

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## The Days of '76 Rodeo

**A Century of Grit and  
Glory**

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# Milestones at the National Level Help with WREA's Success



**Robert Raker**  
CEO/GM

This year marks an important milestone at the national level. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service, or RUS, is celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Act, originally signed into law on May 20, 1936. 16600

That legislation is what made rural electrification possible. Even today, programs like RUS remain critical to cooperatives like West River Electric. When you look at what it takes to provide electric service across a large, rural territory like ours, it can be cost prohibitive to build and maintain the system without long term RUS financing. RUS helps us make the investments necessary to serve you reliably.

To put that into perspective, West River Electric is one of the more dense cooperatives in the state, with just over seven meters per mile of line. While that may sound high, many investor-owned utilities and municipalities operate with several times that density, often four to five times as many meters per mile.

That difference matters. Fewer consumers spread over more miles of line means the cost to build and maintain infrastructure is higher on a per member basis. That is exactly where programs like RUS play a critical role. It also highlights how growth benefits our members. As we see costs rise all around us, growth allows us to spread those costs across more members.

As part of leveraging RUS, we are currently preparing for our next RUS loan. That requires us to lay out a detailed Construction Work Plan showing the projects we expect to complete over the next four years. This process forces us to take a long-term view of system needs, growth, and

reliability, and make sure we are prioritizing the right projects at the right time.

Our goal is straightforward, to serve our members' best interests by continuing to invest in and build a system that can meet the needs of today while preparing for what is ahead.

Next, I would like to address a noticeable change I have been hearing about lately. Many of you have noticed fewer vehicles at our Rapid City facility, and that is due to Caterpillar, who previously occupied the second floor of our building, has completed construction of their own facility and has transitioned into their new space. We appreciate the time they were part of our building and wish them the best moving forward.

When our building was built, it was designed with the future in mind. As West River Electric continues to grow, that space will ultimately be utilized internally. In the meantime, we are actively working on securing another tenant for the second floor. This approach allows us to make the most of the asset today while maintaining flexibility for tomorrow. 129100

We also want to be clear that we are fully open and operational, and here to serve you the member/owners.

I want to leave with one final thought; we are heading into wildfire season, and conditions are very dry. Keep praying for rain and, please know that your Co-op has processes and procedures in place that we take seriously during times like these. We all need to be careful in these conditions and we all must do our part to reduce risk.

Stay safe,

*Robert Raker*  
CEO & General Manager

## Save The Dates

- August 24<sup>th</sup> - Ag Appreciation at the Central States Fair
- September 25<sup>th</sup> - Member Appreciation Day
- October 2<sup>nd</sup> - Wall vs. New Underwood Tailgate in Wall
- October 10<sup>th</sup> - Annual Meeting in Wall





## Lean Team, Strong Service

If you've driven past West River Electric's Rapid City building recently, you may have noticed fewer vehicles in the parking lot. Rest assured, West River Electric is open, operating as usual, and continuing to serve our members every day.

The difference you're seeing is the result of Caterpillar recently relocating to its own facility. For several years, Caterpillar shared a portion of our building upstairs, bringing additional employees and vehicles to the building which accounted for approximately 95% of the cars in the parking lot. With their move complete, the parking lot looks noticeably different—but our commitment to serving our members remains unchanged.

West River Electric serves nearly 17,000 members across 4,500 square miles with a team of 57 employees. From linemen and member services representatives to engineers, operations personnel, marketing and administrative staff, every employee plays an important role in keeping electricity flowing safely and reliably throughout our service territory.

As a member-owned cooperative, we are committed to operating efficiently and making responsible use of member resources. Maintaining a lean workforce allows us to focus on delivering reliable service while carefully managing costs. Our employees wear many hats, work collaboratively across departments, and remain dedicated to meeting the needs of our members best interests.

While the parking lot may look a little quieter these days, our team is hard at work behind the scenes—planning system improvements, responding to outages, assisting members, and ensuring reliable electric service throughout western South Dakota.

