

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## **SOUTH DAKOTA STAR QUILTS**

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Legacy With  
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# At the Table in Washington, D.C.



**Robert Raker**  
CEO/GM

If you ever get the chance to visit Washington, D.C., I recommend it. It's a place where marble buildings and busy sidewalks are filled with people making decisions that affect everything from energy and agriculture to water and broadband—and yes, even your electric bill. 5400

This past April, I joined over 2,000 leaders from electric cooperatives across the country for the NRECA Legislative Conference, where we spent several days meeting with lawmakers and advocating for policies that protect and strengthen rural America. It was a whirlwind of meetings, briefings, and boots-on-the-ground storytelling—all aimed at making sure co-ops like West River Electric are heard in the halls of Congress.

We met with Senator Thune, Senator Rounds, and Representative Dusty Johnson, each of whom took time to hear directly from our South Dakota delegation. The topics weren't surprising: energy permitting reform, grid reliability, wildfire mitigation, and continued support for hydropower and RUS funding. What stood out was how receptive and engaged they continue to be on issues that affect rural cooperatives. 41000

One speaker described D.C. as a place full of "work horses and show horses"—and I can confirm we were lucky to spend time with the work horses. Regardless of which side of the aisle anyone sits on, we believe in finding common

ground to keep rural priorities front and center. From streamlining infrastructure permits to protecting affordable and reliable generation sources, we found bipartisan support for the issues that matter most to you—our members.

Beyond the policy, we were reminded of what makes co-ops so respected in Washington: we're consistent. Our message doesn't shift with political winds because our focus never changes—we're here to serve people, not profits. That kind of stability builds trust, and it's a big reason we continue to earn a seat at the table.

I left Washington encouraged—not only by the leaders we met, but by the shared commitment of co-ops across the country. Not to mention that travelling out there really makes me appreciate living in Western SD. No matter where we're from, our core values are the same: safety, local control, reliability, affordability, and service to community.

As always, thank you for your continued trust in us. We will continue working hard to ensure your voice—and your cooperative—is represented at every level.

*Robert Raker | CEO*

**SAVE THE DATES**

**SEPTEMBER 12TH**  
New Underwood vs. Wall Football  
Tailgate in New Underwood

**SEPTEMBER 26TH**  
Member Appreciation Day in  
Rapid City

**OCTOBER 11TH**  
86th Annual Meeting in Wall

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

**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**WEST RIVER ELECTRIC**

(USPS No. 675-840)

**Our Mission:**

To serve our members' best interest.

**Our Vision:**

We will be a high performing co-op.

**Our Values:**

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Board President:** Andy Moon

**Board of Directors**

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

**CEO and General Manager:**

Robert Raker – robert.raker@westriver.coop

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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. 6564, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail amanda.haugen@westriver.coop.

# Who Owns What?

## Understanding Electric Equipment



**Mike Letcher**  
Manager of Operations

As July rolls in with longer days and rising temperatures, it also brings the increased potential for severe weather. Summer storms can arrive quickly and hit hard, sometimes causing significant damage to essential electric

equipment throughout our community.

West River Electric is always prepared to respond swiftly to outages and restore power safely, but it is also important for homeowners to understand which parts of the electric system are their responsibility and which are maintained by us at the co-op. Understanding these key differences can help speed up repairs and ensure everyone stays safe when the weather turns rough.

West River Electric is responsible for maintaining and repairing the equipment and lines that run to your home, including utility poles, distribution power lines, electric meters and padmounted transformers.

Members of West River Electric are responsible for the equipment located between the electric meter and your home or business, including any underground service lines that lead into the structure and the service panel. Members are also responsible for the weatherhead and service mast located outside the home.

If any equipment that you (the homeowner) are responsible for is damaged, please call a licensed electrician to conduct the repairs. A professional has the experience and know-how to assess and manage these types of repairs.

When severe weather damages electrical equipment, it's important to note that any necessary repairs to the homeowner's equipment must be conducted before West River Electric crews can restore power to your home or business. By understanding the equipment you are responsible for, the repair and restoration process will be smoother and faster.

Our community takes great pride in the beautiful trees and landscaping that contribute to the natural beauty where we live, however, regular trimming is essential to ensure reliable electric service and minimize damage from severe weather. West River Electric regularly trims trees throughout our service territory to improve service reliability. If you spot a tree limb that is obstructing a distribution power line outside your home, please call 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 so we can trim those limbs and maintain those lines.

Any overgrown limbs or vegetation around the service line is the homeowner's responsibility, and in these cases, please call a professional tree trimming service to assist.

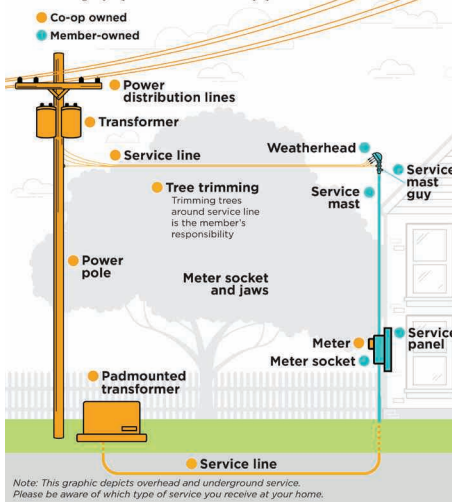
By working together to understand the essential equipment that powers daily life, we can all be better prepared to start the repair and restoration process if severe weather impacts our community.

