

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Anglers from across the region compete in the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year to try their luck and test their skills

Hook, line and auger

Inside the Mobridge ice fishing tourney
Pages 8-9

Shake the blues with winter outdoor fun
Pages 12-13

A Very Merry Christmas



Dick Johnson
General Manager

*In one respect, 2022 has gone like a flash,
In another respect it seems to have been
a marathon dash.*

*A busy year at West River indeed,
But our team of employees went beyond
to fill the need.*

*I warned our employees in January
change would abound,
I don't think I missed the target much, as
they found.*

Fast paced service growth, employee

*changes, supply chain issue,
Kept everyone on their toes but none grabbed a tissue.*

*Transformers that previously could be received in six weeks,
Suppliers telling us at least 18-24 months before you get any
peeks.*

*Elbows, arrestors, and poles on Santa's list too,
Are all being purchased for 2024, as we need to be in the
queue.*

*The sound of nails pounding all around our service territory,
So many old timers asking, "where they are coming from,
and what is their story?"*

*New large developments, businesses, housing, and many
apartments,*

Kept our 58 employees busy in all departments.

*The Eglin substation in Rapid City is about to be heated,
A labor of love with supply chain and cost increases
repeated.*

*On its heels will be a substation in Ashland Heights,
The new transmission line from Box Elder will help us light up
the nights.*

*All the push for renewable resources and EV's, we have to
learn to adopt,
We must do additional planning, as I don't see that it can be
stopped.*

*My concern this joyous season with all those renewable
dreams,*

*Is we still need reliable baseload generation when the sun
isn't omitting its beams.*

*Our largest in history was our new four-year work plan,
It exceeded \$45 million during that span.
An RUS loan we garnered to cover that work,
I am certain rising interest rates will make our finances jerk.*

*Our safety program is still important as part of our game,
We all work hard to make sure it is our aim.
An accident in June made us all take a pause,
We hope to have him back working soon, all of us will
applause.*

*Rate stability is the name of the game keeping us lean,
We haven't had to increase our rates since twenty sixteen.
Basin Electric doing well financially at a fast clip,
Bill credits of \$1.2 million back to us showed the power of
cooperative membership*

*A special Merry Christmas to you our members at the end of
the line,
Our wish this season is that our service all year long does
shine.
And that you feel you can come to us and won't think twice,
That we will be your trusted expert for all your energy advice.*

*To the Board of Directors, a thanks I do send,
Your total commitment to the members, community and
employees seems to never end.
To my co-op family, employees, and especially to my wife and
girls,
A special thanks for a wild 2022 that hasn't been exactly filled
with pearls.*

*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 2023 brings happiness and good cheer you too will
agree!*

MERRY
Christmas
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED THE FOLLOWING DATES:
Friday, Dec. 23rd-11am-5pm
Monday, Dec. 26th-All day
Friday, Dec. 30th-11am-5pm
Monday, Jan. 2nd-All day

West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Teachings Energy Cooperative
"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

To report and outage or in case of emergency please call 605-393-1500 or 605-279-2135

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

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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.

West River Electric's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Score Hits 88



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

If you remember back to last month's article about the ACSI score, we had just finished our annual survey and the results were not in yet for this year's score. I am proud to say that the results have come in and we increased our score by one number! West River Electric has set a vision statement that we will score an ACSI score of 90 by 2024, so the increase from 87 to 88 was music to our ears. But we cannot rest on our laurels, and we must continue to set tough goals because as the saying goes, if your goals do not scare you a little, they are not big enough.

Thank you again to all that took the time to complete the survey. It is one measurable we use to see 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. 1273600



Be Prepared for Winter Storms

When winter temperatures drop and storms hit, it can be challenging to stay safe and warm. Winter storm severity varies depending on where you live, but nearly all Americans are affected by extreme winter storms at some point. West River Electric cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.

Heavy snow and ice can lead to downed power lines, leaving co-op members without power. During extremely low temperatures, this can be dangerous. During a power outage, our crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

- **Stay warm** – Gather up warm clothes and blankets and plan to use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove. These are great options to keep you and your loved ones warm, but exercise caution when using, and never leave the heating source unattended. If you are using gasoline-, propane- or natural gas-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel- and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.
- **Stay prepared** – Ensure all mobile phones, tablets, and computers are fully charged to stay connected during an extended outage. Put new batteries in flashlights and have extras on hand and limit the number of times you open the outside door to conserve the heat inside your home.
- **Stay fed** – The CDC recommends having several days' supply of food that does not need to be cooked handy. Crackers, cereal, canned goods and bread are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.
- **Stay safe** – When an outage occurs, it usually means power lines are down. It is best not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed power lines, always assume they are live. Stay as far away from the downed lines as possible and report the situation to our dispatchers by calling 605-393-1500 or 605-279-2135 if possible.

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead can often be the difference between life and death. West River Electric is ready for what Mother Nature has in store, and we want you to be ready, too. For more winter safety tips, visit www.ready.gov/winter-weather.

