

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Local art teacher's mural commemorates dedicated Burke lineman.  
*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

## Rural Murals

Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

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## Blizzard Bags

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# What Lies Ahead



**Dick Johnson**  
CEO/GM

The temperatures in September were simply crazy. I am certain we sold more air conditioning kWh than even 1 kWh of electricity for heating. In our territory, I do not believe we even had a any frost. I just fear we will go from summer to winter. Either way, know we are prepared for all your electricity needs. 378100

I spoke of selling heating kilowatt hours. We have approved a new policy that will take affect October 1 for those heat meters that do not use any kWh's during the month. If you use your heat meter each month, you will not have any additional charge. However, if you go an entire month without using any heat usage on the meter, we will charge an idle service fee of \$2.00. We have several accounts that do not use any heating kWh's: sometimes an entire season without it ever being used. They have either switched to gas or strictly use electric heat as a backup. We still have ongoing costs for the meter that is installed at their home, business, or shop, and new meters are too expensive to have just sitting out there not being used. If you want to avoid the \$2.00 idle service fee, we will be happy to come out and remove the meter. If you decide to start using the service again for heating, we can gladly come back out and install a meter. The office sent out a letter to the accounts that had not used anything last year and might be affected.

We are still evaluating our rate design for 2025. Rushmore Electric has not completed their final budget with the expected increases from Basin and WAPA. I would expect our increase will be in the 7.5% range. What will we do with that increase? We are still studying the impacts. I do not believe our sales will be enough in 2025 to absorb that large of an increase. We had hoped Basin would not take such a significant increase this year. We fear we cannot absorb all the increase in power costs in our current rates for 2025 even though we had an adjustment this past spring. I would expect we would add a power cost adjustment, or PCA, to cover the increases. I fear these increases from Basin and WAPA will not be the last. The utility space is in a period of rapid transition and will not slow down anytime soon.

Thanks for those who attended our various member events over the last month. We had a successful Wall/New Underwood tailgate, the Rapid City Appreciation Day as well as the Annual Meeting on October 12. It is always good to see all the members and have an opportunity to say hello. I had several that came up to me at the various events to mention my column. I am glad it gets some love by people reading them regularly!

Have a safe and pleasant fall/winter.

## Seven Cooperative Principles

<div data-bbox="363 1331 847 1455"> <p><b>VOLUNTARY AND OPEN MEMBERSHIP</b> Cooperatives are voluntary organizations open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="965 1331 1449 1486"> <p><b>AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE</b> Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy.</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="363 1472 847 1640"> <p><b>DEMOCRATIC MEMBER CONTROL</b> Cooperatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions. The elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary cooperatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and cooperatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="965 1497 1449 1652"> <p><b>EDUCATION, TRAINING AND INFORMATION</b> Cooperatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so that they can contribute effectively to the development of their cooperatives. They inform the general public, particularly young people and opinion leaders, about the nature and benefits of cooperation.</p> </div>
<div data-bbox="363 1654 847 1887"> <p><b>MEMBERS' ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION</b> Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the cooperative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the cooperative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefitting members in proportion to their transactions with the cooperative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.</p> </div>	<div data-bbox="965 1665 1449 1766"> <p><b>COOPERATION AMONG COOPERATIVES</b> Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.</p> </div>
	<div data-bbox="965 1787 1449 1887"> <p><b>CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY</b> While focusing on member needs, cooperatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.</p> </div>

## 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.

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#### CEO and General Manager:

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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.

# New CEO Announced

West River Electric Association (WREA) names Robert Raker as incoming CEO and General Manager to lead the Cooperative into the future.

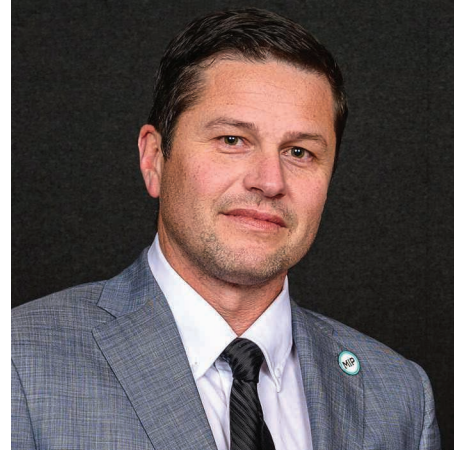
WREA is pleased to announce the appointment of Robert Raker as the next Chief Executive Officer, effective January 3, 2025, upon the retirement of outgoing CEO Dick Johnson. Raker, who joined WREA in 2008, brings nearly two decades of industry expertise and a forward-thinking approach to the leadership role.