If you have any questions about your electrical equipment, we're here to help. Please contact West River Electric at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500.

### Who Owns What?

#### Electric Co-op Owned Equipment vs Member-Owned Equipment

This graphic depicts equipment owned by the co-op (in gold) and the member (in blue). If a storm damages any equipment owned by the co-op, we are responsible for repairs. If a storm damages any member-owned equipment, the member is responsible for repairs. Members should hire a licensed electrician when making any repairs to member-owned equipment.



# Playground Safety

Source: National Safety Council

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year, more than 200,000 children go to U.S. hospital emergency departments with injuries associated with playground equipment.

As the weather warms up and trips to the park become frequent, take a moment to familiarize yourself with the risks on playgrounds and how you can prevent injuries.

### Check for Playground Hazards

Nearly 80% of playground injuries are caused by falls. Watch out for these potential hazards when taking kids to the playground, and report any hazards observed.

**Improper ground surfaces:** Surfaces around playground equipment should have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials. Playgrounds should be free of exposed concrete footings, rocks or tree stumps.

**Overcrowded play areas:** The area under and around play equipment should be a minimum of 6 feet in all directions while swing set areas should be twice the height of the suspending bar both in back and front of the swings. Structures more than 30 inches high should be at least 9 feet apart.

**Unprotected elevated areas:** Platforms higher than 30 inches should have guardrails or barriers.

**Head entrapment spaces:** Openings between rails, bars, rungs and even ropes of cargo nets should be less than 3 1/2 inches or more than 9 inches.

**Sharp points and edges:** Playground equipment should be free of protruding bolt ends, “S” hooks, and other sharp points and edges.

Visit the American Academy of Pediatrics webpage on playground safety to learn more.

### Avoid Strangulation Hazards

The American Academy of Pediatrics cautions that children should not wear or play with anything that could get caught on equipment and become a strangulation hazard.

- Never attach or allow children to attach ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines or pet leashes to play equipment.
- Leave sweatshirts with drawstrings and necklaces at home.
- Remove bike helmets when playing on the playground.

### Be Cautious of Too Much Sun Exposure

Playgrounds should have full or partial sun protection between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., peak exposure time.

- Limit playtime at peak sun exposure time and know the signs of heat illnesses.
- Avoid burns; if playground equipment is hot to the touch, it is too hot for your child’s bare skin.

### Allow Only Age-Appropriate Activities

The Consumer Product Safety commission lists age-appropriate equipment in the Public Playground Safety Handbook. There is no substitute for parental supervision, especially for young children.



### “Don’t go outside during lightning storms!”

#### Marah Kinnunen, Age 8

Marah warns readers about the dangers of going outside during a lightning storm. Thank you for your picture, Marah! Marah’s parents are Reuben and Sarine Kinnunen from Hayti, S.D.

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.

# Delectable CHICKEN

## CHICKEN MILANESE

### Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. McCormick® Chicken Parmesan One Sheet Pan Seasoning Mix
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 lb. thin-sliced boneless skinless chicken breasts
- 1 tbsp. oil

### Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Empty Seasoning Mix into shallow dish. Add Parmesan cheese. Brush chicken with oil. Coat evenly on both sides with Seasoning Mix. Discard any remaining Seasoning Mix.

Place chicken in single layer on foil-lined shallow baking pan sprayed with no stick cooking spray.

Bake 15 minutes or until cooked through, turn chicken halfway through cook time.

[McCormick.com](http://McCormick.com)

## SWEET AND SOUR CHICKEN

### Ingredients:

- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 2 tbsps. fat or oil
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tbsps. cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup vinegar
- 20 oz. can pineapple chunks (drained, reserving juice)
- 3 tbsps. soy sauce
- 3/4 cup green pepper strips
- 1/4 cup onion (thinly sliced)

### Method

Cube chicken into one inch squares; brown in fat. Add water. Cook in water until tender. In another pan combine cornstarch, salt, brown sugar, vinegar, pineapple juice and soy sauce.

Cook until slightly thick, stirring constantly. Pour sauce over hot chicken. Let stand at least 10 minutes. Add green pepper, onion, and pineapple chunks. Cook two to seven minutes until warmed through. Serve over hot rice. \*Makes 4 servings.

**Jan Grage**  
Clay-Union Electric Member

## CHICKEN POT PIE

### Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. prepared pie crust (top and bottom)
- 1/3 cup butter or margarine
- 1/3 cup chopped onion
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 3/4 cup Progresso™ chicken broth (from 32 oz. carton)
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 1/2 cup chicken/turkey (shredded, cooked)
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables (thawed)

### Method

Heat oven to 425°F. Prepare pie crusts as directed on box for two-crust pie using nine inch glass pie pan. In two quart saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion; cook two minutes, stirring frequently, until tender. Stir in flour, salt and pepper until well blended.