Tips to use your electric blanket wisely

Heating pads and electric blankets cause around 500 fires throughout the U.S. each year. Almost all of these fires involve electric blankets more than 10 years old.

Learn how to stay safe and injury-free.

- Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.
- Do not plug electric blankets into an extension cord or power strip, as they could overheat and cause a fire.
- Look for dark, charred, or frayed spots or electrical cords that are cracked or frayed. Replace any worn or old heating pads or electric blankets.
- Never fold electric blankets when in use. Folded or tucked-in electric blankets could overheat and cause a fire.
- When purchasing electronics, including electric blankets, be sure to only purchase from reputable retailers. Purchase devices that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Do not allow anything to rest on top of a heating pad or electric blanket when it is in use. It may cause the device to overheat.
- There are two types of personal heating appliances: electric blankets and heating pads that are placed directly on the mattress. They are not meant to be used interchangeably or at the same time.

Gums wins Connections annual recipe contest

Lily Gums of Clear Lake has been selected winner of the annual *Cooperative Connections* member recipe contest.

Gums submitted a beverage recipe she calls "Swamp Water" that was published in the April 2022 issue of the magazine. She received a \$25 gift card for her submission. Congratulations, Lily!

She is a member of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

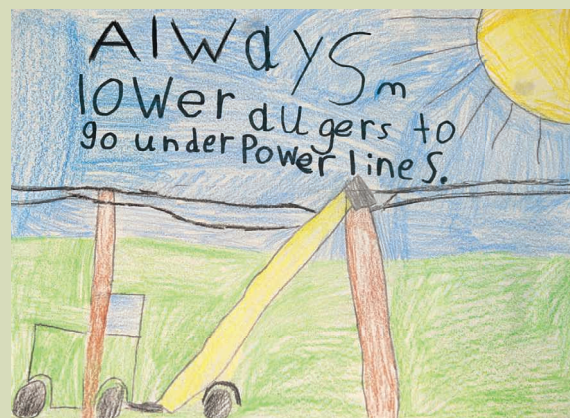


CO-OP LEADERS SERVE THEIR MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENTS



Ryan Maher is both a state senator and a board member at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative in Timber Lake. He is one of three cooperative leaders who play unique roles in serving their co-op consumers while also serving their constituents as state lawmakers during the legislative session in Pierre.

To view the comments and insights of these lawmakers and learn more about how electric cooperatives work to improve our communities, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