The next time you pass by, know that West River Electric is still open, still serving, and still working every day to power the communities we call home.

## 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

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Robert Raker –  
[robert.raker@westriver.coop](mailto:robert.raker@westriver.coop)

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# BEFORE THE SMOKE: PROTECT YOUR HOME BEFORE WILDFIRE SEASON

Wildfires can move quickly, especially when dry grass, high winds and hot weather come together. In rural South Dakota, where homes, farms, shelterbelts, outbuildings and open grassland share the same landscape, preparation matters.

But there is one important point to make first: fighting a wildfire is not a job for homeowners.

If a wildfire is nearby, leave firefighting to trained professionals. Follow evacuation orders, call 911 to report a fire and stay away from downed power lines, smoke-filled areas and active fire zones. Cooperative members can do their most important work in advance, taking steps that make a property harder for fire to reach and easier for responders to protect.

One of the most effective steps is creating defensible space around the home. That does not mean clearing every tree or turning a yard into bare ground. It means reducing combustible material near houses, garages, sheds and other structures, while thinking about how fire could move from brush to trees to buildings.

Start closest to the house. Embers can collect against siding, under decks, in gutters or near steps. Remove dry leaves, dead plants, stacked lumber, cardboard and other combustible materials from next to the home. Gravel, rock, concrete, pavers and other hardscaping can be better choices near walls, decks and porches.

Gutters and roofs deserve attention, too. Leaves and needles can become dry fuel. Cleaning them before fire season can reduce the chance that embers find an easy place to ignite.

From there, look at the rest of the yard. Clear dead brush, tall grass and dried weeds, especially near structures. Keep grass mowed around homes, outbuildings, propane tanks and driveways. Trim and space shrubs and trees so fire cannot easily climb from grass to brush to tree canopies. Low branches can act like ladder fuels.

Do not overlook decks, porches and crawlspaces. Dry leaves, grass clippings and other materials can collect underneath. Cleaning those areas and using screening can help keep debris from building up.

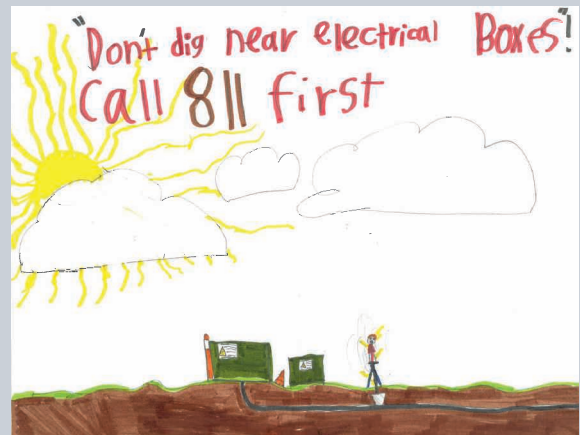
Access is part of preparation, too. Firefighters need to reach

a property quickly and safely. Keep driveways clear, make sure gates can open and trim branches that could block emergency vehicles. Clearly visible address signs can help responders find a home when visibility is poor.

Before making major landscaping changes, building fences, planting trees or adding new water lines, call 811. Underground electric, gas, water and communication lines may be closer than expected. A free locate request helps protect homeowners, utility crews and infrastructure.

Cooperative members can also make a plan. Know two ways out of the property or neighborhood. Keep important documents, medications and emergency supplies ready to go. Take photos or videos of buildings, equipment and belongings for insurance records.

Wildfire preparation is a seasonal habit, much like cleaning gutters, changing filters or preparing equipment for winter. The goal is not to fight the fire. That job belongs to firefighters and emergency responders. The goal is to give the home, property and responders a better chance before the fire ever starts.



**"Don't dig near electrical boxes!  
Call 811 first."**

**Caleb Blake, age 9**

Caleb urges members to not dig near a pad-mounted transformer. Thank you for sharing your picture, Caleb! Caleb's parents are Peter and Stephanie Blake – members of West River Electric.

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.