With a background that included a master electrician license and a Juris Doctorate, Raker has served the cooperative in several key roles. During his 16-year tenure, he has been instrumental in WREA's energy services, marketing and community engagement efforts, and most recently serving as Manager of Public Relations and Communications. 3021901

"On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to congratulate Robert Raker on being selected as the next CEO/General Manager when Dick retires on January 3, 2025. The Board did a search both internally and externally to be certain that we would choose the right individual to lead West River Electric into the future. We felt Robert's experience in the utility industry, along with his training and education, would make him the best candidate to help lead the cooperative into the future," said Board Chairman Andy Moon.

Raker holds an associate degree in Electrical Technology from Western Dakota Tech and is a licensed electrician. He earned his bachelor's degree from Chadron State College and his Juris Doctorate from Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, MN.

Upon his appointment, Raker shares, "I am deeply honored by the Board's trust and excited to lead WREA into the next phase of growth and innovation. My focus will remain on ensuring safety, reliability, and sustainable energy solutions for our members."



Incoming CEO and General Manager  
Robert Raker.

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you're heading out of town during the holiday season, remember to set your home to vacation mode. You can save energy while you're away by lowering your thermostat a few degrees or creating an "away" schedule with a smart or programmable thermostat. Newer water heaters include a vacation mode setting to help you save on water heating costs, or you can simply lower the temperature manually.

Small actions can also stack up to energy savings. Unplug devices that consume energy when they're not in use, including phone chargers, toothbrush chargers, TVs and gaming consoles.

# HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

**Rachel Dotson**

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

It's the time of year when many families will be gathering around the dining room table savoring the flavors of their favorite holiday meals. Check out how to keep your holiday meals safe this season with a few tips from Land-grant University Extension Services.

### Shopping Safely

Before shopping, check the ingredients you have at home and verify their expiration date. It is helpful to prepare a shopping list before going shopping. Make sure you have sufficient room in your refrigerator for all purchased food items. Cold foods that need refrigeration or freezing should be purchased last.

Oklahoma State University Extension advises while shopping, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart. Placing raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags can be a good method to separate them from other foods. Ask a cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

### Safe Food Handling Practices

- When it comes to preparing meats, washing poultry and meats at home is no longer necessary and is not recommended by the USDA. University of Connecticut Extension recommends thawing meat in a refrigerator or in a cold-water bath.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator for approximately 24 hours, depending on size, or submerge meat in its original package in cold water and allow 30 minutes of thawing time for every pound.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt. Even wash prepackaged greens to minimize bacterial contamination.
- While preparing food, use two cutting boards: one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting fruits and vegetables, cooked food or preparing salads.
- Don't forget to also wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

### Storing Leftovers

Bacteria grows when the food is left out for more than

two hours at room temperature. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension advises reheating cooked leftovers to 165 degrees. Use a food thermometer to measure temperature accurately. Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil. When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive.

### Multistate Approach for Food Safety

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million Americans each year. Research and education have led to major advances in food safety; however, challenges remain. Many methods that use heat or chemicals to ensure food safety are not 100% effective and can damage food color, texture, flavor and nutrients.

Researchers at 32 Land-grant Universities are collaborating on innovative solutions for food safety and quality.

Their work is helping meet consumer demand for minimally processed, additive-free food items with longer shelf lives, higher nutrient content and less potential to cause food-borne illnesses.



### Farm Safety "Always Be Alert"

#### Clyde Manas, Age 8

Clyde Manas warns farmers and ranchers to be careful with their equipment around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Clyde! Clyde's parents are Terry and Lacey Manas, members of Bon Homme Yankton 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.

# Holiday DELIGHTS

## EASY CRANBERRY SALAD

### Ingredients:

12 oz. fresh cranberries  
 20 oz. crushed pineapple, drained (reserve juice)  
 1/2 cup pineapple juice (from reserved juice)  
 2 cups sugar  
 3 oz. pkg cranberry jello (may also use cherry jello)  
 1/4 cup maraschino cherries, finely chopped

### Method

Boil cranberries with pineapple juice and sugar. When berries pop, remove from heat. Add dry jello, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate. Keeps for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Elaine Rieck  
 Harrisburg, S.D.

