

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Barb Gross, Adele Enright
and Jean Tehle have all
worked hard to facilitate
free and fair elections
for registered voters
in Dewey County

Poll tenders rock the vote

Election workers are
dedicated to the task
Pages 8-9

Freshman Impact teaches sound decision making

Pages 12-13

Electric Update



Dick Johnson
General Manager

Thanks to everyone who attended the annual meeting, the Wall tailgate event and the Rapid City appreciation day. I enjoy getting the opportunity to see many of our members and answer questions they have. We still have another event to do in Enning/Union Center this fall. We always take any ideas you have to make them better events. Congratulations to Marcia Arneson, Sue Peters and Jamie Lewis on being re-elected to the board for their respective districts.

I wanted to address a couple of issues in my column this month. I have good news and bad news. Let us start with the good news. Recently, the media has been publishing that your electric bill is going to see a significant increase this winter, or already has. I am here to tell you that if you are a member of West River Electric, your rates have not gone up. If your bill is higher, it is because you have used more; not because the rate has increased. I challenge you to even go back to 2018 and compare your bill with your bill today. The charge per kWh consumed should be the same. The last time we did anything with rates was in 2018. At that time, we raised the base charge to \$25.25 from \$23. We then increased the kWh charge from \$.1107 to \$.1167.

For most members, there was little to no change in your bill. The last time we took a rate increase was in 2016. Yes, 2016. Now tell me the last thing you use every day that has not increased since 2016. There are few.

What the national media is pointing to is many larger utilities around the country have fuel cost adders on the consumers bills. They add a charge for the increased cost of fuel like natural gas. You have noticed the increase in energy costs in the gas market. However, Rushmore and Basin Electric do not levy a fuel adder charge. Rushmore and Basin have kept their

rates stable for several years. 10724300

I would also remind you that when you get your bill the next three months it will be higher than in 2021. If you recall, in 2021 West River gave all our members a bill credit from October-December that amounted to about a 25 percent reduction in your bill. We would have loved to do another bill credit this year, but it was not in the cards.

I wanted to touch quickly on some bad news.

“I am here to tell you that if you are a member of West River Electric, your rates have not gone up.”

At a manager's meeting last week, the VP of our material vendor stated that the co-ops and all utilities need to warn their members that supply chain shortages may not allow your project to go through like you wished. If anyone out there is going to build a new house, grain bin site, shop, or other site needing electric service, you better contact us now. We are looking at two years wait time on some material. We will do everything in our power to get the needed material and transformer, but we may end up with lengthy delays. If you are even remotely thinking about doing something, please give us a call. We would rather cancel the anticipated service later than tell you that you would have to wait two years.

Have a safe rest of your fall!



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

Our Mission:

We are safety conscious, community oriented, and the trusted energy expert for our member owners.

Our Vision:

We will achieve an ACSI score of 90 by 2024.

Our Values:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board President: Andy Moon

Board of Directors

Stan Anders – Vice President
 Jamie Lewis – Secretary
 Larry Eisenbraun – Treasurer
 Jerry Hammerquist
 Howard Knuppe
 Marcia Arneson
 Chuck Sloan
 Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

Dick Johnson –
 dick.johnson@westriver.coop

Editor

Robert Raker –
 robert.raker@westriver.coop

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Thank you
VETERANS
 HONORING ALL WHO SERVED

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

OUR OFFICES WILL BE CLOSED
FRIDAY | NOV. 11TH
 IN OBSERVANCE OF THE HOLIDAY

TO REPORT OUTAGES OR IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, CALL
605-393-1500 OR 605-279-2135

LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

If you locate your account number anywhere in this issue of West River Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, you will be a winner. There will be five account numbers placed randomly throughout the publication. If you spot your account number and notify our office before the 10th of the next month, you will receive a \$10 credit on your next bill.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD
 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 605-393-1500

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave, Wall, SD
 Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
 605-279-2135

A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience. Office hours are subject to change in response to COVID-19.

SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 during office hours. E-mail us at info@westriver.coop for questions on your account.