# Sweet on RHUBARB

## RHUBARB CHEESE CAKE

### Ingredients:

#### Rhubarb Filling

9" pie shell, unbaked  
2 1/2 cups rhubarb, chopped  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 tbsp. flour

#### Cheese Cake Filling

8 oz. cream cheese  
2 eggs, added one at a time  
1/2 cup sugar

#### Topping

3/4 cup sour cream  
2 tbsps. sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla

### Method

Stir rhubarb with flour and sugar. Put in the unbaked pie shell and bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and lower temperature to 350° degrees.

Beat cream cheese, add 2 eggs one at a time, then add the sugar. Mix well and pour over hot rhubarb layer. Bake 30 minutes at 350° degrees.

Mix the topping of sour cream, sugar and vanilla well and spread over hot pie. Cool 3 hours or more before serving. The flavors blend better the longer it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

**Charles Lebeda**  
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## RHUBARB SALAD

### Ingredients:

2 cups rhubarb, chopped  
4 tbsps. water  
1/2 cup sugar  
3 oz. red jello  
3/4 cup cold water  
1 apple, diced  
1 banana, sliced

### Method

Combine rhubarb, water and sugar. Stir and cook until mushy. Add jello and stir until dissolved. Add 3/4 cup cold water. Cool until it begins to set. Stir in diced apple and sliced banana. Chill and serve.

**Leanne Eich**  
Central Electric

## RHUBARB CAKE

### Ingredients:

White cake mix  
4 cups rhubarb, diced  
1 cup white sugar  
2 cups heavy whipping cream

### Method

Mix white cake as directed on the box. Pour in a greased 9x12 pan. Place 4 cups of diced rhubarb over the top. Pour 1 cup of white sugar over the rhubarb. Pour 2 cups of heavy whipping cream over the top. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

**Jeanette Kleinsasser**  
Dakota Energy

Picture by Sokor Space and Shutterstock.



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# Co-op Country, the connection that makes communities stronger.



**West River Electric  
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

## At West River Electric, we don't just serve communities — we're a part of them.

As your local electric cooperative, we live and work alongside you. We cheer on the same hometown teams, support the same schools, and gather at the same community events. The people we serve aren't just customers — they're our neighbors, our friends, and often, our family.

That connection is what sets us apart. Because we're member-owned, every decision we make is guided by what's best for the people and communities we serve. Whether it's keeping the lights on through a tough storm, investing in local infrastructure, or supporting youth programs and economic development, we do it with one goal in mind: to power a stronger, more vibrant future — together.

Being part of a cooperative means we succeed when our communities succeed. And that's a responsibility we take to heart, every single day.

Thank you for allowing us to serve you.



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

## Member Photo Calendar Contest

13

photos selected | 12 monthly and 1 for the cover



\$20 bill credit to monthly photo photographer winners and \$50 bill credit to cover photo photographer winner



photo submission window is June 1 - August 31 | calendars available for pick up in October at WREA offices



must be an active WREA member to participate

scan for  
guidelines and  
submission link





# A CENTURY OF GRIT AND GLORY

## The Days of '76 Rodeo

Photos by KSchurr Photography

Jocelyn Johnson

[jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop)

In the historic gulch of Deadwood, S.D., the past isn't tucked away in books – it rides out of old wooden chutes every July at the Days of '76 Rodeo.

What began more than a century ago as a short weekend celebration has grown into a week-long rodeo and parade tradition that draws contestants and visitors from across the country. Yet, amid the growth and national recognition, the Days of '76 remains rooted in family, heritage and a deep sense of place.

Pat Roberts, longtime board member of the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "It started in 1924, and it actually wasn't a rodeo then. It was a celebration of Deadwood and its establishment in 1876 – hence where the name came from. It was started by the community just to promote the founding."

Those early celebrations featured parades, horses, fireworks and the kind of small-town pageantry that fits a frontier

community proud of its past. The full-fledged rodeo format came a few years later in the late 1920s, but the heart of the event hasn't changed: honoring Deadwood's origins and the Western way of life that built it.