## CAKE BATTER DIP

### Ingredients:

8 oz. softened cream cheese  
 8 oz. thawed cool whip  
 1/3-2/3 cup milk  
 1 box Funfetti cake mix (unprepared)  
 Sprinkles

### Method

Add whipped topping and cream cheese to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy.

Add cake mix and 1/3 cup milk and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Dip will be very thick, so add more milk, a little at a time, until you get to your desired consistency. I used about 2/3 cup for my dip.

Garnish with sprinkles and serve with whatever dippers you prefer (graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, pretzels, fresh fruit, etc.)

Kayla Beaner  
 Centerville, S.D.

## OPEN-FACED HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

### Ingredients:

1 container (12 oz.) turkey gravy  
 8 slices cooked turkey  
 1 loaf baguette bread, (12 in. long)  
 1 cup fresh spinach leaves  
 1 cup prepared stuffing, warmed  
 1/2 cup cranberry sauce

### Method

Cook gravy and turkey slices in large skillet on medium-high heat until heated through.

Cut baguette in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half. Place bread, cut-side up, onto four serving plates.

Top bread evenly with spinach, turkey, stuffing, any remaining gravy and cranberry sauce.

[McCormick.com](http://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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

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(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4))	105	106
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)	14,148	14,254
g. Copies Not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4 (page #3))	50	50
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I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.

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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).

## We're Grateful for Your Membership.

Our offices will be closed  
**Thursday, November 28,**  
**and Friday, November 29,**  
 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.  
 We are incredibly grateful for your membership as our team spends this special time with loved ones.

From our co-op family to yours,  
 we hope you have a wonderful  
**Thanksgiving!**

**VCP** Voices for Cooperative Power  
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## VOTE FOR RELIABLE ENERGY

Learn more at [Vote.coop/Become-A-Coop-Voter](http://Vote.coop/Become-A-Coop-Voter)



Rosebud Electric Cooperative providing power in the early days.  
Photo provided by the Rosebud Electric archive.

## William Kindle Remembers When Electricity Came to Bull Creek

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

William Kindle, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, carries vivid memories of growing up in Bull Creek, a small township just east of Winner. It was the mid-1950s: Eisenhower was president, and the Korean War had just ended. Though more than half a century has passed, Kindle remembers clearly the challenges of living without electricity.

“Growing up, we didn’t have any refrigeration,” Kindle said. “My mom used to drop our food into a well using a bucket, clear down to the water level where it was cool, and that’s where she kept her cream and butter.”

At age 10, Kindle’s life changed drastically when Rosebud Electric connected his rural, family home to the grid. The lights came on, and the days of using the water well for food preservation

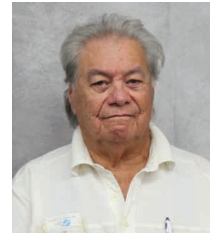
would soon be a memory as his father brought home the family’s first refrigerator.

“After that, he went to town again and bought a TV, a great big old wooden thing,” Kindle laughed. “It had only one channel, KPLO.”

But electricity meant more than just connection to a grid. It brought with it a connection to the outside world through shows like “I Love Lucy,” “The Andy Griffith Show,” and Kindle’s personal favorite growing up, “Captain 11”. The show, broadcast from Sioux Falls, featured weatherman Dave Dedrick as a space captain who would introduce cartoons and play games as an after-school children’s program.

“Us kids thought that it was the greatest thing that ever happened, when we got a TV,” Kindle said.

According to Kindle, the introduction of electricity had an overwhelmingly positive impact on his rural community.



William Kindle  
Photo by Frank Turner

The dangers of using kerosene lamps vanished, allowing producers to work more effectively through the night.

“I remember the first night that we had a yard light,”

Kindle said. “Us kids were playing under that light, and we couldn’t get over the fact that the whole yard was lit up. Prior to that, as soon as the sun went down, we would light the lamps and that’s all we had.”

“Everyone in the community welcomed having power,” Kindle added. “It was quite a thing.”

