One of the top attractions of the sport is that the cost of entry is relatively small. For instance, a quality mountain bike can cost thousands of dollars and other pastimes require a substantial financial investment for equipment, gear, fees and more.

"You can find some used gear and get everything you need for around \$100, or \$300 for new equipment," he said. "Trail access is free and you'll be outdoors getting some great exercise. As far as learning the technique, it's a straightforward process that's almost as simple as walking."

Wangeman said skiing across the snowy terrain can be a cinch compared to the work that's required to keep the trails maintained. Members of the Nordic Ski Club join forces with the Grooming Alliance of



Cross country skiers receive both the mental and physical health benefits of a sport that's economical to pursue.

Spearfish and log hundreds of hours of labor and donate hundreds of dollars each season to keep the pathways well-groomed for all to share. Some trails are designated for snow shoeing and fat biking only. Volunteers have also built a warming shelter in a meadow that's situated among the five loop trails where skiers can take a break from the wind and cold.

Aside from the Big Hills XC Trails, the Black Hills National Forest area has other sites suitable for cross country skiing. The Eagle Cliff Network is located 15 miles southwest of Lead and offers 20 miles of trails that cross open meadows and meander through Ponderosa pine forests. Half the trails are rated "difficult."

Bear Mountain is situated 10 miles

southwest of Hill City and features rocky ridges, abundant wildlife and scenic overlooks along its 16-mile trail system.

Additional pathways in the area can be found at Beaver Creek, Bear Butte State Park, Custer State Park and portions of the Centennial and Mickelson Trails.

Here are a few helpful tips for those who are thinking about taking to the wintry trails:

1. Start your day right with a hot beverage.
2. Pack well, and don't forget gloves, hat and extra socks. Layer, layer, layer.
3. Choose the right place to ski with good grooming and a reasonable and amount of flat terrain.
4. Consider taking lessons to

## Cross country skiing sites

These state parks offer trails for cross-country skiers to enjoy:

- Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve
- Beaver Creek Nature Area
- Big Sioux Recreation Area
- George S. Mickelson Trail
- Hartford Beach State Park
- LaFramboise Island Nature Area
- Lake Herman State Park
- Lake Poinsett Recreation Area
- Newton Hills State Park
- Oakwood Lakes State Park
- Pelican Lake Recreation Area
- Richmond Lake Recreation Area
- Sica Hollow State Park
- Walker's Point Recreation Area



Volunteers keep the trails groomed for cross country skiing at Big Hill and also constructed a warming shelter, a popular site on cold and windy winter days.

improve your form.

5. Be prepared to fall. Acquiring balance takes time.

6. Keep your energy up with a ready snack such as a granola bar or an apple.

7. Have fun. Explore a bit and lose yourself in the rhythm of the sport.

8. Don't forget to look around you, and keep an eye out for wildlife or scenic vistas.

9. Reward yourself! You worked hard and did something adventurous.

# SEALED BIDS ARE BEING ACCEPTED

West River Electric has the following items for sale by sealed bid. Bids will be accepted until 5 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 15, 2022. When bidding, please include the item number. Sealed bids can be sent to any WREA office. All items are sold "as is."

WREA reserves the right to reject any and all bids. 4209600

The following vehicles/equipment can be seen at our Rapid City office at 3250 E. Hwy 44. Ask for Mike or Brendan.

**Item #202 - 2007 CMC 1500 4x4 extended cab 127,281 miles**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Bid \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Item #205 - 2007 CMC 1500 4x4 extended cab 121,100 miles**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Bid \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Item # 227 - 2009 Chevy Suburban 118,852 miles**



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Bid \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Are Portable Space Heaters Efficient for My Home?

Small space heaters are meant to do exactly as their name says: heat a small space. But unfortunately, many people use portable space heaters to heat their entire home, which can really take a toll on your energy bills. The truth is, whether you should use space heaters really depends on your home's efficiency and energy needs.

If you're using a space heater to compensate for problems in your home, like inadequate insulation, drafty windows and exterior doors, or an inefficient heating system, space heaters are not a practical solution. Your best bet is to improve the overall efficiency of your home. If you're on a tight budget, caulking and weather stripping around windows and exterior doors is a low-cost, easy way to save energy. Depending on the size of your home, adding insulation can be a great next step. Loose fill insulation typically costs \$1 to \$1.50 per square foot.

Taking these proactive energy-saving measures rather than relying on space heaters for supplemental warmth can reduce your heating and cooling bills for years to come.