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

Contact 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 in the event of an outage or other emergency. Our calls are answered 24/7.

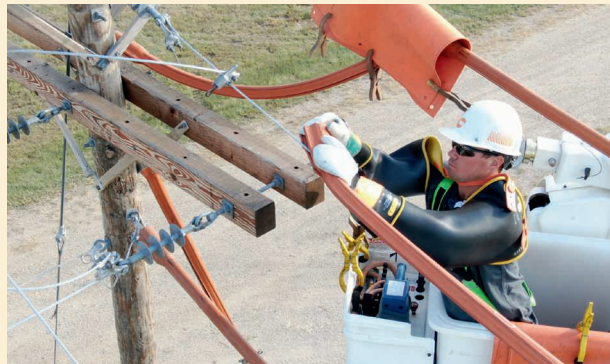
A heaping helping of holiday home safety

Nearly every household uses extra electricity during the holidays for cooking, decorating and heating.

Take extra care to use electricity safely and to ask family members and house-guests to do the same. Here are some helpful tips:

- Stay in the kitchen when broiling or doing any stovetop cooking.
- Keep children well away from cooking appliances while in use.
- Keep towels, potholders and curtains away from hot surfaces.
- One of the riskiest holiday behaviors is overloading your electrical outlets. You will overload your wall outlets if you string strand after strand of holiday lights together and plug them into an extension cord that you plug into an outlet. Plugging multiple strands of cords into a power strip does not add any juice to the electrical circuit that powers the outlet you plug the strip into.
- Check decorative lights for damaged cords, plugs and sockets. Replace anything that's frayed, cracked or broken. Buy cords that are certified by UL; look for the UL symbol on the package.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, carpets or baseboards, or anywhere they can be a tripping hazard.
- Only use decorations and cords outdoors that are properly rated for outdoor use.
- When you put up outdoor decorations, do not string lights in trees near power lines. Fasten outdoor lights carefully and securely with clips, never nails or tacks.
- Keep electric lights away from decorative metal trees.
- Keep all light strings and other decorations away from pets so they don't get tangled in them or chew the wires.
- Keep all decorations - and everything else - at least 3 feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces and space heaters.
- Always turn off your decorations when you leave home and when you're sleeping.
- Make sure smoke detectors are present and working properly.
- Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic areas and at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn off space heaters and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave an open flame, including your fireplace or a candle, unattended.

LINEMEN PARTICIPATE IN RUBBER GLOVING SCHOOL



Roughly 50 electric cooperative linemen from across the state recently participated in a Rubber Gloving School at the Mitchell Technical College training facility. The program included simulating maintenance and repair work on energized power lines, awareness of proper safety procedures, grounding and insulation of vehicles, operation of aerial lift devices and more.

To see a video of this event and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Don't play on transformer boxes

Traci Tschetter

Traci, 11, warns readers to stay away from transformer boxes, which contain high-voltage underground electrical equipment inside. Traci is the child of Ryan and Elaine Tschetter and they are members of Whetstone Valley 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.

CROCKPOT CREATIONS

SLOW COOKER CHILI

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. lean ground beef
- 1 pkg. McCormick Slow Cookers Chili Seasoning
- 2 cans (14.4 ozs. each) diced tomatoes, undrained
- 2 cans (16 ozs. each) kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can (15.5 ozs.) tomato sauce

METHOD

Brown ground beef or turkey in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Place cooked beef, Slow Cookers Chili Seasoning Mix, tomatoes, beans and tomato sauce in slow cooker. Stir until well mixed. Cover. Cook 8 hours on low or 4 hours on high. Stir before serving. For best results, do not remove cover during cooking.