The safety and productivity it brought were immeasurable, transforming every facet of daily life. Kindle remembers how much the addition of consistent light affected his own family’s cattle operation.

“We ran cattle and raised hogs,” he said. “I remember when my dad got the barn wired up, because he used electricity for calving. Before we had electricity in there, we used kerosene lamps out in the barn, and they started a lot of fires – those damn things.”

Kindle’s early years were spent farming and ranching, but he devoted most of his career to the autobody and fender business, repairing cars for over 30 years. He later joined the tribal council of the Rosebud Sioux in 1989 and has since completed five terms as president, including one in an interim capacity, and three terms as vice president. Recently, he was re-elected to the council as a representative for the Swift Bear community near White River, where he lives now as a member of Cherry-Todd Electric.

As someone who has served his community for more than three decades, Kindle said he is unsure if people could ever return to a time before electricity reached their door.

“If we had to go back to those days, people couldn’t do it,” he said. “I don’t think people would adjust. It would be too difficult to go back.”



# RURAL MURALS

## Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

**Jacob Boyko**

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

### Lemmon

Visitors from all over the map flock to Lemmon each year to explore the town's plethora of fascinating exhibits, from the Petrified Wood Park to the life-size steampunk-style sculptures by local artist John Lopez.

But of all the town's unique offerings, there's one stand-out exhibit that ties everything together: Boss Cowman Square.

Lopez's life-size metal sculpture of cowboy legend George Edward Lemmon is the focal point of the square. The Boss Cowman clutches the reins of his steampunk stallion, his eyes fixed on the horizon watching for stray cattle.

"Dad Lemmon," as the town's founder is so fondly known among locals, settled the town in 1906 between the Grand River and North Dakota border. It would soon be a stop along the incoming Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which Dad Lemmon had been recruited to platte westward.

The sculpture is accompanied by a background mural depicting a scene far away from the bustling saloons and general stores of early Lemmon. In the scene, saddled-up cowboys under the careful

watch of the Boss Cowman sculpture guide a meandering herd hundreds of heads long across a river – no problem for Dad Lemmon, whose roundup skills and knowledge of the land were legendary across the West.

In 2015, as Lopez dreamt of what would one day be Boss Cowman Square, he recruited the help of two Nigerian artists, Dotun Popoola and Jonathan Imafidor, to help bring the vision to life.

"We studied a few materials and made sure all the elements were well captured, like the kinds of trees, the way the river looks and the butte in the background," Imafidor recalled about the 2016 project.

One obstacle that posed a challenge for the traveling artists – beside the shock of South Dakota's cold spring weather – was the slight differences between the cattle they knew in Nigeria and the cattle of the American West.

"We are representational artists and we've done a lot of drawings of cows, so we kind of had an idea of what the cattle should look like," Imafidor explained. "But in Lemmon, the kind of cattle that are found in the region are a little different than what we have in Nigeria. I remember when we started painting the cattle ... John Lopez told us, 'I don't think you can find those here.' Then he brought some material for

Cowboys keep a herd of longhorns moving at the bank of the Missouri River. Visitors will notice the sculpture of Dad Lemmon turned around to keep an eye on the progress. *Photo provided by John Lopez.*

us so we were able to see the difference and then we made the corrections."

After about a month of work, the mural was completed and the Boss Cowman Square was unveiled to the public in July 2016.

### Burke

In Burke, K-12 art teacher Kate Witt isn't shy about brightening up her community. The mom of four has designed and painted four murals around town, including one depicting the town's beloved utility worker, Rich Bailey.

Rich's wife, Margaret Ann Bailey, commissioned the mural after Rich's passing in 2023. The mural shows the lineman hanging onto a utility pole as he works on the power lines.

"When we came here in 1970, there wasn't a bucket truck or anything," recalled Margaret Ann. "So he climbed everything, whether it was blizzarding or lightning, and he made sure people had electricity."

The mural also features emergency vehicles, as Rich served for decades as a volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. Parked beneath the lines, the rusted white pickup truck Rich drove around town that over the years became synonymous with himself.

"With this mural specifically, I felt I had

a big important job,” Witt said. “This is a man who the town really loves, and I had a big job to make something beautiful that [Margaret Ann] was going to be proud of.”