Today, the Days of '76 Rodeo is marking its 104th year alongside other milestones – the 150th anniversary of Deadwood and the nation's 250th anniversary.

The rodeo boasts a total payout of roughly \$350,000 and typically draws 700 to 800 contestants, including top names like Rocker Steiner, Lisa Lockhart and rising stars such as Emily Beisel. During a week of performances, 25,000 to 30,000 spectators pack the grandstands, turning the arena into a sea of cowboy hats and hometown pride.

The events remain classic: bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and breakaway roping. No frills, no gimmicks – just the timeless contests of skill and grit that define rodeo.

"We just keep it traditional," Pat said. "Just welcome everybody to Deadwood to enjoy the best cowboys and the best bucking stock that we can get."

For a town of about 1,200 people, the Days of '76 Rodeo has earned outsized recognition.

In 2011, the Days of '76 was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, a distinction the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) had not extended to a rodeo in many years.

Chris Roberts, son of Pat Roberts and fellow board member on the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "We won the PRCA Rodeo of the Year every single year that we were in the medium category until we surpassed into large. We've been nominated many times in the large category and won it once. To our knowledge, we're the only rodeo that's won Rodeo of the Year in each and every category."

In Deadwood, legacy still rides out of wooden chutes, year after year, drawing generational athletes. Rodeo here is a family affair. The Roberts family has been involved continuously since the event began.

"There's been a Roberts at every Days of '76 celebration since it started," said Pat.

Pat attended his first Days of '76 Rodeo when he was four days old and serves on the board with his son, Chris.

"I'm fourth generation," Chris said. "My great-granddad was there from year one, and we never missed a single year. Then his son – my granddad – followed in his footsteps, my dad and now me."

A fifth generation is already helping behind the scenes, continuing a family legacy that mirrors the rodeo's own endurance through the decades.

That kind of continuity isn't unique to the Roberts alone. Many contestants

arrive with stories of parents and grandparents who once competed in Deadwood.

"From a contestant perspective, I'd be willing to bet that no matter where you grew up, if you are a rodeo family, Deadwood was one that was always on the map," Chris said. "I hear it every single year – contestants talking about how grandpa or great-grandpa, grandma or great-grandma competed in Deadwood, and they've always wanted to be here. In the rodeo world, everybody knows Deadwood."

Mackenzi Gatzke, secretary of the board of directors, says her family story is similar. She currently serves on the Days of '76 board alongside both of her parents and noted two other families who have long served on the board promoting the event.

"Our board is all made up of people who were or still are locals to Deadwood, and we're all volunteers," she said. "We really do it because we love Deadwood, and we love the Days of '76 and the tradition behind it. We actually have four different families with multiple generations on our board, and we all just work together like one big family that just loves the community."

That focus on authenticity extends beyond the arena. The Days of '76 Museum houses the largest working



collection of horse-drawn wagons in the country, along with memorabilia from across the Black Hills dating back to 1876. During rodeo week, many of those wagons leave their resting place to roll through downtown Deadwood in historic parades – matching the sight of a 19th-century streetscape.

For Pat Roberts, rodeo's relevance in modern life is still significant and comes down to identity.

"It's tradition – it's the cowboy way," he said. "These cowboys and cowgirls are athletes...and the horses are too. They're bred to buck. We're not hurting anything by doing it – that's what they want to do. Just think of Deadwood and the West. Rodeo fits right in."





## Play it Safe: 10 Do's and Don'ts When Using Portable Generators



**Adam Daigle**  
Manager of  
Marketing and  
Communication

Storm season is upon us, which means the potential for power outages. If you're planning to use a portable generator in the event of an outage, West River Electric reminds you to play it safe.

With proper use and maintenance, portable generators can provide great convenience during an outage. However, when generators are used incorrectly, they can be extremely hazardous. In a 2022 report, the Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated 85 U.S. consumers die every year from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning caused by gasoline-powered portable generators.