McCormick.com

SLOW COOKER TURKEY BREAST

Ingredients:

- 2 tsps. McCormick Garlic Powder
- 2 tsps. McCormick Paprika
- 2 tsps. McCormick Rubbed Sage
- 2 tsps. Sicilian Sea Salt
- 1 tsp. McCormick Pure Ground Black Pepper
- 1 tsp. McCormick Whole Thyme Leaves
- 1 turkey breast, (about 6 lbs.) fresh or frozen, thawed
- 3 tsps. butter, melted

METHOD

Mix seasonings in small bowl; set aside. Rinse turkey and pat dry. Brush turkey with melted butter. Sprinkle seasoning mixture over entire surface and under skin of turkey. Place turkey breast in slow cooker. Cover. Cook 1 hour on high. Reduce heat to low; cook 7 hours longer or until turkey is cooked through (internal temperature reaches 165 degrees). Transfer to platter or carving board and slice.

McCormick.com

SLOW COOKER MASHED POTATOES

Ingredients:

- 5 lbs. Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and cut into cubes
- 1 c. chicken stock
- 2 McCormick Bay Leaves
- 1/2 c. (1 stick) butter, cut into chunks
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3/4 tsp. McCormick Pure Ground Black Pepper
- 1/2 tsp. McCormick Garlic Powder
- 1/2 -1 c. milk
- 1 tsp. McCormick Parsley Flakes

METHOD

Spray inside of 6-quart slow cooker with no-stick cooking spray. Add potatoes, stock and bay leaves. Cover. Cook 4 hours on high or until potatoes are tender, stirring after each hour. Remove bay leaves. Stir in butter, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Cover. Let stand 5 minutes. Beat potatoes with electric mixer on medium-high speed or mash with potato masher, gradually adding milk, until smooth. Stir in parsley. Top with additional butter, if desired. Serve with McCormick Brown Gravy or Perfect Brown Gravy.

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Construction of the Eglin Substation is Underway

Matt Schmahl
Construction Manager

The population and community growth in the Rapid City and Box Elder areas around Exit 61 and the increase in energy requirements that this growth brings is driving the need for West River Electric to expand our substation infrastructure to better serve the communities in which we are a part of. WREA is committed to keeping ahead of the growth and ensuring adequate infrastructure is in place to serve the member-owners who have decided to settle in this area and build their homes and businesses here. 11645000

The Eglin Street Distribution Substation is being constructed on the north side of Eglin Street, just west of Elk Vale Road. The construction of the substation facility will ensure the service area's continued reliability with the growth around the Exit 61 corridor.

Purpose of Substations

High voltage transmission lines extend from the generating station to the substations strategically positioned around load centers-developments. The substation generally has an overhead transmission line that serves the substation with high voltage. Once the transmission line enters the substation, multiple



Construction, Cont.

pieces of equipment are used to reduce the voltage to a lower distribution level. Other equipment is utilized to help keep the voltages in check. The most significant item in the substation is the station transformer. This equipment will service all the members connected downline from the substation. You will have your distribution line past the transformer, leaving the substation. While these are generally underground, but not always, these lines are routed through development and rural areas. Usually, these lines will serve hundreds to thousands of members over many miles down to the last member at the end of the line.