Witt incorporated her own signature styles into the mural; her white outlines make the lineman’s silhouette stand out against the more geometrically designed Missouri River bluffs and cloudy sunset in the background.

“That’s where I have a little fun, putting in the modern twist and bold colors,” Witt continued. “I put this white line around everything which made some elements almost look like they’re stickers on a wall.”

Since Witt completed the mural last August, it’s become a point of pride for Margaret Ann who says it’s a testament to her husband’s years of dedication to his community.

“There was an older gal here in town, and she called him at 2 o’clock in the morning and said ‘my air conditioner isn’t working and it’s darn hot in my house,’” Margaret Ann recalled.

She said her husband explained that his job was to fix power lines, not air conditioners. Still, he went to flip the breaker on the woman’s fuse box anyway before going back to sleep.

“That’s the kind of guy he was, and I’m proud,” Margaret Ann said.

## Tabor

Where in South Dakota can you find roses, ears of corn, a cardinal and Czech kolaches all in one mural?

Only in Tabor, probably.

Commissioned for the town’s 150th anniversary in 2022, the colorful mural on the sidewall of the local library meanders through the community’s history. From the heavy Czech influence of the earliest settlers represented by pastries and roses to the school’s original mascot, the cardinals, Robbie Jelsma worked very intentionally to portray the town in a way only a knowledgeable local artist could.

Growing up in nearby Springfield, Jelsma is no stranger to Tabor and its famous Czech Days, which draws thousands of people from across the country for the three-day celebration.

“I wanted to represent Czech Days and the Czech culture, so I did my own

research,” Jelsma said.

He incorporated roses, which are the national flower of the Czech Republic, as well as the fluffy pastries with fruit in the middle called kolaches.

He also incorporated local history—Tabor’s school mascot was the cardinal before merging with Springfield and Tyndall to form Bon Homme School District.

When he’s not painting murals, Jelsma is a highly sought-after tattoo artist specializing in more realistic styles. For him, the highlights of the Tabor mural is the level of depth and realism he achieved in his roses and clouds.

The hardest part of painting the mural is working with the elements, as there’s a laundry list of work that needs to be done on the surface before any real painting can begin: washing; smoothing; primer.

On top of that, unpredictable Midwestern weather requires a careful eye on the weather radar for any outdoor painting projects, Jelsma said.

“We started about early October so the fall was just getting started, and you never know in South Dakota if the weather is going to hold out or if you’ll get an early snow or strong wind,” he recalled about his three and a half weeks working on the project.

For Jelsma, the finished mural is as big of a point of pride for him, having been selected and commissioned for the work, as it is for the people of Tabor who get to show it off every summer during Czech Days.

“It’s cool I was thought of for the project,” Jelsma said. “It’s an art project that I think just lights everybody up a little bit when you drive down main street and you see something like that in a small town.”



Artist Robbie Jelsma puts the finishing touches on his mural ahead of the 2022 unveiling.  
Photo provided by Robbie Jelsma.

# Co-ops Power Communities with Purpose



**Amanda Haugen**  
Communications  
Specialist

Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Some are based on geographical proximity, some are based on shared interests or hobbies, and some communities can even be found in

virtual spaces like social media groups. Regardless of where or how they are formed, communities can bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

West River Electric is deeply committed to our consumer-members, and we're glad you are part of the electric cooperative community. 3107700

This month/October, more than 30,000 cooperatives across the U.S. are celebrating National Co-op Month. It's a time to reflect on all the aspects that set cooperatives apart from other types

of businesses, but more importantly, it's a time to celebrate the power of co-op membership.

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit utilities that are built by the communities they serve. For WREA, our mission has always been to provide you with reliable power and to serve your best interests. We care about your quality of life, and because we are locally operated, we're uniquely suited to meet our members' evolving energy needs.

Beyond the business of electricity, our employees and directors are equally invested in our local community. Why? Because we live here, too. That's why we work hard to support local economic development projects, youth programs and scholarships, charitable giving initiatives and additional programs that make our community a better place to call home.

All co-ops, including WREA, are guided by seven cooperative principles

that embody the values and spirit of the cooperative movement. These seven principles are a framework to help all co-ops navigate challenges and opportunities while remaining true to our purpose:

**Open and Voluntary Membership:**

Co-op membership is open to anyone who can use the co-op's services.

