

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Dokken's Dogs

Training Dogs to
Hunt
Pages 8-9

Touchstone Energy
Anniversary
Pages 12-13

Energizing the Generations: Bridging the Gap



Andy Moon & Dick Johnson

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We celebrate another remarkable year at our upcoming annual meeting. “Energizing the Generations: Bridging the Gap” speaks to the essential role our cooperative plays in connecting the past, present, and the future. Tracing our roots back to 1939, it’s evident we “stand the shoulders of giants.” Their vision, determination and resilience laid the foundation our coop stands on today. Many of you weren’t around in 1939 but we still have several pioneers today that were a big part of this foundation. Over the last year, we have had 4 long-time employees and one Board of Director, Jerry Hammerquist, retire. Jerry and Wayne’s 39 years each collectively boast an astonishing 78 years of service to our cooperative. Together these 5 individuals have 148 years of institutional wisdom, exiting our ranks. However, we’ve been building a bridge. Our bridge comes in the form of a new generation of young, scrappy, and hungry employees and directors who are poised to propel West River Electric into the future.

To start, let’s delve into some key figures that illuminate our cooperative’s robust adaptability and service expansion over the last year. The past year had its struggles creating opportunities to bridge the gaps and energize the future generations.

- We added 562 new services during 2022 compared to 636 new services in 2021. The decrease was, in large part, due to shortages of material and labor for the builders.

- So far in 2023 we’ve added nearly 600 new services. We’re on track to surpass 2021 as many of the apartment buildings being

built will end up being connected yet this year.

- Our commercial growth hasn’t increased significantly but, in the past, the commercial load tends to lag residential growth.

Regardless of whether you’re anti or pro-growth, we have a duty to all our members’ needs.

While we celebrate our achievements and growth, it’s also crucial to address the evolving challenges in resource availability and cost that we’re grappling with. Here’s a closer look at how these industry-wide trends are affecting our cooperative and what it means for our future. The coop has likely never seen this amount of increase in costs and a scarcity of materials needed to construct and do maintenance on our system.

- The cost of a 35’ pole increased \$240 or 65% in 5 years. That doesn’t sound like a lot of money on the surface but take it times the 100’s of poles we install each year.

- Transformers have gone through the roof. They have increased over \$1,500 each in 5 years, which equates to a 130% increase.

The lead times on some of these items used to be weeks, then it became months, has now it’s years. So, we have to order material for 2025 to be certain we have it by then. Our suppliers tell us it is not a supply issue but a demand issue because of all the building happening around the country. Our inventory dollars are the largest in the Coop’s history and we fear this is going to put more pressure on our rates soon.

Next, let’s delve into the details of how the Board recently passed a resolution aimed at financial stewardship and member benefit to ensure our cooperative’s long-term health. Our Board elected to retire and put money back in the hands of you, our member owners, by retiring over \$1.0 million this year. This is half of our previous two years retirements, but with our growth, we felt it would be prudent to trim that amount this year to help maintain strong equity. Our equity is analogous to a 3-legged stool; the 3 legs are margins (rates), plant growth, and capital credit retirement. We must carefully measure all because we don’t want one or

two legs shorter than the others.

As we assess our financial landscape, it’s important to zero in on another key metric that defines our cooperative’s fiscal health: our margins.

- In 2022 they were \$3.5 million compared to \$3.6 million in 2021. A large part of the margin in 2022 is owed to the great year that Basin Electric had because our actual operating margins were down \$1.9 million year over.

- We received an allocation of \$2.5 million as the share of Basin and Rushmore’s margins.

- For 2023 our year-to-date margins are at about last year’s levels. However, we don’t expect Basin’s margins to be as strong.

- Our 2022 equity ended the year at 31.9% compared to 34.2% in 2021. The decrease was due to plant growth and a larger retirement of capital credits last year.

So, with margins down, and costs up, and a demand for growth, we secured a new RUS Loan in the amount of \$46.5 million, the largest loan in our cooperative history. This loan comes at a time with rising interest rates which, adds more cost pressures. 1148101

Our Board, staff and employees recently completed a new strategic plan as a road map to energize the future and bridge the gap. There were five key priorities that we will be developing goals and metrics to hold ourselves accountable to be certain we are meeting the members’ expectations.

1. Safety – This is always top of mind with our employees and Board. We must continue to promote safety to our employees and members.