West River Electric's Commitment to our Members and our Communities

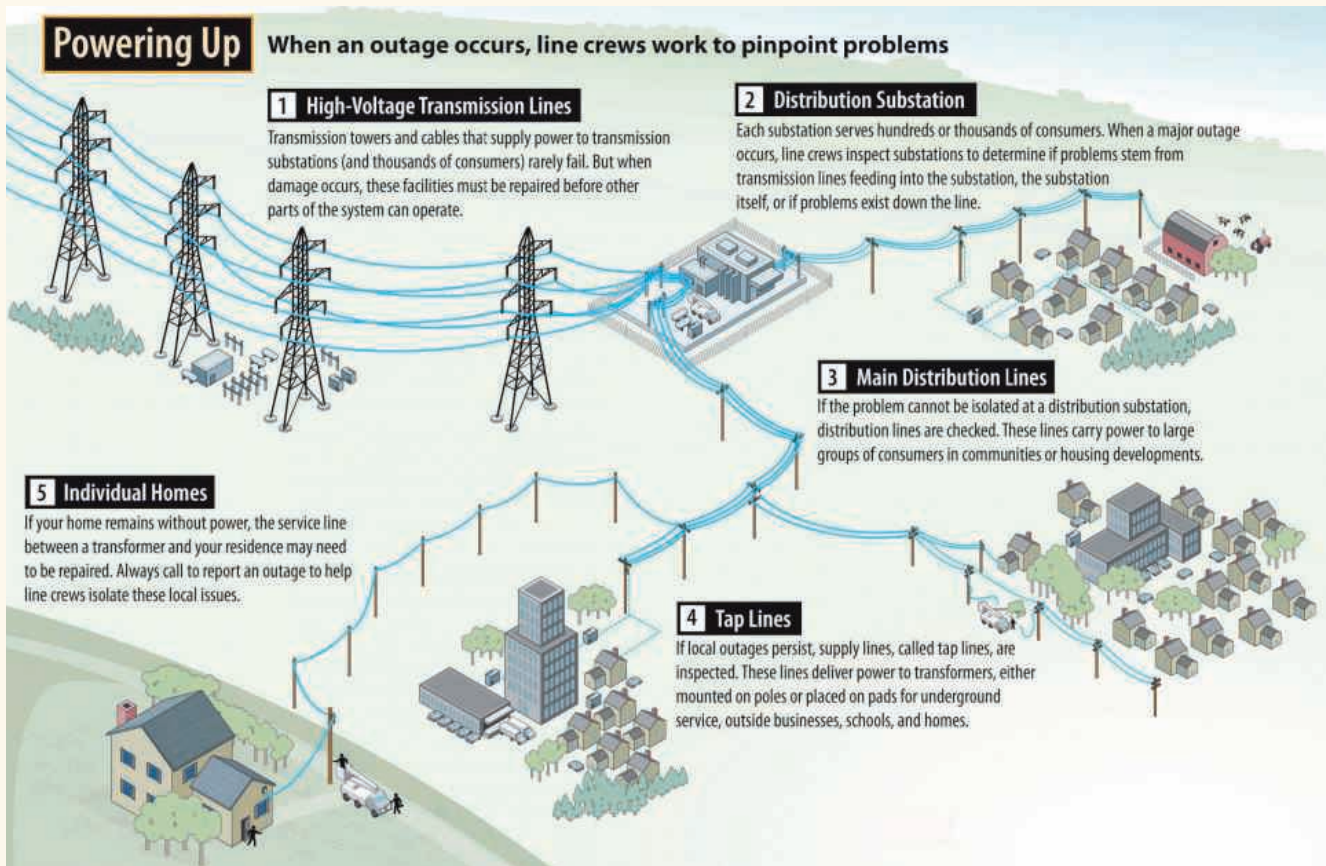
Before making the decision to construct the Eglin Substation, we considered several criteria to determine

the overall benefit to the member-owners. These included meeting the population's growth, providing value to the membership, and minimizing the impacts to the community. With these in mind, we feel that the addition of this facility will meet all the expectations now and well into the future. 4503500

For the Eglin Substation Project, West River Electric focused on reducing the facility's overall footprint as much as possible, keeping the visual impacts to the local area to a minimum.

Anticipated Construction Schedule

Start Date: Currently Under Construction
 Anticipated Completion Date: April 1, 2023
 Contact (605) 393-1500
 Matt Schmahl
 Construction Manager





Jamalia Franzen, auditor deputy in Dewey County, encourages all eligible citizens to register to vote. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Poll workers urge voters to stay active in the election process

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

About 10 years ago, Michele Moore was newly retired and looking for something interesting to occupy her time. Out of the blue, she received a call from the Clay County elections auditor.

“She wanted to know if I was interested in working the elections and I told her I’d do it. It’s been very rewarding and it feels like I’m doing something important and worthwhile,” Moore said.

When she’s not facilitating the election process, Moore takes care of the bookkeeping for the family’s welding and manufacturing business operated by her husband, David.