**Democratic Member Control:**

Members make decisions that shape the cooperative. Why? Because co-ops are created by the members, for the members.

**Members' Economic Participation:**

Members contribute money to the co-op to make sure it runs smoothly now and in the future. At WREA, this happens through paying your energy bills.

**Autonomy and Independence:**

Co-ops are independent and can operate on their own, which ultimately benefits the members.

**Education, Training and**

**Information:** Co-ops continuously focus on education to ensure employees have the training and information they need to make the co-op successful.

**Cooperation Among Cooperatives:**

Co-ops share with and learn from other cooperatives. We help each other out in times of need because we want other co-ops to thrive.

**Concern for Community:**

All cooperatives work for the greater good of the local communities they serve. Co-ops give back to their communities to help them thrive and grow.

This October, as we celebrate National Co-op Month and the power of membership, we hope you will recognize the many aspects that set electric cooperatives apart. Our mission is to serve your best interests. Our purpose is people—the local communities we're proud to serve.

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL  
**CO-OP  
MONTH**

Electric cooperatives are not-for-profit, community-led utilities. Because we are a co-op, we can adapt to our local members' needs, providing the programs and services you care about most.

That's the power of co-op membership.

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

# Construction Update



**Matt Schmahl**  
Construction  
Project Manager

This month, I'd like to provide an update on the rebuild of an overhead line project we've recently initiated in the southern part of our system along Sage Creek Road and Highway 44. This line segment, originally

constructed in the 1950s, has reliably served the area for decades, enduring numerous weather challenges that have gradually impacted the condition of the infrastructure. Given its age and the growing demands on our infrastructure, this rebuild is crucial to ensuring reliable service moving forward.

When we reflect on construction standards from the 1950s, we typically see longer spans between poles and the use of smaller poles, which was common practice at the time. However, our construction standards have evolved significantly with today's focus on system resilience and the increasing frequency of severe weather events. Our most modern designs emphasize robustness and durability, but as always, it's important to recognize that no system is immune to all possible weather conditions. 3173300

The new design for this line rebuild includes significantly larger poles compared to the existing ones, with reduced spacing between them—typically less than 250 feet apart. This closer spacing is specifically intended to increase structural integrity and stability. In addition, we've opted to use our standard overhead conductor, which consists of a twisted pair of wires. This conductor has consistently performed well in past storms, and its design helps to minimize ice



accumulation, a critical factor during harsh winter conditions. By reducing ice buildup, we enhance the system's resilience and overall performance during extreme weather. 10749400

Our line crews are already hard at work on this project, and we

anticipate completing the rebuild by the end of this fall. Once finished, this line segment will provide enhanced reliability and resilience, especially during inclement weather—a critical factor in maintaining consistent service for our members in this area.

## Tips for a Safe and Efficient Holiday Season

This holiday season, keep energy savings and electrical safety in mind.

### SAVE ENERGY

- Use smaller appliances like slow cookers instead of the oven.
- Lower the thermostat when hosting friends and family.
- Decorate with energy-saving LED lights.

### PRIORITIZE SAFETY

- Never leave unattended candles burning.
- Ensure all smoke alarms are working.
- When decorating, inspect all light strands and cords for damage.



# PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER

**Jacob Boyko**

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

As we near the frigid winter months of South Dakota, it's important for you and loved ones to stay ready for an emergency.

Even though power outages are rare, a loss of electricity can affect modern lives in critical ways; In an instant, you may no longer be able to heat your home, prepare food or access critical information.

It's crucial to prepare for power outages and other general emergencies by keeping supplies in both your home and vehicles as well as making sure you and your loved ones have a plan in place.

Brad Reiners, director of communications for the state Department of Public Safety, encourages South Dakotans to stock

up on essentials like food, water and batteries prior to the winter months.

"Make sure you have enough food and water for at least three days, and each person in the household should have one gallon of water per day," Reiners said.

State DPS recommends keeping non-perishable food items like pasta, canned goods and nutritious snacks that don't require refrigeration and don't need to be heated or cooked before consumption.