Gradually stir in broth and milk, cooking and stirring until bubbly and thickened. Stir in chicken and mixed vegetables. Remove from heat. Spoon chicken mixture into crust-lined pan. Top with second crust; seal edge and flute. Cut slits in several places in top crust. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown. During last 15 to 20 minutes of baking, cover crust edge with strips of foil to prevent excessive browning. Let stand five minutes before serving.

**Cindy Foster**  
Codington-Clark Electric Member

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# How Extreme Summer Temps Impact Reliability



**Amanda Haugen**  
Communications  
Specialist

When outdoor temperatures soar, our electricity use increases. That's because our air conditioners are running longer and more often to counteract sweltering outdoor temperatures.

Factor in that we all tend to use electricity at the same times—in the morning and early evenings—and that equals a lot of strain on our electric grid.

At West River Electric, we work closely with Rushmore Electric Power Cooperative, our local generation and transmission (G&T) cooperative in resource and infrastructure planning to ensure you have the power you need whenever you flip a switch. But, the electric grid is much larger than your local co-op and G&T.

In summer months, when even more electricity is being used simultaneously across the country, it is possible for electricity demand to exceed supply, especially if a prolonged heat wave occurs. If this happens, which is rare, the grid operator for our region of the country may call on consumers to actively reduce their energy use or initiate rolling power outages to relieve pressure on the grid. West River Electric will always keep you informed about situations like this. 48401

We work proactively with our G&T to create a resilient portion of the grid and ensure electric reliability in extreme weather, including regular system maintenance, grid modernization efforts and disaster response planning; but it takes everyone to keep the grid reliable.

To help keep the air conditioner running for you, your family and neighbors, here are a few things you can do to relieve pressure on the grid during times of extreme summer heat:



1. **Raise your thermostat setting a few degrees higher** than usual. Every degree can reduce cooling energy consumption.
2. **Cook with smaller appliances** to save energy and reduce heat gain in the kitchen.
3. **Keep blinds, curtains and shades closed** during the hottest part of the day to block direct sunlight.
4. **Use fans** to circulate air, which can make you feel cooler without needing to lower the thermostat.
5. Shift activities that require a lot of energy consumption to **off-peak hours** when demand is lower.

- Select the highest comfortable thermostat setting and turn it up several degrees whenever possible. Your cooling system must run longer to make up the difference between the thermostat temp and the outdoor temp.
  - Pro tip: Seal air leaks around windows and exterior doors with caulk and weatherstripping. Air leaks and drafts force your cooling system to work harder than necessary. 2562801
- Run major appliances such as dishwashers, ovens and dryers during off-peak hours when the demand for electricity is lower.
  - Pro tip: Start the dishwasher before you go to bed.
- Use ceiling fans to make yourself feel a few degrees cooler. Remember, ceiling fans cool people (not rooms), so turn them off in unoccupied rooms.
  - Pro tip: During summer months, set ceiling fan blades to rotate counterclockwise, which pushes cool air down for a windchill effect.
- Close blinds, curtains and shades during the hottest part of the day to block unwanted heat gain from sunlight. 3818200
  - Pro tip: Consider blackout curtains with thermal backing or reflective lining to block heat and light.
- Use smaller appliances, such as slow cookers, air fryers and toaster ovens to cook meals.
  - Pro tip: Studies have shown that air fryers use about half the amount of electricity than a full-sized oven. Air fryers are smaller and use focused heat, which results in faster cooking times, less heat output and lower energy use.

As we face the challenges posed by soaring summer temperatures, understanding the impact on energy demand is crucial for maintaining a reliable power supply. By adopting energy conservation practices during periods of extreme heat, not only can you save money on your electric bills, but you can also contribute to the resilience of the grid, keeping our local community cool and connected.

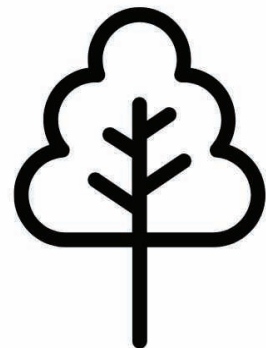
# Don't Touch the **GREEN** Box!

Because it's NOT just a green box. It's a pad-mounted transformer, and electricity flows through it from underground power lines.



### PLAY SAFE

Never play on or around a transformer.



### PLANT SAFE

Landscape at least 4 feet from sides and 10 feet from the door.



**West River Electric Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"



Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.

### DIG SAFE

Never dig around a transformer before calling 811.

### STAY SAFE

If you see a green box that is damaged, call West River Electric to report it.





# SOUTH DAKOTA STAR QUILTS

Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative directors present retiring manager Melissa Maher (left) with a star quilt.  
*Photo by JJ Martin*

## Honoring Cooperative Legacy With Time-honored Tradition

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@srea.coop

Across the prairie, few gifts carry as much meaning as a star quilt. For many, these quilts are more than just blankets – they are acts of honor. Rooted in Native American culture, particularly among Lakota, Dakota and other tribes of South Dakota, star quilts have long been used to mark some of life’s largest milestones, including graduations, marriages, memorials and moments of deep community respect.