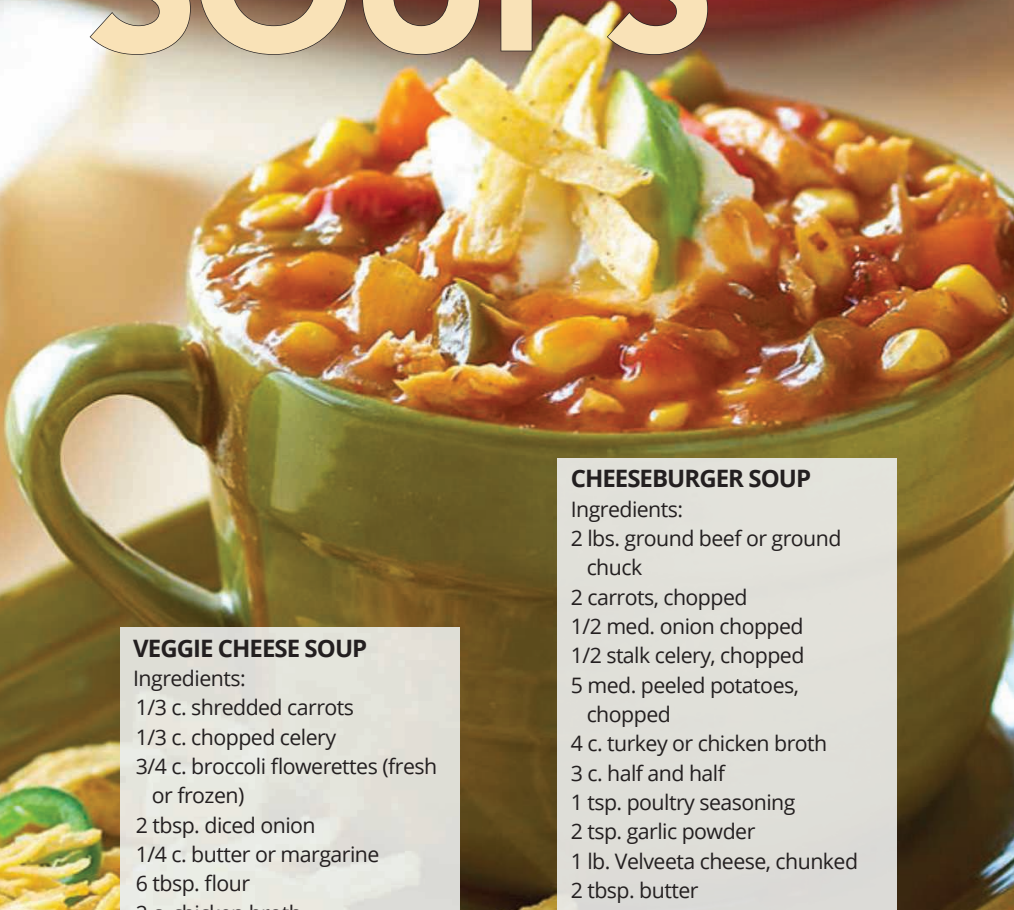
Be safe around power lines

Weston Kling

Weston Kling, age 7, urges equipment operators to always lower augers to accommodate for overhead power lines. Weston is the son of Tyler and Alexis Kling of Rapid City. They are members of West River Electric based in Wall.

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.

SUPER SOUPS



VEGGIE CHEESE SOUP

Ingredients:
 1/3 c. shredded carrots
 1/3 c. chopped celery
 3/4 c. broccoli flowerettes (fresh or frozen)
 2 tbsp. diced onion
 1/4 c. butter or margarine
 6 tbsp. flour
 2 c. chicken broth
 2 c. milk
 2 c. Velveeta cheese, cubed

METHOD

Cook carrots, celery and broccoli in 1 cup water until tender crisp. Saute onions in butter. Add flour to blend. Add milk and stir to make white sauce then add cheese and stir until melted. Add chicken broth and vegetables in remaining water. Blend until smooth.

Nancy Stenson, Fort Pierre

CHEESEBURGER SOUP

Ingredients:
 2 lbs. ground beef or ground chuck
 2 carrots, chopped
 1/2 med. onion chopped
 1/2 stalk celery, chopped
 5 med. peeled potatoes, chopped
 4 c. turkey or chicken broth
 3 c. half and half
 1 tsp. poultry seasoning
 2 tsp. garlic powder
 1 lb. Velveeta cheese, chunked
 2 tbsp. butter
 salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Brown ground meat in large pot. Drain and return to pot. Add butter, onion, carrots, celery and potatoes. Cook for 5 minutes. Add broth, poultry seasoning, garlic powder and continue cooking until vegetables are tender. Add half and half and Velveeta cheese and continue heating until cheese has melted. Salt and pepper to taste.

Kathleen Meier, Firesteel

CHICKEN FAJITA SOUP

Ingredients:
 1 tbsp. oil
 1 med. green bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
 1 med. red bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
 1 sm. onion, finely chopped
 3 tbsp. tomato paste
 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
 1 pkg. McCormick® Organics Fajita Seasoning Mix
 3 c. chicken stock
 1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, drained
 1 c. frozen corn
 1 c. tortilla strips

METHOD

Heat oil in large saucepan or Dutch oven on medium-high heat. Add peppers and onion; cook and stir 2 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook and stir 2 minutes. Stir in chicken, Seasoning Mix, stock, tomatoes and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 20 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with tortilla strips. Serve with desired toppings.

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.

What's Happening at Your Co-op?

We would like to wish Cheryl Walker and Wayne Shull well in their retirements after 55 combined years with West River Electric.



Cheryl Walker

Cheryl started work for West River Electric in 2005, as the IT specialist and we would like to say a big THANK YOU after 17 years with us. Prior to coming to West River Electric, Cheryl was a teacher at Wall School District for 23 years. She could be found always helping with printer errors, computer errors, installing new software, writing reports, making sure all the employees were up to date on the latest “Think Before You Click” information and always misplacing her glasses.

Cheryl can be found spending time with her eight grandkids and traveling with her husband, Randy.



Wayne Shull

Wayne Shull started work for West River Electric in 1984, as an apprentice lineman and we would like to say a big THANK YOU after 38 years with us. Along with his apprentice linemen position, Wayne was also a journeyman lineman, an area foreman and most recent position the Wall operations superintendent. Prior to coming to West River Electric, Wayne was a

mechanic at General Motors.

Wayne can be found spending time with his 13 grandchildren, comparing his bucket list to his wife Melanie’s,



better his relationship with God and contacting some of the soldiers he had the privilege working alongside during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Upon Cheryl’s retirement we had Gerri Johnston move up from network/helpdesk administrator to IT manager and Carolyn Shultz, former billing support specialist, move up to network/helpdesk administrator.

With Carolyn moving up positions, we hired Christina Nesseth as the new billing support specialist.

Christina started work for West River Electric on Oct. 31, 2022, in the Wall Office. She graduated from David Prodan High School in Cugir, Romania.

Following graduation, she attended University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Cluj Napoca, Romania, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree.

Cristina enjoys traveling, reading, trying new restaurants, and spending time with her husband, Mike, and her daughter, Eliana.

Thank you, Cheryl and Wayne, for all you both have done for West River Electric, and we wish you guys well in your retirement!