While election work isn’t a full-time gig, poll tenders put in long hours on voting day. They typically report to the local precinct at 6 a.m. before the polls open an hour later. The shift goes straight through to 7 p.m. when the polls close, although any voters still

standing in line at that time are allowed to cast their ballots. Workers have to stay on duty the entire time and often pack their own lunch and dinner.

After the last voter is done, all the sealed ballots and accompanying paperwork are brought to the auditor’s office for verification and certification to ensure the election is “free and fair.”

Moore said all the workers at her precinct located at the National Guard Armory in Vermillion are diligent, dependable, thorough and conscientious. She said they take their jobs very seriously and are careful not to be “political” in any way, a guideline contained in the orientation and training process that workers go through before each election regardless of one’s years of service.

The training material requires that workers be professional, punctual, respectful to voters, team-oriented and “leave partisan leanings at the door.” Anyone concerned about the validity of the election process can appear at



the precinct as a “poll watcher” or “poll observer,” however, those individuals must adhere to a separate set of guidelines as set forth by the Secretary of State’s Office.

“We’re not here to change anyone’s mind or influence how anyone votes,” Moore said. “We’re just here to do anything we can to help them vote as quickly and smoothly as possible and make sure the process goes well. We try to make it easy for them.”

That doesn’t mean everything always goes according to plan. As the political passions and divisions have grown more intense over recent years, Moore said she’s encountered some fairly tense situations. But she said she generally



Poll workers are on the job from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time. If the polls close while you are in line, you will still be permitted to vote.

Here is a breakdown of party identification as of Sept. 1, 2022:

- Republican - 291,956
- Democrat - 150,760
- No party/Ind. - 142,538
- Libertarian - 2,733
- Other - 1,376

Total - 589,363

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Election poll workers see themselves as doing something helpful to support and facilitate the democratic process.

feels safe while doing her work inside the armory.

Some voters can get upset when they try to make requests that violate the voting rules, such as attempting to change their party affiliation on voting day or not providing the proper identification. She said tensions can run high during contentious presidential or mid-term elections.



“Sometimes people get angry and you just try to calm them down. They don’t know how things work and what’s required because they’re not paying attention,” she said. “Social media and TV stirs up their passion and they don’t always know how to control that.”

She recalled one particular fellow who insisted on voting without presenting the proper identification. When he was

told he would have to use a provisional ballot, he became agitated and stormed out of the precinct. Moore was “a little nervous” about the man returning and what he might do, but she took comfort in the fact that the National Guard soldiers were right there in the building.

Cris Sichmeller, a resident of Webster, signed on to join her local precinct in Roslyn six years ago and enjoys the



Michele Moore

social aspects of the assignment. A self-described “farm wife,” Sichmeller said she doesn’t often have an opportunity to sit down and visit with friends, but being at

the polling place means visiting with folks and catching up on current events.

“People used to spend time just visiting with one another, going to houses and having coffee and playing cards, but that doesn’t happen a lot these days,” she said. “There’s a lot of camaraderie that comes with being around people you know in the community that you have something in common with.”

She said at her precinct things normally proceed “without a lot of drama,” but she remembers that the Covid pandemic did cause a few wrinkles. Several workers contracted the virus, along with the precinct deputy.

The workers had to wear face shields, and Plexiglas was set up in the voting area and at the registration tables.

“I remember a man who had just retired from the military and he came in and saw the face shields and just laughed,” Sichmeller recalled. “He said that wasn’t going to keep us from getting the virus or passing it on to others. He said we needed a hazmat suit for that. I guess he was right.”

Barb Gross recently retired after tending the polls in Dewey County since the 1980s. She describes herself as a stickler for adhering to the rules and buttoning everything down.

“We always made sure everything tallied up because we knew we were going to be audited and we invited that because it was a challenge to see if we could pull it off without a hitch and without anything slipping through the cracks,” she said.

Secretary of State Steve Barnett emphasized the fact that poll workers serve a very valuable role in society.

“They’re on the front lines of the election process. You couldn’t run an election without them,” he said.

Barnett stressed importance of voters meeting their obligation to stay actively involved and make sure they are familiar with the rules and regulations. To find out more about voting rights and responsibilities, visit www.sdsos.gov.