Perhaps your home is energy efficient but you're cold-natured and want a specific room to be cozier than the rest. In this case, a space heater may work for your needs. A good comparison is ceiling fans; we use ceiling fans in the summer to cool people, not rooms. A space heater can be used in a similar way during winter months. Only use a space heater in small spaces that

you're occupying and, if possible, try to shut off other rooms to contain the warmth provided by the space heater. If you decide to use a space heater to heat a small area in your home, make sure the heater is properly sized for the space; most heaters include a general sizing table. 3548400

A word about safety: the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates more than 25,000 residential fires are associated with the use of space heaters every year, resulting in more than 300 deaths. If you must use a space heater, purchase a newer model that includes the most current safety features and make sure it carries the Underwriter's Laboratory (UL) label. Choose a thermostatically controlled heater to avoid energy waste and overheating, and place the

heater on a level surface away from foot traffic when in use. Always keep children and pets away from space heaters.

Consider alternative ways to stay warm like extra layers of clothing or UL-approved electric blankets. If you have hardwood or tile floors, lay down area rugs to provide additional insulation (and appeal!) and maintain warmth.

We know it's cold out there, but remember in addition to safety concerns, space heaters can greatly increase your energy bills if used improperly.

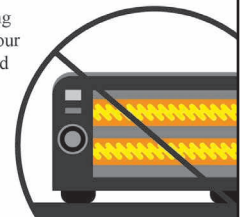
If you're looking for alternative ways to save energy and increase comfort in your home, contact West River Electric at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500. We're here to help you manage your energy use.



## TIPS TO DITCH THE SPACE HEATER

Space heaters are energy hogs, and older models can be extremely dangerous. This winter, ditch the space heater and try these alternative solutions to stay cozy.

- Use an electric blanket to keep warm during the night.
- Caulk and weatherstrip around all windows and doors to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding insulation to your attic and around duct work.





# CAR DEALERS ADAPT TO EV MARKET

Jesse Johnson of Jan Busse Ford in Highmore keeps customers informed of the latest industry news. *Photo by Billy Gibson.*

## Car dealers adapt to emerging EV industry by making new investments and keeping their customers informed

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Keeping up with the emergence of the electric vehicle market is like listening to the hushed intonations of the announcer at the end of a 1960s-style soap opera.

Will a reliable charging network be constructed?

Will EVs become more affordable?

Will drivers ever overcome their range anxiety?

Will the political winds change direction?

Tune in tomorrow. Same time. Same channel.

Scott Shepherd is no fan of soap operas, but he's happy to give you his take on the topic. Shepherd is a career educator who has taken the EV leap and last June invested in Ford's debut model: the Mustang Mach-E. Shepherd recently delivered a presentation

describing his experience and insights to a group of electric cooperative representatives.

Subtitled "The Good, the Kind of Bad, and the Ugly," the presentation was intended to be an unbiased, unvarnished and apolitical analysis of the investment he made last year. Though Shepherd admits to being somewhat of an EVangelist, audience members were eager to hear Shepherd's comments to help them convey useful, accurate information to their electric cooperative consumers back in their respective service areas.

On the positive side, Shepherd said the advanced technology and the instant torque of his Mach-E deliver an exciting driving experience, and he likes doing his part to reduce emissions. His dealer, Jesse Johnson at Jan Busse Ford (Pioneer Garage, Inc.) in Highmore, was knowledgeable and ready to answer all of his questions and concerns. He noted

that factoring in a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500, he was able to save nearly \$1,000 in his first 5,000 miles of travel in the Mach-E.

"There's no gas tank to fill at over \$3 per gallon and no oil to change," he said. "A trip to Sioux Falls cost me \$6 in electricity, compared to \$49 in gas for an ICE (internal combustion engine)."

**250**  
Approximate number of EV charging stations throughout the Upper Midwest.

On the not-so-good side, Shepherd pointed to the high front-end purchase price, reduced range during the winter months, the lack of Level 2 chargers in homes and the fact that traditional vehicles sometimes block access to public charging stations. He said in the rush to build out a reliable system of charging stations throughout the region,

standardized practices have yet to be developed.

“There can be a lot of inconsistent pricing with public charging stations,” he said. “Some require a connection fee plus a per-minute fee as high as 50 cents per kilowatt hour. The networks and the number of phone apps that are out there can be confusing, and I’ve also run across some charging stations that were malfunctioning.”

He pointed out that electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and investor-owned utilities in South Dakota and Minnesota are working together to create a charging network for public use that will reduce range anxiety for EV drivers. Presently, there are nine Tesla supercharger stations and four non-Tesla chargers in South Dakota, as well as more than 250 throughout the region and dozens more for the use of guests at hotels, campgrounds and other private properties.