As we say farewell to Cheryl and Wayne, we congratulate Gerri and Carolyn and welcome Christina. 1182801



Christina Nesseth



What is Youth Tour?

Every June, more than 1,800 high school juniors and seniors travel to Washington, D.C., to spend a week in the nation's Capitol as part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. The students are sponsored by their local rural electric cooperatives-cooperatives that are committed to educating America's rural youth about America and the role electric cooperatives play in developing strong rural communities. 1254900

A few of the sites toured during the week will be the Lincoln Memorial, National Cathedral, The White House, Washington Monument, U.S. Capitol, Ford's Theatre, and many other historic sites. Students will also have the opportunity to participate in a breakfast briefing with the South Dakota Congressional Delegation.

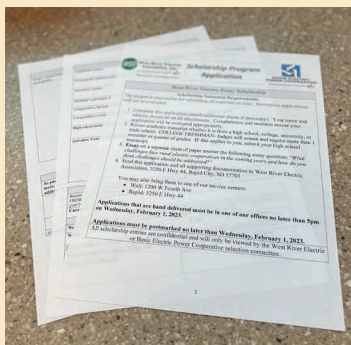
Participating in the the Youth tour is an awesome way to learn about this great nation, develop skills,

gain better understanding of electric cooperatives and make friendships that will last well beyond a week.

Current juniors or seniors are eligible to apply for this opportunity. The application deadline to apply is **April 3, 2023**, and you can apply at westriver.coop.

Student Scholarships Available

West River Electric is once again offering college scholarships to high school seniors graduating in May 2023 as well as



students currently enrolled in post-secondary education. This year we will be offering six \$500 scholarships and one \$1,000 scholarship provided by Basin Electric Power, our power generation cooperative. All scholarships will be

awarded to the students in April.

Applicants for the scholarships must be a member or a dependent child of a West River Electric member and a U.S. citizen. They must be planning to enroll or be in attendance in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/technical school.

Scholarship recipients will be chosen by a selection committee based on academic record, potential to succeed, leadership and participation in school and community activities, honors, education and career goals, and a written essay.

Completed applications and supporting documentation must be returned to West River Electric Association in Rapid City or Wall before 5 p.m. on Wednesday, **Feb. 1, 2023**. Winners will be announced in April. Applications may be picked up at the cooperative offices, online at www.westriver.coop, or at area high schools.

*Students are eligible to receive one scholarship yearly

ICE FISHING IN MOBRIDGE



The annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament attracts more than 1,000 avid cold-weather anglers. *Photo by Mobridge Outdoors*

Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament offers fun and friendly competition

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Last fall, the world of competitive walleye fishing was shaken with a startling saga of deception and skulduggery worthy of a Tom Clancy novel.

Social media lit up showing the dramatic moment a tournament director in Ohio shouted at the top of his lungs with horror and disgust: “We got weights in fish! We got weights in fish!”

Suspicion had long surrounded a pair of locals who ultimately got nabbed stuffing lead weights down the gullets of their walleye. After the two sparked skepticism with a catch of nearly 36 lbs. - one-third heavier than the runners-up - the director gutted the fish right in front of the entire field of wary competitors and held aloft several shiny orbs the size of steel ping-pong balls.

The viral video received more than 10 million views as cameras captured the chaotic scene with one of the accused hanging his head in shame (his partner had slithered away to his truck) while fellow competitors cursed and threatened to inflict bodily harm upon the sly anglers who were later indicted on four felony counts.

Vinson Dargatz is pretty sure nothing close to that degree of high drama will be replicated at the 22nd Annual Mobridge Walleye Ice Fishing Tournament set for Jan. 14. Based on his experience participating in the event over the past 12 years, this competition is more fisherman-friendly and the atmosphere is much more focused on fun.

Dargatz, an apprentice electrician at Lake Region Electric based in Webster, has continued to make the four-hour trip from his home to Mobridge mostly

because of the fellowship and the relaxed, laid-back vibe of the festivities.

He typically gets together with his two brothers and three cousins for the tournament that he describes as a “yearly ritual.”



Vinson Dargatz is shown with one of his prize catches.

“We always have a lot of fun” he said. “We used to just bring a portable shack out on the ice and sit on some buckets while we fished. But now that we’ve gotten older, softer and a little smarter, we have an Ice Castle and we fish and hang out and grill some burgers.”

Number of two-person fishing teams competing

551

in last year's Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament

Dargatz confesses that the purchase of the 8 x 16-foot Ice Castle was actually his wife's idea. When it's time for an outdoor fishing excursion, the entire family with two boys and a girl always likes to come along. And mom insists on having adequate accommodations.