Rapid City Appreciation Day and Wall Tailgating

Thank you to everyone that came to our Rapid City Appreciation Day and Wall Tailgate. Between the two events we cooked 980 hotdogs and 2,005 hamburgers. If you missed one or both of these events hopefully, we will get you there next year!



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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

New Faces at WREA

Andria Williams started working for West River Electric on Aug. 16, as a Member Service Representative in the Rapid City Office. Andria graduated from Central High School in 2022 and attended Western Dakota Technical College in Rapid City, S.D., where she graduated with a business and technology associate of applied science degree.

Andria enjoys being with family, paddle boarding and hiking. 11246600

Selena Parce started work for West River Electric on Aug. 25, as a Member Service Representative in the Rapid City Office. Selena graduated from Summertown High School in 2002. She attended Middle Tennessee State College in Murfreesboro, Tenn., where she graduated with a bachelor of fine arts degree. After graduation, she traveled and began a long career in 911 Emergency Communications in Tennessee and South Dakota.

Selena also got married and started a family of two children. She enjoys learning new crafts, painting – all forms, drawing, reading, fishing, hiking and yoga. 10826300



Jamie Lewis
District 1

Marcia Arneson
District 2

Sue Peters
District 3

Congratulations to these directors for their re-election.

"The quality of a director is service before self."

Charles "Chuck" Sloan
Board of Director (District 2),
West River Electric

We Power Creativity.
Our community is teeming with energy and ideas.
We're proud to power yours.

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



SOUND DECISIONS

Central Electric lineman Cody Riggs uses a hot stick to simulate de-energizing a power line during a Freshman Impact emergency exercise at Hanson High School in Alexandria. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Freshman Impact program promotes sound safety practices for students

Billy Gibson
billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The students at Hanson High School were stunned and aghast at the horrific scene unfolding right before their eyes.

There were two wrecked sedans, a downed utility pole and tangled wires strewn across the road. Emergency responders were swarming everywhere as a fire truck barreled onto the scene with its sirens blaring. And the most unsettling sight of all: four of their fellow students lying in the crumpled cars with massive wounds and barely clinging to life.

Fortunately, it turns out the accident scene was just a drill staged by a group known as Freshman Impact: Caught in the Moment, and coordinated as part of Cornbelt Program Day at the school located in Alexandria.

Nearly 200 students came from surrounding schools for a full slate of

learning opportunities centered around vehicle safety, first aid, emergency response, drug abuse awareness and much more. Participating schools were Hanson High School, Armour, Bridgewater-Emery, Ethan, Marion, McCook Central, Plankinton and Wessington Springs.

Local organizers Yolanda Price and Don Huber worked with Freshman Impact Executive Director Rick McPherson, local school officials and emergency response agencies to plan the event.

The morning session included seven separate stations scattered throughout the school's parking lot and in the gymnasium. The learning stations focused on the following subjects: teen mental health; healthy relationships; jaws of life and ambulance demonstration; seatbelt awareness; drug dog; social media dangers; and a distracted driving course where the



West River Electric is one of several electric cooperatives that support the Freshman Impact program.

students wore goggles simulating drug and alcohol impaired vision and attempted to navigate a short course behind the wheel of an ATV.

Taking part in the program was Central Electric Cooperative, which provided the downed power pole and wires. Once the emergency exercise was set into motion, two co-op linemen promptly arrived on the scene to de-energize the lines and worked with other responders to secure the area and form a safe perimeter.

Central Electric's Manager of Communications Tara Miller helped



A Hanson High School student takes on the role of an accident victim during a recent mock emergency scenario. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

facilitate the partnership while working alongside local organizers.

“This is an incredible opportunity for area students to learn about good decision-making, safety and the real dangers that are out there,” Miller said. “Concern for community is one of our guiding principles as a cooperative. This experience serves to educate first responders and students. It aligns with our values, and we are pleased to support it.”