Electrify America Fast recently announced the company is planning to install a bank of supercharging stations in Wall sometime in January, and state officials are looking to continue to invest money into light-duty charging stations from the second round of the Volkswagen Electric Vehicle Charging Station Program.

Johnson, Shepherd’s sales agent, said these days he’s getting lots of questions from scores of potential buyers who are ponying up the \$100 refundable



Jesse Johnson is shown adjusting the drive mode in the Ford Mustang Mach-E.

*Photo by Billy Gibson.*

fee at [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com) to get placed on a waiting list for not only the Mach-E but also the new Ford F-150 Lightning, the company’s first electric-powered pick up. In fact, he has a personal spot on the Lightning list along with more than 160,000 others across the country. Tesla, GMC, Rivian and Chevrolet are also introducing their own pick ups.

“We’re getting calls from all kinds of people - retirees, commuting moms and dads, gear heads, collectors, technology buffs, environmentalists, farmers, you name it,” said Johnson, who has already sent two early adopting customers home with the Mustang Mach-E and has a third on his lot.

Johnson said car and truck dealers will have to redouble their efforts to provide service after the sale as the EV industry continues to emerge. He keeps his customers, including the many who are on the purchaser’s waiting list, apprised of any new developments

**160,000**  
Number of reservations made for the new Ford Lightning F-150 at [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com).

in the market. For example, when manufacturers began recommending that owners refrain from exceeding an 80 percent charge - unless going on an extended trip - to extend the car’s battery life, Johnson made sure his customers got the memo.

In preparing for the transportation future, car dealers are having to make significant investments in education for their sales force, training for technicians and new service and maintenance equipment to accommodate EVs.

“EVs are fun to drive with their immediate torque and safe-driving technology,” Johnson said. “These vehicles are an excellent option for those wanting to forget about the price of gas, reduce maintenance and emissions. We understand they may not fit everyone’s lifestyle, but we see a definite place for them in the future.”



Scott Shepherd is shown above talking with students at the Lake Area Technical College Automotive Technology Program about his experience as an EV owner.

Hot Beer  
Lousy Food  
Bad Service  
Welcome

# SHARING A PASSION FOR COMMUNITY THEATRE

Bev Raske (left) and Diane Drager (right) pretend to share a cold one on set. The two have co-directed several shows together.

## Performers in South Dakota and Minnesota express their passion on the community theatre stage

**Emily Costar**

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When you think of theatre, what's the first image that comes to mind? Maybe it's Hamlet, dramatically pondering whether "to be or not to be" with skull in hand and a rapt audience before him. Perhaps you envision a chorus line under the bright lights of Broadway, all high kicks and jazz hands.

Or maybe you think of a packed community hall with the folks up on stage delivering heartfelt moments and big laughs. The cast and crew consists of neighbors, colleagues and family. They're up on that stage, not for widespread acclaim or fortune, but for the love of live performance. This is community theatre.

In Minnesota, the town of Renville is no stranger to the performing arts;

they have the Renville Friends of the Arts organization, founded in 2002 and currently led by self-described "theatre junkie" Bev Raske. She first graced the stage at Renville County West High School in ninth grade for a one-act play, and continues to perform over six decades later.

"We use the same stage I stepped on back then," Raske fondly recalled.

Friends of the Arts tries to do two plays a year, which are held at the high school. Their most recent production was *Clue* this past October. Raske said productions are a "cooperative venture," as they work with the school to coordinate facility use and support other events. Friends of the Arts can't always have the space to rehearse, but that isn't a deal breaker.

"We've done a lot of rehearsing in my basement," Raske said with a chuckle.

It's that can-do attitude that's helped Friends of the Arts successfully apply for grants, such as the one that enabled them to acquire their own sound system, and then new LED lighting for the stage in a joint venture with the school.

It's also the attitude which led Joel Bakker, local farmer and Renville-Sibley Cooperative member-owner, to get involved with Friends of the Arts as an actor. Bakker was quick to applaud Raske's commitment to live theatre, saying, "She's a master of doing plays – she's the one that got me started."

Most recently seen onstage in 2020's *Twisted Christmas Carol*, Bakker has been in 10 plays with Friends of the Arts. As he put it, "I guess I enjoy being goofy in front of people. For some reason I don't have a fear!"

Bakker enjoys being involved because the productions provide folks with good entertainment they can come and see right in their area without having to travel. He also appreciates how close-knit the cast members get during a show, calling them "a second family."



Friends of the Arts also does musicals! One of their most recent productions was *Polyester the Musical*, a disco-style musical comedy.



For a few nights every year, Hayes Hall gets packed to standing-room only. West Central Electric Cooperative provides the hall's electrical power and is an annual sponsor of the Hayes play.

And good news for those who are interested: Friends of the Arts is looking to expand that family.