2. Member engagement – This is an ongoing goal. Our goal in the previous plan was an ACSI (American Consumer Satisfaction Index) score of 90 by 2024. Currently, we are at an 88. We will continue to engage our members to be your trusted energy advisor.

3. Power reliability/cost/legislative efforts – This goal will be a heavy lift. The reliability of West River’s distribution system is extremely strong: 99.99% last year. However, due to poor public policy our baseload generation is eroding, affecting our future reliability and how we keep the grid

energized.

4. Technology – This goal is aimed at bridging the gap from our current technology to our future.

5. Business alignment and planning – This is aimed at bridging that gap with all generations to be certain they have the tools needed to do their job. As the new roles in, we need to focus on business planning to align our organization from top to bottom and bottom to top.

We would like to thank our employees for another successful year. They have worked during some extremely difficult times lately and endured like none other. They continue to make safety a top priority. We had several staffing changes we mentioned above, but they endured and made West River an even stronger organization and frankly a fun place to work. 1984700

A special thanks go to our Board of Directors. They have had to make some difficult decisions as we energize our future. However, we would especially like to thank Jerry Hammerquist, Director from District 1

for 39 years of service to our member owners; 20 of those years as Chairman. He has been a solid rock during many challenging times. He always had the member at heart while still remembering how important our employees are to our cooperative. Jerry, you will be dearly missed.

Energizing the generations serves as a reminder of the commitment to deliver reliable and sustainable electricity to our members. From our pioneers who started the coop in 1939 and laid the foundation, to our youngest members who are embracing cutting-edge technologies, we are the bridge that connects the knowledge and wisdom of the past with innovation and dreams of the future. We hope that you can join us on another step in this journey at our annual meeting on October 7 starting at 10:00 AM.

Thank You,

Andy Moon, Chairman
Dick Johnson, CEO/Manager

West River Electric
West River Electric Assn.

Notice of Annual Meeting of Members of West River Electric Association, Inc., Wall, South Dakota

The Annual Meeting of members of West River Electric Association, Inc. Will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023, at the Wall Community Center, in the town of Wall, County of Pennington, State of South Dakota, for the purpose of:

1. **Receiving reports** of officers, directors and committees;
2. **Electing one** director from each of the (3) districts for a term of three (3) years to replace those directors whose terms expire;
3. **Approving, ratifying and confirming** all the acts of the Directors of the Association and its officers taken prior to this annual meeting;
4. **Transacting any** and all business with may be necessary, convenient or desirable in connection with any of the foregoing at said meetings or at any properly scheduled adjournments hereto;

Dated at Wall, South Dakota, this 18 day of September 2023

Jamie Lewis, Secretary, West River Electric Association, Inc.

Do You Need Special Accommodations to be a Part of the Annual Meeting?

Need for auxiliary aids or services: Facilities are accessible to people with mobility impairments. If you need auxiliary aids or services in order to participate in the meeting (e.g., sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices, materials in alternative format), please submit a request to West River Electric at 605-279-2135. To ensure auxiliary aids or services are available, please make the request(s) at least 10 days in advance to the meeting.

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

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of West River Electric Association. Members subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership for \$6 a year. West River Electric Cooperative Connections purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to rural electrification and better living. Nonmember subscriptions are available for \$12 per year. Periodicals Postage paid at Wall, S.D., and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to West River Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 412, Wall, SD 57790-0412.

Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6519, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393-0275; e-mail robert.raker@westriver.coop.

October is Fire Safety Month

Is your workplace or home fireproof? Each year, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) celebrates National Fire Safety Month in October. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, there were 88 occupational fatalities as a result of workplace fires or explosions. This is down from 2015, in which there were 121. While the statistics show that the number of fatalities due to fires or explosions in the workplace is on a downward slope, any number other than 0 is unacceptable and demands the attention from management, safety professionals and employees in every company. Not only do fires present a severe life safety hazard, they also can be detrimental to business success due to the possible destruction of business equipment and facilities. This campaign serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of fire safety awareness in both the workplace and our home lives.

The safety reminders communicated in the workplace can be easily translated to fire safety in the home. Establish a family emergency action plan, discuss escape routes with family members, and locate fire extinguishers in your home. Additionally, conduct a mock fire drill with your family members to ensure you and your loved ones know how to get out safely. During this drill, outline meeting places that are at a safe distance from the home. Designate a neighbor to contact for help in the event of an emergency. Simple exercises such as the aforementioned could mean the difference maker in your family making it out alive in the event of a fire in your home.