The day’s program covered just about all the bases. The schedule included a poignant perspective of loss and grief from LeAnn Moe, who lost her teenage daughter to an automobile accident. During the mock accident response, one of the crash victims was carried away in a hearse furnished by a local funeral

home. And after all the activity settled down outside, the students returned to the gymnasium to observe a mock legal trial and sentencing hearing over the car accident they had witnessed.

The day ended with the distribution of educational materials by CORE (Community Organized Resources for Educating), the parent organization of Freshman Impact.

McPherson said he has found that the teaching method employed by Freshman Impact is successful in driving the message home to students, and they also develop a rapport with local

agencies and emergency responders.

“The students see up close and learn through hands-on activities the possible consequences of wrong choices and the lasting effects physically and emotionally on their bodies, their families and friends and their community,” he said, noting that West River Electric based in Wall is also an event sponsor. “It’s all about making safe choices and preventing destructive behaviors, and it’s important our teens learn the life-long skills and values to help them make the best possible decisions.”

Visit www.freshmanimpact.com.

Central Electric Cooperative of Mitchell presented CORE with a \$2,500 Operation Round Up grant to help fund the local program. Pictured left to right are Freshman Impact founder Rick McPherson, CORE Coordinator Yolanda Price, CORE Coordinator Don Huber, Operation Round-Up Trustee LeAnn Moe, Central Electric Director Merl Bechen and Hanson County Chief Deputy Mike Brown. *Photo by Tara Miller*





University of Minnesota graduate students pose in a massive coal bucket during an electric cooperative tour sponsored by Renville-Sibley CPA and the university.

Renville-Sibley leads tour of electric cooperatives for college students

Erin Kelly
NRECA

The smallest electric cooperative in Minnesota is having an outsized impact in educating college students about the co-op business model and how power is generated and delivered for co-ops in the region.

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association, a 1,586-member co-op with 13 full-time employees, worked with the University of Minnesota to organize a week-long tour of distribution co-ops and generation and transmission co-ops in Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota for graduate students pursuing master's degrees in science, technology and environmental policy.

"These students are going to lead us into the future from a public policy and an environmental perspective,"

said DeeAnne Norris, Renville-Sibley's CEO. "It's important that they understand there's an obligation to keep energy reliable and affordable while trying to marry that up with renewable energy and sustainability."

The mid-May tour began at Renville-Sibley's office in Danube, Minn., with a discussion about broadband, solar energy and farming. It continued with stops at several facilities run by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Bismarck, N.D.-based generation and transmission provider owned by 131 member co-ops that provide electricity for more than 3 million people in nine states.

Other visits included Sioux Valley Energy, a distribution co-op in Colman, South Dakota, where students learned about electric vehicle charging and other kinds of beneficial electrification,

and East River Electric in Madison, South Dakota, a G&T that supplies power to Renville-Sibley and 23 other co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Students learned about East River's load management, economic development programs and co-op relationships.

The tour wrapped up at Lake Region Electric Cooperative in Pelican Rapids, Minn., where students saw the co-op's creative member-focused programs like wind and solar generation and hydroponic gardening trailers.

"It's important for the students to be able to get out there in the field to see the really big energy infrastructure," says Gabriel Chan, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota and co-director of the Electric Cooperative Innovation Center, a new initiative focused on research partnerships with co-ops.

"You read about wind, hydro or coal plants, but being there is an entirely



The students put on their harnesses and took turns going up in a bucket to simulate working conditions for linemen. The group also stopped by the headquarters of East River Electric in Madison, SD.



different experience.”

Chan had worked with Norris since before the COVID-19 pandemic to organize the tour and used the pandemic delay to create a semester-long graduate seminar called The Energy Transition in Rural America, which brought in guest speakers and included site visits to nearby cooperative facilities.

Sarah Komoroski, a mechanical engi-

“IF YOU DON’T TELL PEOPLE WHAT’S HAPPENING AT YOUR CO-OP, THEY’RE GOING TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN STORY ABOUT YOU.”