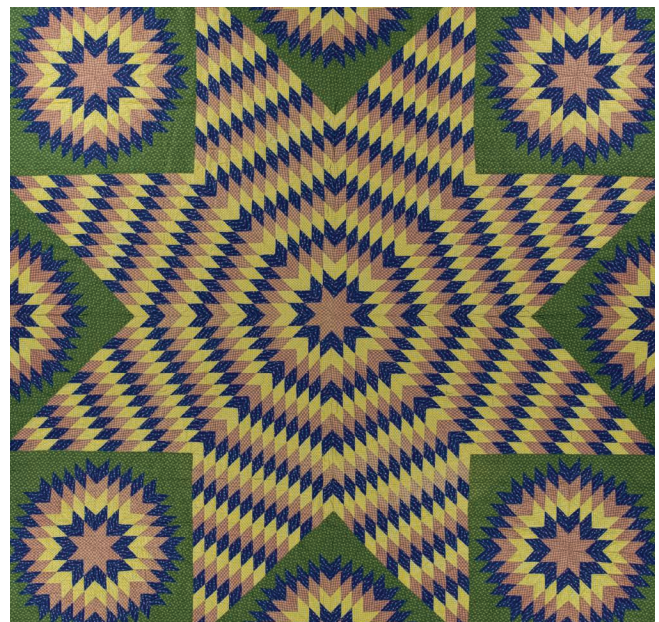
Electric cooperative leaders Donovan Young Man, a former director of Lacreek Electric who was honored shortly before his passing earlier this year, and Melissa Maher, the former manager of Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, recently accepted star quilts from their cooperatives in recognition of their many years of service to their member-owners.

So what makes the star quilt such an honor? According to International Quilt Museum Collections Manager Jamie Swartz, the quilts are special because they take an incredible amount of skill and experience to assemble.

Many star quilts are block quilts, constructed from dozens or even hundreds of small fabric pieces carefully cut and stitched together. At the heart of the design is an eight-pointed star, a

shape that demands near-perfect precision.

“There are so many small pieces that make up a star quilt,” Swartz said. “When you are combining so many small pieces together to make a large, over-all design, there is more room for error. A small mismeasurement can create bumps, ripples or puckers in the patchwork.”



*Photo Courtesy of the International Quilt Museum, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1997.007.0123*

That level of precision, care and time-honored tradition a star quilt represents is a part of what makes it such a meaningful gift. In recent years, the practice of gifting star quilts has been embraced by some electric cooperatives as a way to express a deep appreciation for their employees who have dedicated a lifetime of work to their cooperatives and communities.

**Remembering Donovan Young Man**

Before his passing earlier this year, Donovan Young Man was honored by his cooperative at the Lacreek Electric annual meeting with a star quilt for his 31 years of service to Lacreek Electric, serving as a director for both his cooperative and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association. Specifically, the cooperative honored Donovan’s commitment to both his cooperative and community.

Lacreek Electric CEO Josh Fanning said Young Man was known for both his calm and steady presence, and his exceptional ability to bridge tribal relations, fostering understanding and unity within the community.

In his community, Donovan was known for his profound impact on his community’s youth. For 41 years, he devoted himself to the Oglala Lakota County School District, leaving a lasting legacy of dedication, education, and empowerment for the youth. Beyond education, Donovan served his community in many other ways, including as a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council.

“Donovan had a lasting impact on our cooperative,” Fanning said. “His wisdom, leadership, and steady guidance helped shape its direction and strengthen its foundation. His contributions will be remembered and felt for years to come.”

“We chose a star quilt because gifting one is a deeply meaningful gesture in our area – an expression of profound respect, honor and the warmth of community,” Fanning continued. “In many Indigenous cultures, the star quilt represents the highest form of recognition, symbolizing heartfelt gratitude for the recipient’s enduring contributions. It also serves as a guiding light, reflecting the inspiration and direction they provide for future generations.”

**Honoring Melissa Maher**

Moreau-Grand Electric honored Melissa Maher with a star quilt at the co-ops annual meeting in October for her 40 years of service at the cooperative. In addition to Maher, the cooperative also presented Larry Hieb with a quilt for his 55 combined years of service as both an employee and director.

Maher joined the cooperative in 1984 as manager’s secretary. Through the years, Maher remained with the cooperative, serving as the member service director and later Moreau-Grand Electric’s manager, the first woman to hold this title.

“I’ve always loved star quilts, what they stand for – the celebration and honoring of someone with an heirloom that they can enjoy for hopefully generations to come,” she said.

Maher first experienced the star quilt tradition through her



Lacreek Electric employees gift director Donovan Young Man a star quilt to celebrate his 31 years of service to the electric cooperative. Photos by Mandy Scherer



mother, who taught kindergarten at Cheyenne-Eagle Butte School. As a teacher in the Eagle Butte community, her mother received star quilts from several of her students’ families.