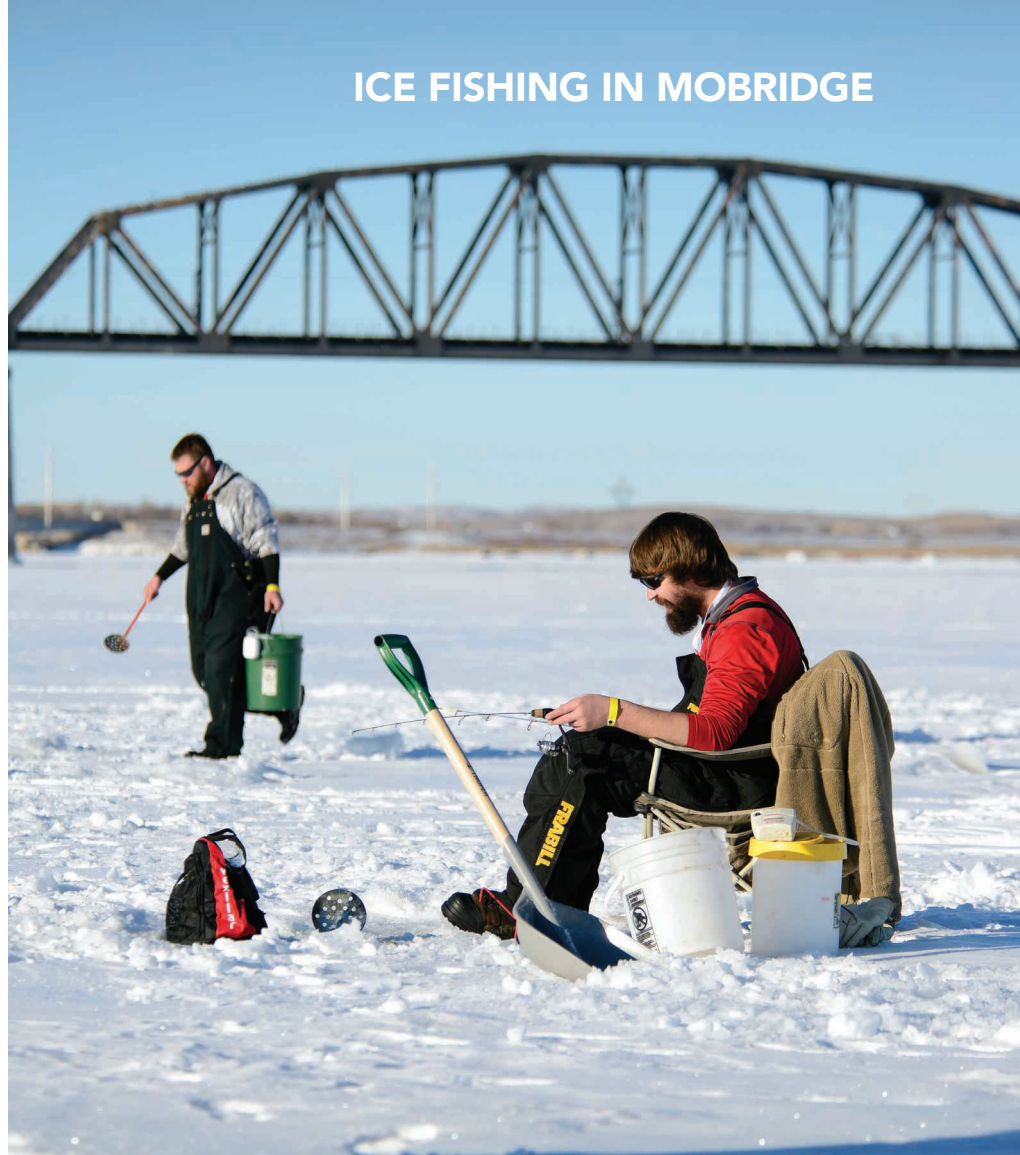
But Dargatz said when it comes to the annual winter escapes to Mobridge with the fellas, the family has to find something else to do. Besides, the town already doubles in size during tournament weekend and if every angler brought hangers-on in tow, Mobridge might expand to the size of Sioux Falls.

FILLED TO CAPACITY

Lately, the walleye population is standing less of a chance for survival against the increasing number of competitors testing their luck and skill in the annual tournament. The field has ballooned to the point of being capped at 551 two-person teams with fishermen swarming in from 16 different states.

Only so many humans can be stuffed into the town's expo center where the group events are held.

All of these developments have bewildered Jeff Jackson, one of the tournament's founders and owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge. He recalls more than two decades ago sitting around the table with a group of town leaders who were trying to figure out a way to attract visitors to the area and capitalize on all the outdoor adventure the Missouri



The Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament draws eager competitors from 16 different states.

Photo by Travel South Dakota

River and Lake Oahe have to offer.

In the first year, 50 eager contenders were lured to the event by the opportunity to claim the super grand prize of a Mr. Heater. These days, the prize list represents more than \$225,000 in assorted items such as Ice Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, clam shacks, \$8,000 worth of outdoor gear from Scheel's and Runnings, and more.

Anglers can keep their spot in the field if they register early in mid-July, otherwise their spot will be thrown into a lottery. Three guaranteed positions are drawn each year for those who participate in the town's summer fishing tournament, the Annual Denny Palmer Memorial Walleye Classic. Three spots are auctioned off on Ebay, which typically fetch up to \$4,000 apiece, while a

final spot is raffled off.