Here are 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind when using portable generators:

1. DO: Install CO alarms.
2. DO: Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times. 426800
3. DO: Position generators at least 25 feet outside the home, away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to enter the home.
4. DO: Keep flammable materials away from the generator. Generators get hot during operation, so keep fuel, paper, leaves and other combustibles at a safe distance.
5. DO: Use three-pronged extension cords that are rated to handle the load of the generator. Inspect extension cords for cuts, frays or other damage before use.
6. DON'T: Operate a generator inside your home or an enclosed (or partially-enclosed) space. Generators produce high levels of CO, which can be deadly.
7. DON'T: Open windows or doors while the generator is running.
8. DON'T: Rely on generators as a full-time source of power. They should only be used temporarily or in emergency situations to power essential equipment or appliances.
9. DON'T: Overload generators. They should only be used to power essential equipment. Make sure your generator can handle the load of the items you plan to power.
10. DON'T: Connect generators directly into household wiring unless you have an appropriate transfer switch installed. If a generator is connected to a home's wiring without a transfer switch, power can backfeed along power lines and electrocute utility lineworkers making repairs.

While generators provide convenience during power outages, they can quickly become hazardous—even deadly—if improperly operated. Before you operate a portable generator, be sure to thoroughly read the owner's manual for important safety information and tips.

If you have questions about proper use of portable generators, we're here to help. Give us a call at 605-393-1500 or contact us at [info@westriver.coop](mailto:info@westriver.coop).

# Shift Timing, Shift Savings



**Amanda Haugen**

Communications  
Specialist

As we settle into the heat of July, our homes naturally use more electricity. Air conditioners run longer, refrigerators work harder and daily routines—from cooking dinner

to doing laundry—often overlap during the warmest parts of the day. That's also when the demand for electricity across our community is at its highest.

At West River Electric, our top priority is delivering safe, reliable and affordable power whenever you need it. But during peak energy hours—2pm - 8pm—there's added pressure on the grid as homes and businesses require larger amounts of electricity, all at the same time. On the hottest days, that strain can be significant.

The good news is that small changes at home can make a meaningful difference.

Think of our electric grid like a highway system. During rush hour, traffic is heavy, congestion builds and everything

slows down. But when drivers adjust their schedules, even slightly, it helps ease the bottleneck. The same principle applies to energy use.

By shifting some of your high-energy activities to off-peak hours—like doing laundry later in the evening, running the dishwasher before you go to bed or cooking meals earlier in the day—you're helping spread out demand. That reduces pressure on the grid during those critical peak hours.

Here are a few simple steps you can take to lower energy use during peak hours. 492400

Smart technology can be a valuable partner in saving energy. A programmable or smart thermostat can automatically adjust your home's temperature when demand is highest, helping you stay comfortable while using energy more efficiently. Even a small adjustment of a few degrees during peak hours can make a difference.

In the kitchen, simple swaps can help, too. Using a slow cooker, air fryer or outdoor grill instead of the oven keeps your home more comfortable and reduces

the need for additional cooling during the warmer parts of the day. And when it comes to laundry, air-drying clothes or spacing out loads can cut down on both energy use and indoor heat.

Don't overlook the power of ceiling fans, either. They can help you feel several degrees cooler, allowing you to raise your thermostat setting without sacrificing comfort. 3074801

These actions may seem small on their own, but together, they add up. When many members make mindful choices about when and how they use electricity, it helps reduce peak demand, eases strain on the grid and supports more stable energy costs for our local communities.

That's the cooperative difference. As a member, you're not just a customer—you're part of a community working together to power our future. Every effort you make contributes to a stronger, more resilient system.

This summer, I encourage you to take a closer look at your daily routines. A few simple shifts can go a long way in keeping your home comfortable, your energy use efficient and our grid running smoothly—no matter how high the temperatures climb.

## Same Energy. Different Impact.

The demand for electricity is typically highest in the late afternoon during peak energy hours. You can help lower demand by shifting when energy-intensive activities happen.



### Shift appliance use to off-peak hours.

- Run the dishwasher before you go to bed.
- Use the oven earlier or later (during off-peak hours.)
- Space out use of major appliances.