Seeing the joy it brought her mother, Maher continued the star quilt tradition into her years at the cooperative, gifting quilts to retirees of the cooperative, gifting dozens of star quilts made by quilt maker Bonnie LeBeaux to employees of the co-op, honoring retirements, directors, and even key members of the construction crew that helped build the new Moreau-Grand Electric office.

“It’s hard to guess how many star quilts I have gifted over the years,” Maher said. “Probably dozens if I had to guess.”

The tradition came full circle at her retirement party when Moreau-Grand Electric presented Mellisa a star quilt of her own.

“We wanted to honor her 40 years of service and highlight abilities as a manager,” said Paul Lawrence, a director of Moreau-Grand Electric. “It’s a way of conveying that she led with honor and integrity, and she did exactly that.”

# AG APPRECIATION AT THE CENTRAL STATES FAIR



We invite you to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Ag Appreciation event held **August 18<sup>th</sup>, from 5:00pm - 6:30pm, at the Monument Health Stage** inside the fairgrounds! These outstanding individuals and business have made lasting contributions to their communities and the agriculture industry, and this is our chance to say ‘thank you’ for their unwavering commitment.

A complimentary meal will be served from 5pm - 6pm, with a short program to follow. Enjoy **FREE fair entrance\*** and be entered into a drawing to receive one of two, two-pack PREMIER passes to an event at the fair.

**\*Must enter on LaCrosse Street and present ticket at the gate entrance for free fair entrance.**

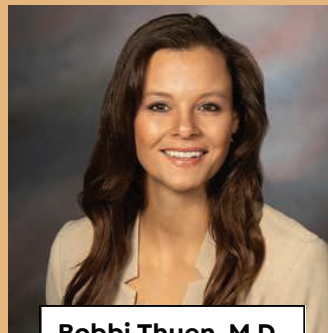
## 2025 RURAL NEIGHBOR NOMINEES

2025 Agribusiness Award  
Sponsored by:



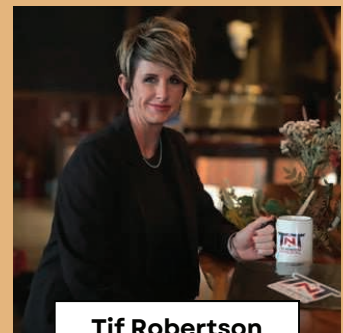
**Marty Hansen**

2025 Rural Neighbor Award  
Sponsored by:



**Bobbi Thuen, M.D.**

2025 Rural Health Care Neighbor Award  
Sponsored by:



**Tif Robertson**

2025 Rural Neighbor Award  
Sponsored by:



# Energy Scams Unmasked



**Gerri Johnston**  
Manager of IT

Consumers with water, gas and electricity connections have long been targets for utility scams. But in today's digital world, every swipe and click increases the risk of potential scams.

Scammers are more sophisticated than ever before, and they understand our increasing reliance on technology. With their sharpened digital knives, scammers have adapted their tactics to trick unsuspecting consumers through a variety of methods.

West River Electric wants to help you avoid energy scams, whether a financial loss or leak of your personal information. This month, I'd like to share updates on some of the latest utility scams, as well as tips to help you stay safe from even the craftiest scammers.

## Recent Utility Scams

Scammers typically disguise themselves—either physically or digitally—as utility employees or representatives to steal members' money or personal information. A common trick is to claim a consumer's bill is past due and threaten to disconnect service if payment isn't received immediately. Scammers approach

consumers through a variety of means, including phone calls, text messages, emails and even in-person visits. However, the digital line of attack is increasingly more common.

For example, new capabilities disguising caller ID or "spoofing" can make the phone number you see on caller ID appear to be from a trusted source. Spoofing makes it easier for scammers to deceive you because it's more difficult to immediately verify the call. Another recent scam uses fraudulent websites that are identical to a utility payment webpage—and what's worse, these pages are often promoted on search engines to trick consumers into clicking and making a payment.

Another recent scam involves phone calls, text messages or emails claiming you overpaid your electric bill and will receive a cash or banking refund. This offer may seem too good to be true, and it is—it's likely a scam aimed to steal your personal information.

## Spotting a Scam

There are several red flags you can watch for to identify an energy scam.

Scammers often use high-pressure tactics to create a sense of urgency, like claiming your electricity or other services will be disconnected if a payment isn't made immediately.

Additionally, scammers may ask for unusual payment methods such as gift cards or cryptocurrency. If someone is pushing for an unusual payment method, it's likely a scam.

You've probably noticed that many digital scams, like emails or text messages, include poor grammar, spelling errors and odd email addresses. These are red flags, so when you see these dodgy forms of communication, consider it a potential scam.

## What West River Electric Will (and Won't) Do

West River Electric will never demand an instant, immediate payment and threaten to disconnect your service without prior notices or warnings. We strive to resolve challenging situations and work with our members to avoid disconnects.