Last year's winners were Travis Bergstrom and Tate Merchant, who registered four fish weighing a total of 15.8 lbs. including one lunker that tipped the scales at 9.33 lbs. Jason Converse and Josh Spilde finished second with five fish weighing in at 13.4 lbs.

Dargatz already has the July 2023 registration date on his calendar and reminder notifications set to make sure he doesn't miss out. He's anticipating another adventurous outing in this year's tourney.

"I think it's great for the town to have so many people visiting and spending money. It's pretty wild that a small town can pull something like that together. They run it like a well-oiled machine and make sure everyone has a good time."

Operation Round Up

It's never too early to get in the Holiday spirit! Our Operation Round Up program is an easy way to give back to your community. It is a voluntary program that does just what the name implies. Each month we "round up" the electric bills of participating consumers to the next highest dollar. For example, a consumer's monthly bill of \$37.75 would automatically be rounded up to \$38, with the additional 25 cents going to the Operation Round up fund. Donations are tax deductible, and consumers are sent a summary of yearly contributions each January. 583300

The additional cents from participating consumers' electric bills get put into a trust that is administered by an independent Board of Directors; separate from West River Electric's Board of Directors. This board consists of one member from each of the five areas: Wall, Union Center, Sturgis,

New Underwood and Rapid City. They are responsible for receiving the funds, evaluating all requests for funds and deciding how to distribute the funds amongst the non-profit organizations. Any Non-profit organization, group, family, or individual on West River Electric service is able to submit for funds to help with



Wall Rodeo Booster Club – \$1,500 for assistance with arena improvements

their charitable projects. In 2022 alone, the Operation Round Up Organization gave back \$14,650, to the community and that's all thanks to you, the member owner. Applications for the upcoming year are due **Feb. 15, 2023**. For more information on how you can give



Rushmore Music Festival – \$1,000 for funding to establish music library



Youth and Family Services – \$500 for assistance with services for youth



Wasta Volunteer Fire Department – \$1,500 for assistance with the new firehall/community center

back or to request funds, visit www.westriver.coop.

*Not pictured Central Meade Country Community Center, \$500 for assistance with building maintenance; Sturgis Rodeo Booster Club, \$500 for assistance with new rodeo arena; Plainview Community Hall, \$800 for assistance with expenses for repairs to hall; and Quinn Volunteer Fire Department, \$1,500 for assistance with expenses on building a new fire hall. 336800



Rapid City BMX – \$500 for assistance with the racing program

New Underwood School – \$2,000 for assistance with supplies



New Underwood Roping Club – \$1,500 for assistance with expenses for arena improvements



City of Wall – \$200 with assistance with expenses for pickleball nets

Rural Meade Ambulance Service – \$1,000 for assistance with equipment purchases



Freshman Impact/CORE – \$1,000 to help purchase student materials



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.



WINTER OUTDOOR FUN

The chill of winter doesn't keep outdoors enthusiasts from finding adventure at Farm Island Recreation Area. *Photos by Travel South Dakota*

Winter adventure-seekers find wonder in the chilly outdoors

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Mental health counselors have discovered that seasonal affective disorder can be much more than just a harmless case of the blahs - it's a real condition that afflicts millions of people when the daylight diminishes and the temps turn colder.

They also agree that one way to defend against the winter doldrums is to get out of the house, embrace the crisp invigorating air and enjoy all the season has to offer.

It doesn't take much time or effort to create a list of fun things to do to get the blood pumping and the spirit soaring. Stepping away from a stuffy den and going outside to build a snowman, hike a nature trail, roast marshmallows over a bonfire and engage in other activities with family and friends can help bring back some

mental and emotional balance.

Nick Harrington of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks said his department is eager to accommodate anyone looking to extract some fun from the chill of winter.

Harrington notes that many of the state's 50-plus public camping and recreation areas are open for attendance during the long winter months, although some facilities are closed in an effort to protect delicate nesting habitats

for eagles and other species of wildlife.

Some comfort stations may close down during winter but the state has modern lodges available with amenities such as heaters and running water, including cabins, suites and group lodges for cold-weather outdoor vacationing.

Harrington said that while many vacationers from far and wide flock to South Dakota in the summertime, the state boasts more than 1,500 miles of nature trails for cold-weather adventurers to discover and is one



Fat-tire biking in Spearfish Canyon

8 WINTER WONDERLANDS FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- * Wind Cave National Park, Hot Springs
- * Snake Creek Recreation Area, Platte
- * Palisades State Park, Garretson
- * Custer State Park Spur, Custer
- * Randall Creek SRA, Pickstown
- * Pelican Lake, Pelican Township
- * Farm Island SRA, Pierre
- * Oakwood Lakes State Park, Bruce



Time spent outdoors during the winter can be beneficial to mental and physical well-being.

of the nation's top attractions for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hiking, fat-tire biking and many other off-season outdoor adventures.