### Use a programmable or smart thermostat.

- Automatically adjust the temp setting during peak hours.
- Schedule home cooling cycles for efficiency.



### Opt for low-energy alternatives during peak hours.

- Use small appliances like slow cookers or air fryers—or fire up the grill—instead of the oven.
- Air-dry clothes instead of using the dryer.
- Use ceiling fans for additional cooling.

# FORT MEADE & THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

## How South Dakota Set the Stage for a National Anthem

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdreaa.coop

This month – July of 2026 – the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the Founding Fathers declared the end of Great Britain’s role as their colonial overseer.

No patriotic song captures the sacrifice and resilience of the American experiment quite like the national anthem, “The Star-Spangled Banner.” However, the anthem is not from the American Revolution, nor was it immediately adopted as the nation’s official song. Its story unfolded over more than a century, from a British bombardment in Baltimore to a flag-lowering ceremony on the plains of western South Dakota.

### The War of 1812

The year is 1814. The United States of America is in the midst of its second war with Great Britain – The War of 1812 – and the nation is reeling from a recent attack on Washington, D.C., where British troops torched the Capitol and White House.

A Maryland lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had just boarded a British naval vessel. He was sent there on behalf of the U.S. government to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, and while his negotiation was successful, Key was not allowed to return ashore until the British forces completed their bombardment on nearby Fort McHenry for fear that Key had overheard military plans while on board.

Detained aboard the enemy ship, Key looked ashore to Baltimore as the American forces fended off the invasion. As dusk settled over the harbor, it became harder for Key to track the battle, his only illumination being the occasional glow of British rockets and exploding shells. Key watched through the night, not sure who was winning the drawn-out fight. At dawn, there was just enough illumination for Key to make out the American flag still flying over the fort. The Americans had held



Visitors to Fort Meade (1 mile west of Sturgis, S.D.) will see the very same flag pole used by Col. Caleb Carlton during the flag retirements. These once-a-day evening ceremonies were the first instance of the Star Spangled Banner serving as the United States’ unofficial national anthem.

*Photo submitted by Randy Bender*

the fort and fended off the British from Baltimore.

Key’s experience that night inspired him to write a poem he titled “The Defence of Fort M’Henry.” Later, it was put to song and became known as “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

### Fort Meade

Fast forward to 1892, thousands of miles west on the American frontier.

Col. Caleb Carlton is the new commander of the Eighth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade, a U.S. Army post in the young state of South Dakota. About a mile west, the bustling town of Sturgis is growing along with the fort, serving as an important stop along numerous trails heading toward gold country in the streams of the Black Hills.

“Fort Meade was put in place in about 1878 to help maintain the peace in the Black Hills region between the native tribes and the settlers coming in,” explained Randy Bender, a lifelong resident of Sturgis and second-generation Fort Meade Museum board member.

Carlton was eager to make his mark – not through a battle, but patriotism. He and his wife discussed how they could better instill respect for the American flag among their troops stationed at the fort. The Carltons’ idea was to have the band play an official song during the evening retreat, when the flag is retired for the night.

“Carlton issued orders that all within hearing distance were to stand at attention, and all men not under arms were to remove their hats as a sign of respect to the flag,” Bender said.

That song, chosen at the urging of Mrs. Carlton, was the Star Spangled Banner.

“We selected the Star Spangled Banner as it was written under very unusual circumstances,” Carlton later wrote in a 1914 letter.

Carlton’s daughter, Mabel, recalled the first ceremony in her journal.

“As the final notes of the song faded away, the flag landed gently in the arms of the waiting troops,” she wrote. “If it had been practiced, it could not have been done more perfectly.”

From Fort Meade, the practice began to spread as other officers and government officials visited and observed the ceremony.

“The New York Times referred to the fact that (I) was trying to establish a national anthem,” Carlton wrote. “This attracted the attention of Col. Cook in command of the recruiting depot at David’s Island, who wrote me that he was having recruits taught to sing our national air. I suggested he concentrate his instruction on the Star Spangled Banner.”