Below are key components to ensuring your workplace and home are fireproof:

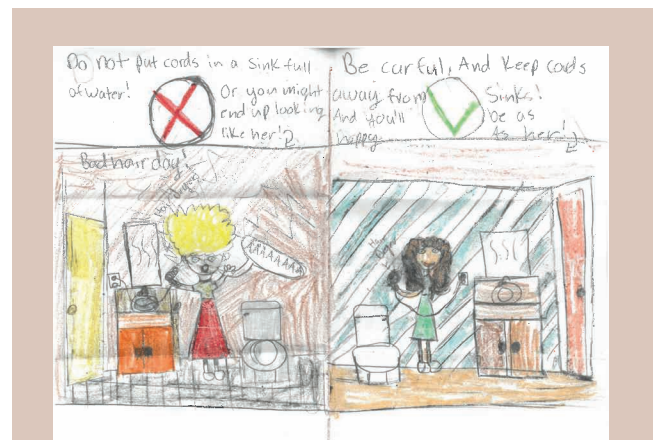
- **Eliminate Clutter** – Exercise good housekeeping. Clutter can easily become a fuel source in the event of a fire, allowing a fire to spread quickly. Furthermore, clutter can restrict access to emergency equipment and exit routes.
- **Fire Extinguishers** – Maintain the appropriate type and number of fire extinguishers. Conduct monthly and annual extinguisher inspections to ensure they are in good, working condition. Provide training for employees on the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- **Chemical Safety** – Use and store chemicals safely. Read hazard warning labels and safety data sheets

to determine flammability and other fire hazards. Ensure your chemical storage areas provide adequate ventilation for the storage of chemical or other hazardous substances.

- **Waste Control and Storage** – Limit the accumulation of flammable or combustible materials and residues as to prevent the risk for such materials contributing to a fire emergency.
- **Exits** – Ensure emergency exit route diagrams are posted and accessible in all areas of the facility for all employees to easily view. Additionally, ensure means of egress are well-lit with regulated exit signs and free from debris or clutter.

Remember it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive and it is best to alleviate hazards or hiccups in times of peace than in times of chaos. Utilize the above tips to reduce the risk for catastrophe or at least minimize the damage.

Source: Safety Resources, Inc.



Keep cords away from water!

Maddy Pannell, Age 12

Maddy Pannell advises people it's not safe to plug in appliances around water. Maddy is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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.

PASTA PERFECT

ITALIAN SPAGHETTI

Ingredients:

1-8 oz. can tomato sauce
 1-6 oz. can tomato paste
 1 1/2 paste cans water
 1 small onion, chopped
 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
 1 tsp. garlic salt
 1/2 tsp. chili powder
 3 shakes cayenne pepper
 1/8 tsp. black pepper
 1 tsp. basil
 1 tsp. oregano
 1/2 to 1 lb. ground beef

METHOD

Combine all ingredients except ground beef. Cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Brown beef and add to sauce. Serve over cooked noodles. May add green peppers or mushrooms.

Gail Keating
Flandreau, S.D.

GARDEN HARVEST PASTA SHELLS

Ingredients:

2 tbsps. vegetable oil
 2 medium zucchini, shredded
 1/2 cup finely shredded carrots
 2 cups chopped fresh broccoli
 1 small onion, chopped
 Salt and pepper
 1 lb part-skim ricotta cheese
 2 cups shredded mozzarella
 1 egg, lightly beaten
 1/4 cup grated parmesan
 1 tbsp. dried basil
 27.5 oz. jar pasta sauce
 12 oz. pkg jumbo pasta shells, cooked and drained

METHOD

Heat oven to 350. In a large skillet heat oil, then saute broccoli, zucchini, carrots, and onions until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl, thoroughly combine ricotta, mozzarella, egg, parmesan, and basil. Add vegetables and stir to combine. Spread 1 cup of the pasta sauce evenly in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Fill pasta shells with the vegetable and cheese mixture and arrange in the baking dish. Spoon the remaining sauce over the shells. Cover and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake another 10 minutes or until bubbly.

Faye Chambliss
Murdo, S.D.