"Some people just enjoy getting out in the cold weather. They like the changing of the seasons we get in our region and they're always looking for new opportunities to explore what we have to offer without a lot of crowds," Harrington said. "It's already a beautiful state, but winter really changes the look of the landscape and is a big draw for many people looking for outdoor fun."

World-renowned summertime attractions such as the iconic Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse destinations take on an entirely different appeal during the snowy season. The Badlands geological formations, Ponderosa pine forests, open prairies, secluded lakes and

scenic waterways become even more alluring for landscape photographers, bird-watchers, hikers and wildlife enthusiasts when set against a charming and aesthetically pleasing wintry backdrop.

One of the most highly-attended state park destinations during both the summer and winter is Custer State Park with its 71,000 acres of trails, spectacular vistas and pristine lakes. The site is open year-round and during winter offers a wide array of things to see and do.

But there is still lots to explore across the state, including the more centrally situated Farm Island Recreation Area located four miles east of Pierre. Considered one of the park system's best-kept secrets, Farm Island sits nestled along the banks of Lake Sharpe

and the Missouri River and welcomes many winter guests who enjoy majestic glowing sunsets, ice fishing, eight miles of hiking trails, cross-country skiing and exploring the perfect natural habitat for birdwatching. There's also RV, primitive and cabin camping opportunities available.

For more ideas on how to plan trip and shake off the winter blues, check out this handy guide: www.travelsouthdakota.com/winter.

And after deciding on your winter vacation plans, don't forget to pack the following along with the rest of your cold-weather gear:

- Wool base layer
- Fleece mid-layer
- Windproof outer layer
- Waterproof boots
- Warm hat, scarf, gloves and socks.



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Habitat for Humanity is active in all 50 states and 70 countries around the world. *Photos by Habitat for Humanity*

Habitat for Humanity builds homes and hope one family at a time

Billy Gibson

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Habitat for Humanity homes have walls that can talk. Well, they don't actually vocalize, but they do carry messages of hope and inspiration.

There's a time-honored tradition that calls for Habitat volunteers to take a break from their carpentry work and jot down personal notes on studs and sheets of plywood before the materials are nailed into place.

The simple scribbles are intended to infuse the space with messages of hope, harmony and good fortune showered upon those family members who will soon call the dwelling home.

"May all who enter this home as guests, leave as family," reads one brief affirmation rendered in green with a fat felt-tipped marker.

"Smile through the darkness. It will always bring light," reads another message of encouragement.

Some notes are based on Biblical scriptures: "Walk by faith, not by sight."

Still others recite Bible verses verbatim such as John 3:16, Jeremiah 29:11 and other familiar passages that share the promise of a bountiful future.

School-age volunteers are also quick to get in on the act. While the adults are busy at work with nail guns and power saws, the kids are taking permanent markers and drawing colorful images of sunbeams, flowers, hearts, backyard playgrounds, church crosses and whatever comes to mind. Inside the walls of one Habitat home in Mitchell there happens to be a sketch of a Happy Meal from McDonald's, complete with a fully-dressed hamburger, fries and a drink.

If nothing else, these personal postings serve as reminders of the passion that Habitat volunteers put into their work.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Board Member Rick Cheloha currently has a compensated "retirement job" as a construction supervisor with his local affiliate but plans to step down soon and continue on as a volunteer.

Before moving to Tabor several years ago, he volunteered with the affiliate in Columbus, Neb., while working full-time as a construction manager with Loupe River Electric.

"I've been involved in 10 projects and none of them would have been possible without the help of volunteers and others who support the program in so many ways. Some people think we build free houses, but that's not true. They have to pay for the house, but they can qualify for a zero percent loan."

Patrick Soukup, manager of member services and marketing at Central Electric in Mitchell, is president of his local Habitat affiliate. Mitchell Regional HFH is one of eight affiliates in South Dakota, representing the global program that was founded in 1976 and serves in all 50 states and 70 countries.

Soukup said the Mitchell crew is on the cusp of completing its ninth home. He remembers the smile on the faces of new homeowner Sonja Wells and her family when they participated in a "nail pounding" ceremony during the construction process last November.

Volunteers, family members and supporters were on hand as Fr. Yamato



Above/left, Patrick Soukup works at the Mitchell Regional HFH plant sale, while volunteers write special messages to future homeowners.

Icochea prayed over the property, the Wells family and the many participants who donated their time and resources to make the project come to fruition.

Soukup said he is sold on the merits of the ecumenical Christian housing ministry, which conducts thorough screenings of housing candidates and requires homeowners to invest considerable “sweat equity” into the homebuilding projects.

“It’s very fulfilling for everyone involved to see a home build take shape and to see so many people put their

hearts and souls into something like this to improve the lives of others. It really makes a difference, it has a direct impact, and you can get a sense of that as you get to know the homeowners and the volunteers during the different stages in the process.”