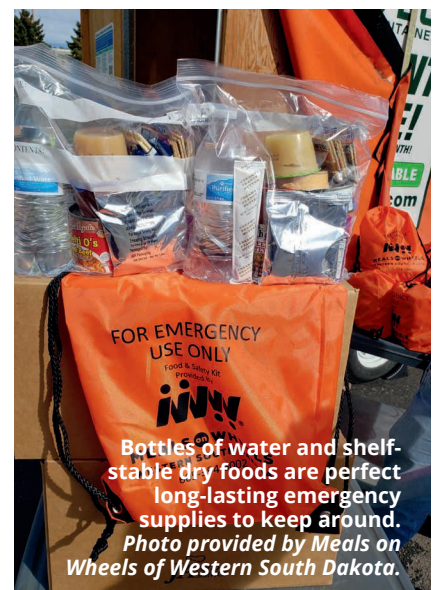
"Never use gas powered generators, grills or portable stoves indoors, as they can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide," Reiner added.

As you prepare, remember to be proactive about your health. Have your medical prescriptions refilled in advance of a severe storm and keep a battery bank charged so you can power your cell phone in case you need to

access telehealth services, emergency services or access critical information.

In your car, keep warm blankets, winter clothes, snacks, a shovel, flashlight and a set of jumper cables in case you get stranded.

"It's also advisable to check your tires for proper inflation and tread, and make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition with freeze-resistant washer fluid," Reiners added.



**Bottles of water and shelf-stable dry foods are perfect long-lasting emergency supplies to keep around.**  
*Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.*

If you plan to rely on a generator or wood burning stove for heat if the power goes out, check beforehand that your equipment is in safe working order, and you have enough fuel to last several days.

Keeping warm clothes, blankets and sleeping bags at the ready can be lifesaving if you're unable to heat your home.

## Meals on Wheels here to help with Blizzard Bags

For senior citizens, some of this advice is easier said than done. Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota understands that better than anyone, and they have come up with a solution.

"Blizzard Bags" have been a part of the organization's lineup for over 20 years now and include some of the essentials seniors need when hunkering down for severe weather.

"We deliver shelf-stable meals for seniors who, especially in rural areas, may not have access to food for a while if their electricity goes out," said Jennifer Paschke, regional manager for Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota. "We provide five meals in those bags they can use during a loss of power or being stranded in their homes due to weather."

The food supplied is generally items that don't require a heat source, like packages of tuna salad and crackers, protein bars or cans with a pop-top seal so no can opener is required, Paschke said.

The bags also include water and other donated supplies like batteries and flashlights from local businesses, including some rural electric cooperatives.

"The biggest success story I know in

my area is a couple of years ago when they had tornados in Philip," Paschke remembered. "The water we provided [in the blizzard bags] were some of the only sources of water some of those people had. Just having that food and water can be a godsend for some people."

Blizzard Bags are available to seniors age 60 and up who are a part of the Meals on Wheels program. The bags cost roughly \$20 to put together, according to Pascke, and are funded in part by community donors. The organization provides home deliveries for seniors living in both cities and rural areas.

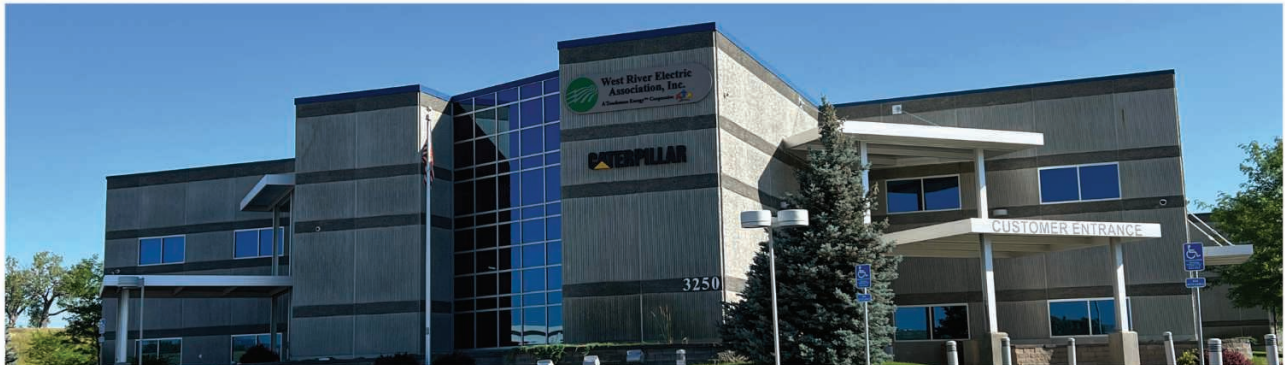
Anyone interested in getting service or helping with the cause can contact Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota at (605) 394-6002.