CREAMY CHICKEN AND BACON PASTA

Ingredients:

8 oz. spaghetti
 1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch chunks
 2 tbsps. flour
 4 slices bacon
 1 cup milk
 4 oz. (1/2 package) cream cheese, at room temperature
 1 1/2 tsps. basil leaves
 1 1/2 tsps. garlic powder
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. coarse ground black pepper

METHOD

Cook spaghetti as directed on package. Drain well. Meanwhile, toss chicken with flour. Set aside. Cook bacon in large skillet on medium heat until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Set aside. Remove all but 1 tbsp drippings from skillet. Add chicken; cook and stir 4 minutes or until golden brown. Stir in milk, cream cheese and seasonings until well blended. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cut bacon into bite-size pieces. Add to skillet. Place spaghetti in serving bowl. Add chicken mixture; toss well. Serve immediately.

mccormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Notice of Nominations by Petition

Notice is hereby given that a nominating petition for the following candidate has been filed for Director, pursuant to Section 4, Article V of the Bylaws of West River Electric Association, Inc. This candidate for the position of Director will be voted on at the October 7, 2023, Annual Meeting from the following district: District No 1: Consisting of the area served by the Cooperative in Pennington County, South Dakota, West of the Cheyenne River. 2704401

Regular 3 Year Term

Wendy Bechen, 15295 Long View Rd., Rapid City, SD 57703
 Peter Blake, 22854 High Noon Court, Box Elder, SD 57719
 Aldo Hall, 5111 Misty Woods Lane, Rapid City, SD 57701

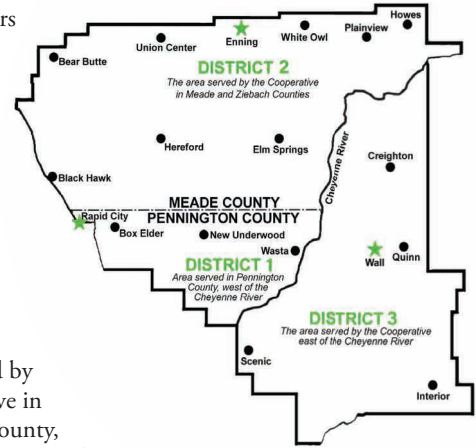
You are further notified that the above nominations by petition are made for the position of Director for a three-year term to fill the expired term of a Director and that one individual from each district will be elected at the October 7, 2023, Annual Meeting of the Association.

Dated this 21st day of August 2023.


 By: Jamie Lewis, Secretary

Notice of Incumbent Directors Seeking Re-Election

Notice is hereby given that the official list of incumbent Directors seeking re-election for the position of Director includes the following individuals pursuant to Section 4, Article V of the Bylaws of West River Electric Association, Inc.



- District 1: Consisting of the area served by the Cooperative in Pennington County, South Dakota, West of the Cheyenne River.
 - Vacant
- District No. 2: Consisting of the area served by the Cooperative in Meade and Ziebach Counties, South Dakota.
 - Charles “Chuck” Sloan: 13368 Tilford Rd Piedmont, SD 57769
- District No. 3: Consisting of the area served by the Cooperative East of the Cheyenne River.
 - Larry Eisenbraun: PO Box 153 Wall, SD 57790

You are further notified that the above nominations are made for the position of director for a three-year term to fill the term of the expiring Director, and that one individual from each district will be elected at the October 7, 2023, Annual Meeting of the Association. 10065100

Dated this 17th day of April 2023.


 By: Jamie Lewis, Secretary

Voting Regulations

1. Each voter must be a member of West River Electric Association, Inc.
2. Each member has only one vote.
3. For joint memberships, where the service is in the name of two individuals, one of the individuals may vote, but not both, and neither are eligible to have any other memberships.
4. Spouses may both have individual memberships, and under South Dakota statutes, one spouse may vote on behalf of the other, provided that the other has not indicated otherwise at the time of the meeting.
5. Each member organization should designate a representative who is an officer, shareholder or member of the organization to vote for a partnership, incorporated business, association, church, school township or other political body. The said person must have a completed authorization form, signed by an officer of the organization prior to the WREA Annual Meeting. The form can be found to the left of this page.
6. No campaigning by or for director candidates is allowed in the hall.
7. At registration, the member will be given a slip that will be exchanged for a ballot at the time of voting.

This form is to designate the voting delegate of an organization. This Form should be completed and signed by an officer of the organization and brought to the meeting.