- DEEANNE NORRIS, CEO, RENVILLE-SIBLEY CPA

neer who is halfway through her master’s degree program, said she felt like “a kid in a candy shop” on the tour as she got up-close and personal with coal boiler, gas turbine and other infrastructure.

“I was just smiling the whole time,” says Komoroski, who describes her passions as climate change and the transition to renewable energy. “Everyone

was so nice and so welcoming and so passionate about what they do.

“I think the biggest thing that struck me about co-ops is they’re so unique in terms of their governance structure,” she said. “They’re non-profit, member-owned, and their goals and incentives are different than a traditional for-profit utility. They’re each tackling the challenges of affordability, reliability and sustainability in a slightly different way.”

Komoroski said she believes electric cooperatives also have the advantage of having a special relationship with their members.

“Co-ops are uniquely positioned to build trust with their members during the energy transition,” she said. “That relationship is the exciting part to me.”

Norris and Chan say they hope to continue the week-long tour every other year for students in the two-year master’s program. The professor said he would like to hear more from cooperative consumer-members, and Norris says she would like to start it a day earlier.

“The students are in their 20s and

30s, but regardless of your age, that was a very taxing schedule,” says Norris, who went on the tour herself.

“It was an intense week,” Komoroski agrees. “We had about 15 stops in five days, with 26 hours of driving.”

Norris urges other co-ops across the country to connect with local universities or university extension offices and plan similar experiences that can raise awareness of energy systems in rural areas and how consumer-centric utilities like co-ops can lead the energy transition.

“When I was planning this trip, there was a little skepticism by a few people we wanted to visit,” she said. “But if you don’t tell people what’s happening at your co-op, they’re going to come up with their own story about you, and often it’s not close to reality.

“This experience shows that when we open our doors, we can engage and collaborate with students who are excited about the cooperative business model, who are passionate about the Earth and her resources and are enthusiastic about learning and making a difference.”



NOV. 3-5
Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge
 Huron, SD

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

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



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

OCT. 28-30

ZooBoo
 Great Plains Zoo
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-367-7003

OCT. 31
Halloween Parade
 Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 3-5
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
 Downtown, Yankton, SD

NOV. 3-5
Huron Ringneck Festival & Bird Dog Challenge
 100 4th Street SW
 Huron, SD
 605-352-0000

NOV. 4-6
Girlfriends' Weekend
 Hill City, SD

NOV. 5-20
Rustic Designs & More Christmas Show
 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily
 Ethan, SD
 605-770-2411

NOV. 5
Fairburn Community Center Bazaar
 Fairburn, SD

NOV. 6

Post 22/40N8 Scholarship Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser
 Rapid City, SD
 715-425-5817

NOV. 6
Turkey Dinner
 Rapid Valley United Methodist Church, Rapid City, SD
www.rapidvalleyumc.com

NOV. 11-13
Christmas at the Barn
 Front Porch 605
 Groton, SD
 605-216-4202

NOV. 12
Black Hills Meat Festival
 Black Hills Harley Davidson
 2820 Harley Dr.
 Rapid City, SD
 605-390-7917

NOV. 12
Holiday Extravaganza
 Sisseton, SD
 605-698-7425

NOV. 13
Lutefisk, Lefse, Meatball Supper
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-234-6698

NOV. 18-20
Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

NOV. 19
Fall Craft Show
 Minneluzahan Senior Center
 Rapid City, SD
 605-394-1887

NOV. 19
Lille Norge Fest
 Canyon Lake Activity Center
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4226

NOV. 25
Olde Tyme Christmas Kick-off and Parade
 Hill City, SD

NOV. 25
Trap Shoot
 Izaak Walton League
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-332-9527

NOV. 25
"Light up the Night" Parade and Fireworks
 Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 25-26
Kris Kringle Kraft Fair
 Hill City, SD

DEC. 2-3
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
 Gregory Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

DEC. 2-3
Christmas in the Hills
 Mueller Center
 Hot Springs, SD
 605-745-4140

DEC. 3
Santa's Thrift Village
 Minneluzahan Senior Center
 Rapid City, SD
 605-394-1887

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