“We don’t want to end up being a bunch of gray-haired ladies trying to keep things going,” Raske wryly noted. “We want new people with new ideas.”

And as the organization celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2022, it’s the perfect time for new folks to get involved.

Renville Friends of the Arts isn’t the only community theatre group with an impressive history, though. In South Dakota, there’s the Hayes Drama Club. Hayes itself is a small town of less than 100 people, but each year the community hall gets packed full of people from the surrounding areas, excited to see what the club has in store. And just this past November, the club put on its 68th annual Hayes play.

“We’re the longest continuously running drama club in South Dakota!” Jack Mortenson proclaimed. He recently played Brad St. Clair in this year’s Hayes play, *The One Who Got Away*.

The club’s success shows a distinct passion for community theatre in the area, with many of its actors and volunteers traveling from surrounding areas to be a part of it. Mortenson himself regularly drove over 30 miles to and from Hayes to be in this year’s show. Beyond the dedication of its participants,

there’s a lot of community history in the club as well.

“Three generations of my family have been in the Hayes Drama Club. It’s tradition at this point,” said Mortenson, who has been in three Hayes plays already and is looking forward to future involvement as well.

Auditions for the annual play are usually held a couple months ahead of time at the Hayes Hall. And the audition details, such as time and date, are generally spread through word of mouth. So, if you find yourself wanting to join in on the theatrical fun, it wouldn’t hurt to join the Hayes Community group on Facebook to help stay in the know.

Renville Friends of the Arts and the Hayes Drama Club are just two out of hundreds of community theatre groups scattered across Minnesota and South Dakota. Live theatre is more than just national

tours in big, urban cities. It’s also the folks in your town coming together to deliver a heartfelt production at the local school or community hall just down the road.

So the next time you find yourself in the mood to sit back and have a few laughs, maybe shed a few tears and be immersed in another world for a couple hours – consider checking in on your local theatre group to see what they’ve been up to. You just might be surprised by what your community has in store.



Joel Bakker (center) in a cast photo from his most recent production with Friends of the Arts, *Twisted Christmas Carol*.

Want to get involved and stay up-to-date with Renville Friends of the Arts? Go give their Facebook page a like and follow at: [www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-360087927337206](http://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-360087927337206)

To keep up with the latest happenings in Hayes (including the Hayes Drama Club), go join the public Hayes Community group at: [www.facebook.com/groups/144509355581709](http://www.facebook.com/groups/144509355581709)

**61st Annual Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo  
January 28-February 5, 2022**



To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

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



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

**DECEMBER 23-24**

West River Electric will be closing at noon on Dec. 23 and closed all day Dec. 24, in the event of an outage or other emergency call us at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500

**DECEMBER 23-24**

**1880 Train Holiday Express**  
222 Railroad Avenue, Hill City, SD, 605-574-2222

**DECEMBER 26-31**

**Christmas Nights of Lights**  
Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

**DECEMBER 30-31**

West River Electric will be closing at noon on Dec. 30 and closed all day Dec. 31, in the event of an outage or other emergency call us at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500

**DECEMBER 31**

**New Year's Eve With The Davis Sisters**  
Performing Arts Center of Rapid City, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-4676

**JANUARY 1**

**Winter Wonderland Nature Hike**  
Big Sioux Recreation Area, Brandon, SD, 605-594-3824

**JANUARY 4-6**

**Dakota Farm Show**  
USD DakotaDome, Vermillion, SD, more info available at [dakotafarmshow.com](http://dakotafarmshow.com)

**JANUARY 8**

**Knights of Columbus Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament**  
Meadowood Lanes, Rapid City, SD, 605-393-2081

**JANUARY 14-15**

**Deadwood Red Dirt Festival**  
Deadwood Mountain Grand Event Center, Deadwood, SD, 605-559-0386

**JANUARY 15**

**Burning Beetle**  
10th Street, Custer, SD, find out more at [www.facebook.com/barkbeetleblues](http://www.facebook.com/barkbeetleblues)

**JANUARY 15-16**

**Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association Gun Show**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-793-2347

**JANUARY 16**

**Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League January Trap Shoot**  
5000 N Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

**JANUARY 16**

**WWE Supershow**  
Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 21-23**

**That Golden Girls Show**  
Orpheum Theater Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**JANUARY 22**

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

**JANUARY 28-29**

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

**JANUARY 28-29**

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

**JANUARY 28-31**

**Lead Winterfest**  
Various Locations, Lead, SD, call 605-584-1100

**JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 6**

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

**JANUARY 29-30**

**Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association Gun Show**  
National Field Archery Building, Yankton, SD, 605-731-9154

**FEBRUARY 5**

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

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