Voting Authorization Necessary for Organizations
 Non-individual members such as schools, municipalities, churches, organizations, and corporations are entitled to representation and one vote, but the proper procedure must be followed to exercise this right.

Each member organization should designate a representative who is an officer, shareholder, or member of their organization. This form must be signed by an officer of the governing body.

Authorization to Vote
 This is to certify that _____ of _____ in a duly assembled meeting, designated _____ who is a(n) Officer, Shareholder, or Member (CIRCLE ONE) of said organization, to represent the _____ at the regular Annual Meeting of the members of West River Electric Association, Inc., to be held October 7, 2023, and said person is authorized to cast such member's vote on all issues that may come before said meeting.

The undersigned verifies that (s)he is the _____ Of said organization and authorized to execute this instrument on behalf thereof.

 Signature Date

 Organization Address

 Phone Number:

 Witness Mailing Address

 Phone Number:

 Print Name of Witness Signature of Witness

DISTRICT 1 BOARD OF DIRECTOR ELECTIONS



Charles "Chuck" Sloan
District 2 - Incumbent

Charles "Chuck" Sloan

Chuck Sloan is seeking re-election to the District 2 director position. He is employed as a civil servant with The United States Air Force. Chuck served on various advisory committees during his 21 year active duty career in the Air Force. He is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church and recently participated in the WREA Strategic Planning Session, mapping out the future of the co-op. Chuck has earned his second

Directors Gold Certification by attending 147 hours of classroom instruction. He and his wife Nancy have two sons; C.J. and Clay and two granddaughters. Chuck is very eager and interested in continuing his service to the members of WREA based on the importance of the future of the cooperative in light of the many challenges that lay ahead.



Larry Eisenbraun
District 3 - Incumbent

Larry Eisenbraun

Larry Eisenbraun is seeking re-election to the District 3 director position. He and his son, Scot, farm and ranch in the Wall area. He has two other children, Sam and Chad, with nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Larry has served as a director on the South Dakota Farm Bureau; served as chairman of the Wall School Board; committee member of the ASCS board, NRCS supervisor; served as Township Clerk

for Rainy Creek township; is a lifetime member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church serving on various boards, and has served on various West River Electric planning committees and various other boards."

Wendy Bechen



Wendy Bechen
District 1- Nomination

Hello, my name is Wendy Bechen. My husband Travis, our daughter Sylver and I reside east of Rapid City. We are blessed to enjoy the area we live in and the neighbors that surround us.

Sticking to our agricultural roots, we run a small herd of cattle; and also raise, ride and train performance horses.

I have a very diverse work history that I feel will help me bring both professional and personal knowledge to the table as a board member. I spent ten years working for Mid-continent Communications as a Business-to-Business Executive, serving the Mitchell and Huron, South Dakota areas before transferring to Rapid City.

As life changed, I decided to take my side hustle as a nutritional supplement consultant, to a successful full-time operation. This choice gave me more time with Sylver and our horses.

During this time, I also started Equine Herb Connection, which I am a

distributor for.

Travis stays busy operating our fencing company, Bechen Fencing, which I also assist with in bookkeeping. As businesses do, we were buying logo wear to promote ourselves; and as the costs went up and creative options declined, I decided to start my own small shirt and logo wear business, Diamond B Design. I have been blessed to serve local rodeo series, high school athletic groups and small businesses with their promotional needs.

I have volunteered and helped with several things in our area, including the Caputa Community Center, New Underwood Roping Club and Badlands Little Britches Rodeos. I have sat on boards and committees; assisting with awards, event planning, fundraising and whatever other help is needed.

I feel like with all the changes in this world this would be a fun opportunity to learn more and help keep things realistic for our area. I feel it would be a great experience to grow my relationships and benefit our rural area. Thank you, for taking the time to learn about me and I look forward to this opportunity.



Peter Blake
District 1- Nomination

Peter Blake

Peter Blake is a licensed civil engineer who lives with his wife and children just west of New Underwood.

The bulk of Peter's professional work experience has been designing and building electrical infrastructure in the western U.S. He's an honest man who loves to serve our community and hopes to help West River Electric thrive. When he's not managing engineering projects, you may find him working on his family acreage, hiking, hunting or fishing in the area. Peter

is active in his two young kids's lives and the local church they are a part of. He and his wife Stephanie homeschool their two children and are grateful to live in one of the last best places in America. He understands that hard work and respect for people are the keys to success in any organization. He is eager to serve the co-op as District 1 Director and would be humbled and honored by your vote.