Local HFH affiliates apply some creativity to raise funds for their projects. The Mitchell affiliate holds an annual plant sale in the town square. The Brookings affiliate stages an annual gala called “Nail the Runway” which is billed as a “construction-based fashion show with a twist.” The twist happens to be that all fashions must be designed from raw construction materials.

Participants try their best to strut down the runway with grace while outfitted in pieces of tile, wood, landscaping fabric, wallpaper, nails and anything else they can drag out of the tool shed. This year’s event is set for March 18 at the Swiftel Center in Brookings.

Dan McColley is Executive Director and Lead Mission Officer for the Brookings HFH. He admits that he stole – um, “admired and acquired” - the fashion show idea from an affiliate in Rochester, MN. McColley got his start with HFH as a volunteer at the Northwoods ReStore in Bemidji, MN. He gave up his financially rewarding day job as an operations manager to

join Habitat full-time and relocated to Brookings six years ago.

For McColley, his work with Habitat is very personal. He chokes up when describing how his father and mother worked multiple jobs to make ends meet for the family of seven.

“We would have qualified for a Habitat home,” he said, noting that the Brookings group has approved 84 homeowners since 1995. “If I can do anything to lift that burden for another family, that’s what this job means to me. Every day, it’s coming to work and trying to give others an opportunity to have the benefit of home ownership. We celebrate what we’ve done, then we look for ways to do more.”

One family that stands out for McColley involved a mother and daughter who lived together. The daughter required ADA accommodations.

“She told us she needed soft carpeting because her wheelchair wouldn’t fit through the front door and she got rug burns having to crawl around the house,” he said. “We were able to build a home that was ADA compliant where she could use her wheelchair, open cabinets easily and cook without getting burned. The work we do transforms the lives of our homebuyers, our staff, our donors, our volunteers and our communities.”

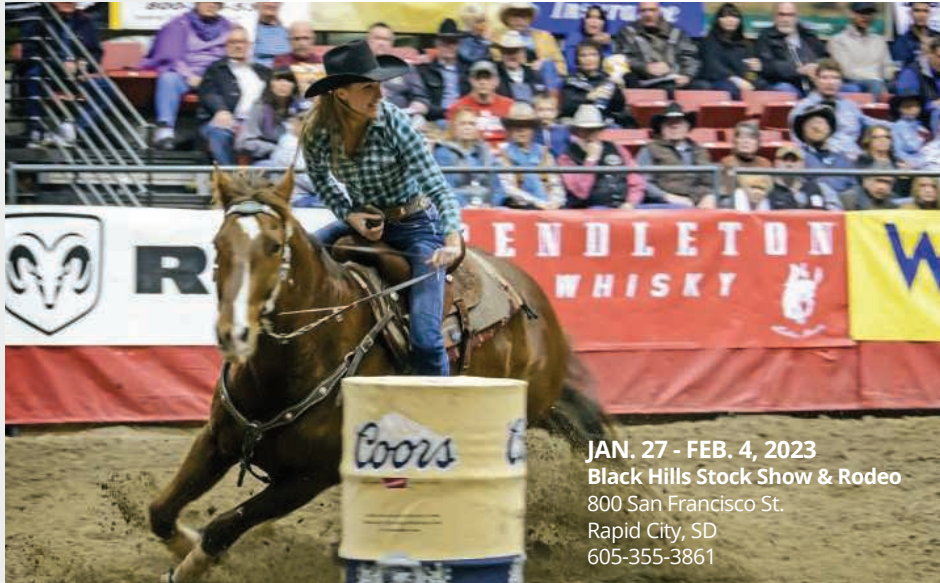


The annual “Nail the Runway” event staged by the Brookings Area HFH is a “fashion show with a twist.”

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JAN. 27 - FEB. 4, 2023
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
800 San Francisco St.
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

JAN. 1
American Legion Post 15
Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
South Dakota Military Heritage
Alliance Building
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 13-14
ON YOUR FEET! THE MUSICAL
Show Dates:
Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14, 2 p.m.
Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 14
Coats for Kids Bowling
Tournament
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.
\$80 for a four-person team
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

JAN. 14
Chinook Days
Winter Carnival
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Big Hill
Spearfish, SD

JAN. 20
Rapid Valley UMC
Soup Supper
4:30 p.m.-7 p.m.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 21
Lakota Games on Ice
1 p.m.-4 p.m.
Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village
Mitchell, SD

JAN. 27-28
Annual Deadwood Pro
Snocross Races
Jan. 27, 12:50 p.m.
Jan. 28, 8:25 a.m.
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds
Deadwood, SD

JAN. 27 - FEB. 4
Annual Black Hills Stock
Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairgrounds and
The Monument
Tickets may be purchased
online and at the gate
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

JAN. 28
K9 Keg Pull
On-site registration
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Deadwood Street by
Outlaw Square
Deadwood, SD

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

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

MAR. 4
Annual Ag Day
9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

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