West River Electric will never ask for your Social Security number or banking details over the phone or through email. We offer several secure payment options, including in-person, online at [www.westriver.coop](http://www.westriver.coop), scheduled payments through the SmartHub app, mail in or drop box.

## Avoiding Scams

Whether in-person, over the phone or online, always be suspicious of an unknown individual claiming to be a West River Electric employee requesting banking or other personal information. We will only send you text messages if you have opted in for important alerts like outage updates or bill notifications.

If you're ever in doubt about a potential energy scam, just give us a quick call at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 so we can assist. West River Electric wants to help protect you and our community against utility frauds, and by notifying us about potential scams, you can create the first line of defense. We encourage you to report any potential scams so we can spread the word and prevent others in our community from falling victim.

**AG APPRECIATION EVENT  
TICKET**



- Present this ticket at the LaCrosse St. gate entrance for FREE fair entrance.
- Present this ticket at the Appreciation event entrance for a meal ticket.

\*Ticket is good for self + immediate family members only.








Cam Wal Electric member Tami Schanzenbach with her dogs Mac, Cash and Blu. *Submitted Photo.*

# RESCUING ANIMALS

## Co-op Members Foster and Support Pets In Need

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

Tami Schanzenbach has always wanted to help animals.

From her earliest days in Aberdeen where she worked as a veterinary technician and helped start the Aberdeen Area Humane Society, to her later Pets N Stuff store in Mobridge, Tami's focus has always been on humans' furry companions and getting them into loving homes.

And even after a long career and a so-called retirement, she still finds ways to help. Through the Wamakaskan Onisca Humane Society, she opens her home to animals in need.

"I'm a foster failure," Tami laughed, admitting three of her own beloved pet dogs were originally supposed to be adopted out.

Served by Cam Wal Electric, Tami's home near Selby is the halfway point for countless animals on their journey from neglect, abuse and homelessness to their forever homes.

"If I have a person that calls me, if someone has found a dog, I ask initially

if they're able to help me with taking care of that dog for a little bit until we can determine whether it belongs to somebody," she explained.

The pets will go to a foster home for the time being – Tami credits volunteers like her friend Annie Walker, a member of Moreau-Grand Electric from the McIntosh area, for stepping up and opening her home to foster animals.

"One day, Tami had a picture of a litter of puppies that needed to be bottle fed," Walker said about her first fostering experience.

"I figured it would be something myself and my children would be up to, and ever since then,

I keep taking some animals from time to time."

If the dog isn't claimed, the rehoming process begins, starting with veterinary care.



Annie Walker with rescue, Layla. *Submitted Photo.*

"We go through and we vaccinate and treat the animal and do what's needed to be able to make that puppy or dog available for adoption," Tami continued.

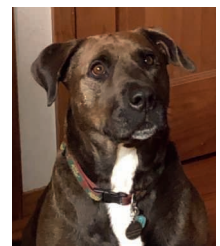
Sadly, the circumstances in which she receives them usually aren't pleasant.

The pets come from around Selby, many from the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River reservations, where they're often found abandoned. Tami recalls coming upon shocking discoveries, like "bait dogs" used to train fighting dogs in the Bismarck area.

"People will steal puppies and kitties and train their pitbulls for fights, and they have a dog that's called a bait dog," she explained. "And that you see in our area as well ... days where [multiple] people are missing their dogs. People are coming in and stealing them and using them as bait dogs."

That's what Tami suspects happened to Cash, a 7-year-old pitbull/lab cross found "in the middle of nowhere" covered in pellet shots and bite marks.

"It took a long time for him to trust and know he's going to be okay here," Tami said. "And I don't



Cash, who was used as a "bait dog," was adopted by Tami. *Submitted Photo*

blame him, because he's never been taken care of.

Tami has made it her mission to end the cycle of animal neglect and abuse where she's able by sterilizing the pets coming into her care before they're adopted out. She also sponsors sterilizations for other peoples' pets.

"We just had about 12 dogs that we sponsored to be spayed at the local vet," she said. "We had a lady that helped me with a donation and wanted it geared toward people that couldn't afford to have their animals spayed and neutered ... We have so many people that always have two litters per year."

Stopping the cycle also means barriers to adoption – if someone isn't a good fit, there's a chance that animal will be surrendered back to the rescue and the process will start from the beginning.

Tami conducts interviews with potential pet owners with hopes of finding a perfect match.

She added that she sometimes steers people with busy and demanding schedules away from getting dogs. A cat – famously independent – is often a better fit, she said.

Tami also employs sustainable adoption practices she says make for better-behaved dogs – eight weeks is generally the earliest age when she'll allow adoptions to occur.

"We have puppy socialization that occurs" when the puppies are little, she explained. "They wrestle and play with their siblings, and they create a lot of socialization that way. And there's a lot of research that has proven that if you keep them with their siblings during that period of time, they make a heck of a lot better dog going forth, because they've been through that socialization."

Jen Uecker, Board President of the Pierre/Fort Pierre Area Humane Society, also known as Paws Animal Rescue, says without volunteers like Tami and Annie, shelters like hers would be overrun and rescuing animals from abandonment wouldn't be possible.