Carlton also wrote that later, during a meeting in Harrisburg with Pennsylvania Gov. Daniel H. Hastings, that the governor promised he would initiate the playing of the Star Spangled Banner among the state’s militia.

The most decisive support came during a meeting between Carlton and Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, with the two speaking about the custom. Before long,



Above: Officers of the 8th Cavalry in Fort Meade, S.D. in 1892. Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society



Right: A photograph of Fort Meade with Bear Butte in the distance. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Lamont ordered that the Star Spangled Banner be played during evening retreats across the nation.

Nearly 40 years after Fort Meade’s first Star Spangled Banner rendition, Congress in 1931 declared it the national anthem.

Today, visitors to Fort Meade can stand near the place where that custom began. A historical marker near the parade ground bears the words “It Started Here,” connecting the South Dakota fort to the story of the national anthem.

“That flagpole that they lowered the flag down from for that event is still standing at Fort Meade, and still used,” Bender said.

For Bender, who grew up at Fort Meade while his father worked at the

VA hospital and mother served on the museum board, the historic post still carries the feel of another era.

“When you visit Fort Meade, it’s like stepping back in time,” Bender said.

Many visitors are surprised to learn about Fort Meade’s place in the anthem’s history.

“It’s one of those things we just take for granted that we have a national anthem,” Bender said, “We never stopped to think about how these things came to be. But every one of those stories had to start at some point, and the national anthem story got its start in Fort Meade, South Dakota.”

The Fort Meade museum is open from mid-May through the end of September 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday.

# AG APPRECIATION AT THE CENTRAL STATES FAIR

**WHAT:** 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Ag Appreciation Night

**WHEN:** August 24<sup>th</sup> from 5:00pm - 6:45pm | Meal from 5:00pm - 5:45pm | Short program to follow

**WHERE:** Monument Health Community Stage inside the fairgrounds

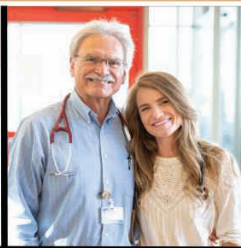
FREE fair entrance\* and a chance at one of two, two-pack PREMIER passes to an event at the fair. \*Must enter on LaCrosse Street and present ticket at the gate entrance for free fair entrance.

## 2026 RURAL NEIGHBOR NOMINEES



2026 Rural Neighbor Nominee:  
**Justin Tupper**

SPONSORED BY:



2026 Rural Health Care Neighbor Nominee:  
**Charles Lewis, D.O.**  
**Sarah Lewis, D.O.**

SPONSORED BY:



2026 Agribusiness Nominee:

**C-LOCK INC.**

SPONSORED BY:



2026 Rural Neighbor Nominee:

**Dennis Quivey**

SPONSORED BY:



2026 Patriot Nominee:



**Darla Crown**



To learn more about the nominees and event, scan the QR code!



### 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.





## LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

There are five (5) account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of the Cooperative Connections, you will be credited \$10.00, towards your next bill. You must notify our office by the 10th of the following month to receive your credit.

## WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

### RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44  
Rapid City, SD 57703  
Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
605-393-1500  
Info@westriver.coop

### WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave  
PO Box 412  
Wall, SD 57790  
Monday – Friday: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
605-279-2135  
Info@westriver.coop

\*This email is not monitored on nights or weekends and it is not for reporting outages. To report an outage please follow the instructions below.

## OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

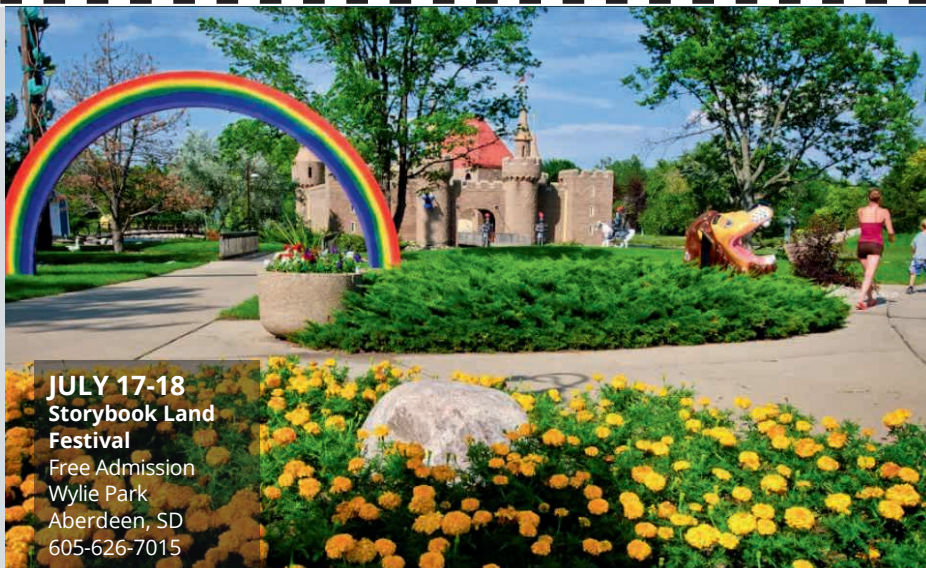
Our calls are answered 24/7. In the event of an outage, please report it via the SmartHub app, texting OUT to 855-939-3719, or by calling our office at 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500.

## 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 17-18**  
**Storybook Land**  
**Festival**  
Free Admission  
Wylie Park  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-626-7015

**JUNE 24**  
**Motor Madness**  
5-7 p.m.  
Box Elder, SD  
605-390-9341

**JULY 2-4**  
**USA 250th Celebration**  
**at Mount Rushmore**  
Rapid City, SD  
[www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

**JULY 4**  
**Philip Volunteer Fire Dept.**  
**Annual Firework Display**  
Philip, SD  
605-685-3082

**JULY 11**  
**40th Annual Spearfish Canyon**  
**Half Marathon & 5K**  
Start: 7 a.m., Savoy, SD  
End: City Park, Spearfish, SD  
Register: [www.nhcasa.org](http://www.nhcasa.org)

**JULY 16-18**  
**Spearfish Senior Center**  
**Summer Fundraising**  
**Rummage Sales**  
Thurs., Fri.: 8 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Sat.: 8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
1306 N. 10th St.  
Spearfish, SD  
605-642-2827

**JULY 17-19**  
**Custer Piecemaker's Quiltshow**  
9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
527 Montgomery St.  
Custer School Armory  
Custer, SD

**JULY 18-19**  
**10th Annual Charles Mix**  
**Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**JULY 22**  
**Water Warz**  
4-7 p.m.  
City Hall & Phelps Pond  
Box Elder, SD  
605-390-9341

**JULY 24-26**  
**Winner Elks 57th Annual**  
**Rodeo to Benefit LifeScape**  
7 p.m.  
Tripp County Fairgrounds  
Winner, SD

**JULY 25**  
**Planes, Trains & Automobiles**  
Prairie Village  
Madison, SD

**JULY 25**  
**Disability Awareness &**  
**Accessibility Committees**  
**Resource Fair (DAAC)**  
11 a.m.-2 p.m.  
Minneluzahan Senior Center  
Rapid City, SD

**JULY 30**  
**Spurs Grand Classic**  
**Equestrian Competition**  
9 a.m.  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-226-1099

**AUG. 1-2**  
**51st Annual Pioneer Power**  
**Thrashing Show**  
MN Machinery Museum  
Hanley Falls, MN  
507-828-5437

**AUG. 4-6**  
**Farmfest 2026**  
8-a.m.-4 p.m.  
Gilfillan Estate  
28269 MN Hwy. 67  
Morgan, MN  
[ideagroup.com/farmfest](http://ideagroup.com/farmfest)

**AUG. 7-9**  
**Fur Trader Days**  
NEW Art in the Park  
Geddes, SD  
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

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

**Note: 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.**