Meals On Wheels of Western South Dakota provides blizzard bags to seniors in case weather conditions affect normal delivery. Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.

# EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

SHINING THE LIGHT ON WEST RIVER ELECTRICS DEDICATED EMPLOYEES



**ERIC EMERY**  
MAINT./CONST.  
FOREMAN

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

I have been with West River Electric for 11 years.

**WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?**

I'm on the construction crew. We bring power into new subdivisions, build new line, line upgrades, and take care of any trouble reports and outages that come through.

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

What I love most about West River Electric are the people I work with and doing something different day to day.

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

With everyday being something different, there's always something happening that's memorable, so there are too many to pick from.

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

Safe, dependable, family.

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

My family and being part of the coop family.



**KEENAN CAESAR**  
JOURNEYMAN  
LINEMAN

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

I have been with West River Electric for 5 years.

**WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?**

My job as a journeyman Lineman entails keeping the lights going at all times of the day and night. It ranges from simple tasks such as changing a light bulb on a security light to more challenging tasks such as fixing a pole blown up from a lightning strike.

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

We are never doing the same thing everyday. And we are never in the same spot.

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

There's too many memories to nail down just one favorite but the smile you get on peoples faces when their power gets restored is something that sticks with you.

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

Confident, caring, growing

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

The drive to keep learning and growing.



WE SALUTE YOU,

\*\*\*

VETERAN!

Our offices will be **CLOSED** Nov. 11th in recognition of the holiday.



**West River Electric  
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

Please call 605-279-2135 or 605-393-1500 to report an outage.

## 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. 11854400

## 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. 11874400

## 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.



**NOV. 22-JAN.5**  
 Winter Wonderland  
 Nightly - 5 p.m.-12 a.m.  
 Falls Park  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-275-6060

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.

**NOV. 2**  
**Wall Community Craft Show**  
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Wall, SD  
 605-279-2665

**NOV. 2**  
**Fall Fling Craft Show**  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Dakota Christian School  
 Corsica, SD  
 605-366-7940

**NOV. 3**  
**Turkey Dinner & Silent Auction**  
 11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.  
 Rapid Valley United Methodist Church  
 Tickets online or in person  
 Rapid City, SD  
 rapidvalleyumc.com

**NOV. 8-9**  
**Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show**  
 Friday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.  
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-332-6004

**NOV. 9**  
**Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival**  
 4 p.m.-8 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Deadwood, SD

**NOV. 9**  
**Christmas at the Homestead**  
 12 p.m.-4 p.m.  
 North Sioux City, SD  
 605-232-0873

**NOV. 9-10**  
**Zonta Craft & Vendor Show**  
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Ramkota Hotel  
 Pierre, SD  
 605-280-1511

**NOV. 16**  
**Festival of Trees**  
 6 p.m.  
 Lead, SD  
 605-584-2067

**NOV. 23-24**  
**Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival**  
 Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Aberdeen, SD

**NOV. 29-DEC. 29**  
**Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum**  
 Hill City, SD  
 605-665-3636

**DEC. 1**  
**A Christmas Carol**  
 2 p.m.  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-624-2859

**DEC. 5**  
**Christmas on the Prairie**  
 4 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Miller, SD

**DEC. 5**  
**Holiday Festival of Lights**  
 4 P.M.-7:30 P.M.  
 Yankton, SD  
 605-665-3636

**DEC. 6-8, 13-15**  
**A Sherlock Carol**  
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.  
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.  
 Corson, SD  
 mightycorson.com

**DEC. 7**  
**KJAM Parade of Lights**  
 5:30 P.M.  
 Madison, SD  
 605-256-4514

**DEC. 7**  
**Rapid City Garden Club 63rd Annual Wreath & Centerpiece Sale**  
 8 a.m.- 1 p.m.  
 Creative Arts Building at CFS  
 800 San Francisco St.  
 605-343-0710

**DEC. 7-31**  
**Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens**  
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Brookings, SD  
 605-688-6707

**JAN 11**  
**Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament**  
 Meadowood Lanes  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-393-2081

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