"We rely heavily on volunteers to help ease the burden of our limited staff and resources," Uecker said. "The foster volunteers open their home to these animals not really knowing a whole lot

about them, their demeanor, where they came from, or anything, and they open their homes to help them feel comfortable and confident until they're ready for their new forever family."

Tami encourages people to volunteer, support their local rescues, adopt if they're able and above all, love their pets.

"There are a lot of dogs and cats and it's just not their fault – they get the bad end of things," Walker said. "Tami is super dedicated ... She's always willing to step in and help these animals find a better life."

For Tami, it all comes down to giving that love back.

"They provide unconditional love to humans, and sometimes we forget that," she said. "We work all day ... When you come home, you need to spend some time with your pets."

## HUMANE SOCIETY & SANCTUARY DIRECTORY

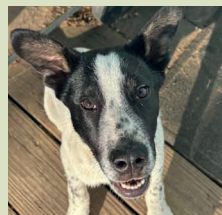
|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Wamakaskan Onsica (Mobridge).....                  | (605) 850-8430 |
| Paws Animal Rescue (Pierre).....                   | (605) 223-2287 |
| Sioux Falls Area Humane Society.....               | (605) 338-4441 |
| Humane Society of the Black Hills (Rapid City).... | (605) 394-4170 |
| Battle Mountain Humane Society (Hot Springs)....   | (605) 745-7283 |
| Beadle County Humane Society (Huron).....          | (605) 352-8955 |
| Aberdeen Area Humane Society.....                  | (605) 226-1200 |
| Glacial Lakes Humane Society (Watertown).....      | (605) 882-2247 |
| Brookings Regional Humane Society.....             | (605) 697-7387 |
| Western Hills Humane Society (Spearfish).....      | (605) 642-1576 |
| Heartland Humane Society (Yankton).....            | (605) 664-4244 |
| Siouxland Humane Society (Sioux City).....         | (712) 252-2614 |
| Mitchell Animal Rescue.....                        | (605) 770-2170 |
| Oglala Pet Project (Kyle).....                     | (605) 455-1518 |
| Wakpá Wašté Animal Shelter (Eagle Butte).....      | (605) 964-7387 |
| Fur and Purr Cat Shelter (Milbank).....            | (605) 432-4505 |
| Lake Traverse Animal Rescue (Sisseton).....        | (605) 742-0219 |

Tami says her most rewarding rescue was Fez, an 8-week-old shepherd/collie cross found with mange, a skin disease caused by mites. She said she refused to give on Fez, who is now a healthy dog with a full coat of hair.  
*Submitted Photo.*

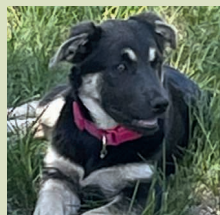


## Looking for a new home...

(plus many more)



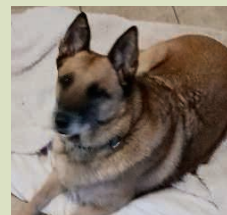
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Margot



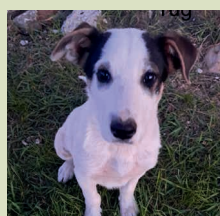
Chopper



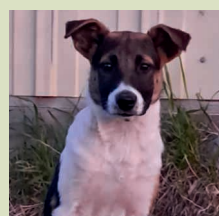
Eliza



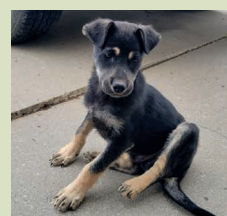
Agnes



Tug



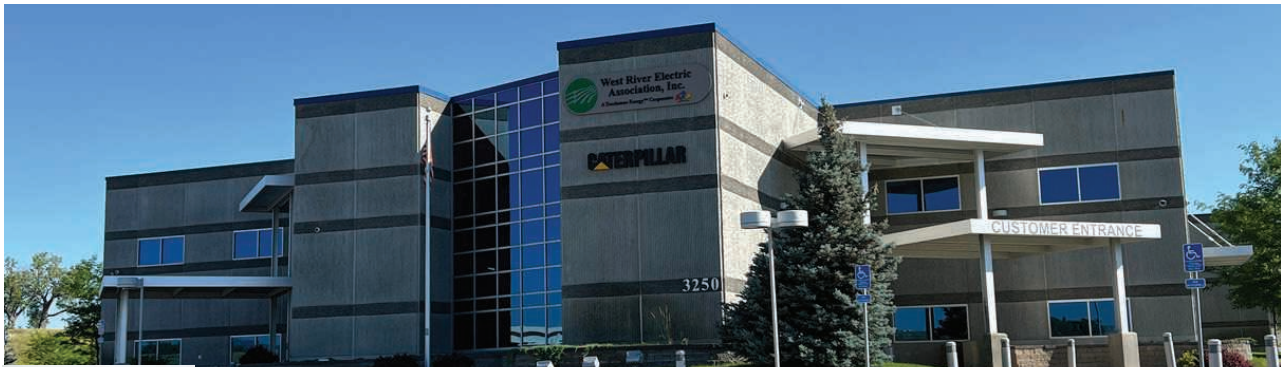
Scooter



Leo

# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

SHINING THE LIGHT ON WEST RIVER ELECTRICS DEDICATED EMPLOYEES



**ANDRIA RUFLEDT**  
MEMBER SERVICE  
REPRESENTATIVE

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?**

I have been with West River Electric for 2.5 years.

**WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?**

My day to day duties include answering members questions and ensuring they are being billed correctly.

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?**

I love the sense of community we have here. It truly feels like being part of a family.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST**

**RIVER ELECTRIC?** There have been so many memorable moments since starting at West River Electric, it's hard to pick just one. Each day brings something new to appreciate, making it difficult to choose a favorite.

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?**

Safe, Accountable, Committed

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

I'm motivated by the chance to make a positive difference for our members every day.



**BRANDON ARNOLD**  
STAKING  
TECHNICIAN

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING WITH WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?**

I have been with West River Electric for 2.5 years.

**WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?**

We meet with our members and provide them assistance in designing their new services and ensure they meet and comply with certain specifications. Other day-to-day duties include staking primary and secondary service installations, system improvements and service retirements. We provide staking sheets to the line crews to install. We also update system maps, preparing, and securing right of way easements, contractual agreements and permits. This includes any other documentation needed to be filed with city, county, state, and federal agencies.

**WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT WEST RIVER ELECTRIC?**

What I love most about WREA is the family atmosphere and getting to see some amazing countryside.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY SINCE STARTING WORK AT WEST RIVER**

**ELECTRIC?** Every day brings new memories that there are too many to count.

**HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE WEST RIVER ELECTRIC IN THREE WORDS?**

Safety, Integrity, Family.

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

I enjoy working at WREA for many reasons. You're not just a number and everyone knows each other, their families, their and their interests. Employees at WREA are truly like family. You can enjoy seeing new countryside, meeting new members, the list can go on and on.

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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## Want to save your co-op money and clear your paper clutter?

Sign up to receive your monthly Cooperative Connections magazine in your email! By doing so, you not only help the co-op save on printing and postage, but you also clear your monthly paper clutter in your mailbox.



**West River Electric Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

## 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](mailto: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.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**JULY 16-20**

### **Danish Days**

Dancing, food, parade, etc.  
Viborg, SD

*Photo courtesy of Travel South Dakota*

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.

### **JUNE 20-21**

#### **Volunteer Fire Dept. Car Show**

Fri. Cruise Night, Sat. Car Show  
Marion, SD  
Brad Schardin  
605-413-5653

### **JUNE 25-28**

#### **Crystal Springs Rodeo**

Clear Lake, SD  
605-874-2996

### **JUNE 27-28**

#### **Buckhorn Rodeo**

Britton, SD  
605-880-5077

### **JUNE 27-29**

#### **Leola Rhubarb Festival**

Leola, SD

### **JUNE 27-29**

#### **Bowdle Tower Days**

Bowdle, SD

### **JULY 1-5**

#### **106th Annual Black Hills Roundup**

Rodeo, Parades, Concerts & Fun  
Belle Fourche, SD

### **JULY 7-10**

#### **Vacation Bible School - SCUBA**

5:30 p.m.-8 p.m.  
Evening Meal Provided  
5103 Longview Rd.  
Rapid City, SD  
605-393-1526

### **JULY 9-12**

#### **Aberdeen Senior Games**

605-626-7015

### **JULY 11-12**

#### **Frontier Days**

White River, SD

### **JULY 12**

#### **39th Annual Spearfish Canyon Half Marathon & 5K**

7 a.m.  
Spearfish, SD  
605-722-4558

### **JULY 12**

#### **Friendship Days Vendor Market**

BBQ Cook Off, Prize Raffle  
10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
White Lake, SD

### **JULY 17-20**

#### **Danish Days**

Daneville Heritage Museum  
Viborg, SD  
danevilleheritage.com

### **JULY 19**

#### **6th Annual Wakonda American Legion Tractor Pull**

3 p.m. Start  
4 p.m. Kids Pedal Pull  
Wakonda, SD

### **JULY 19-21**

#### **Burke Stampede Rodeo**

Burke, SD  
605-840-0824

### **JULY 25-27**

#### **Winner Elk's 56th Annual Rodeo to Benefit LifeScape**

Winner, SD  
605-842-5830

### **JULY 26**

#### **Planes, Trains, & Automobiles**

Car Show, Train Rides, Flyovers  
10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

### **JULY 26**

#### **South Dakota Chislic Festival**

10 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Freeman, SD  
www.sdchislicfestival.com

### **JULY 26**

#### **Richmond Lake Association's Annual Pontoon Poker Run**

Aberdeen, SD  
605-225-0609

### **JULY 27**

#### **Community Cookout - Free Meal**

Smoked Pork, Sides  
11 a.m.-1 p.m.  
5103 Longview Rd.  
Rapid City, SD

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**