Aldo Hall
District 1- Nomination

Aldo Hall

Aldo Hall is seeking election to the Board for District 1 director position. Aldo is a 4th generation South Dakotan with his early years at Igloo, South Dakota. Later he grew up in the small town of Murdo, near the homestead farm in Jones County. He graduated from Murdo High School and enlisted into the United States Air Forces. After serving in the military, he moved back to Murdo and went into business with his brother. For 12 years, he ran a small business TV & Appliance sales and service. Then in 1990 the business closed and he went to college. Aldo graduated from SDSM&T with a

degree in Electrical Engineering and gained employment as an Electronics and Computer Technology instructor at WNCC in Scottsbluff, NE. He taught technology classes at WNCC for 15 years until 2010. He moved to Rapid City and was employed as an Information Technology Engineer at Ellsworth AFB. In July 2023, he retired from the IT career at Ellsworth. Aldo knows the importance of electrical energy to homes and businesses and he is very much interested in being part of the WREA leadership team planning for energy growth for future generations.



FOR THE LOVE OF HUNTING DOGS

Source: Travel South Dakota

A Successful Hunt May Depend on Your Dog

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

With numerous television appearances and A-list clients under his belt, Day County resident and Lake Region Electric Cooperative member Tom Dokken has become one of the premiere hunting dog trainers of our time.

But you won't hear the modest pro brag about himself. Instead, Dokken gives credit to the hard work and the innate capabilities of the dogs themselves.

The 70-year-old Minnesota native has been professionally working with dogs over the last 50 years at his training facility, Dokken Oak Ridge Kennels, Inc. in Northfield, Minnesota.

It's one of the largest gun dog training kennels in the region.

His love for hunting alongside a canine

companion harkens back to his teenage years when he'd tag along to go hunting throughout the country with his friend and his friend's Labrador Retriever, Charlie.

"We were probably 16 years old when we started hunting together. He had a lab and I didn't have one. We hunted with that dog just about every weekend."

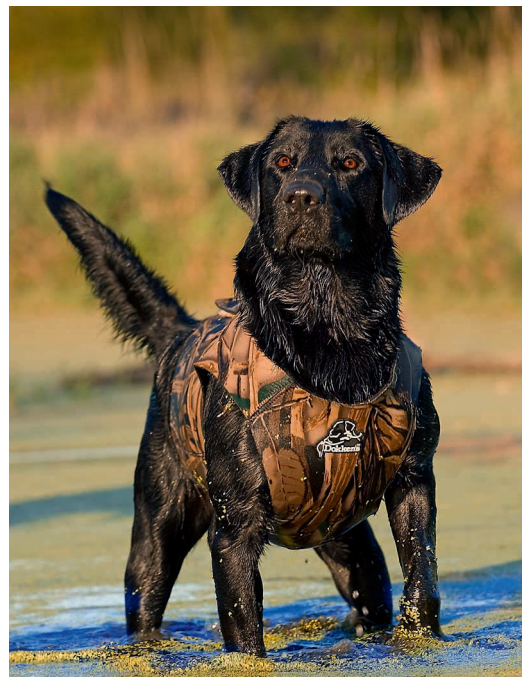
After a few years, Dokken decided it was time to get his own dog.

And to that dog goes all the credit, in Dokken's eyes.

"I started training her then I started running field trials. I did really well, not because of me, but I had a good dog who did

really well on a national level," he recalled.

After that, Dokken was hooked and knew training dogs was what he wanted to do for a living. He's since established



An adult black lab out hunting

himself as one of the top hunting dog trainers in the world, even bolstering a line of dog training products – Dokken Dog Supply – which is carried in sporting good stores across the country.

“That’s just as a result developing products we wanted for training themselves,” Dokken said of his supply company.

Some of the dogs Dokken has trained have hunted under some big names, including President George W. Bush and country music legend Hank Williams, Jr., along with many major professional athletes.

But it takes some prying to get that kind of info out of the humble Dokken, and he’s quick to emphasize that everyone that he does business with is treated the same, no matter what.

“Every customer is important. One person doesn’t get treated different than the other,” Dokken said.

His facility employs four full-time trainers, as well as office staff.

When Dokken isn’t training one of the 350 hunting dogs that come to his Minnesota training facility each year, he’s at home with his wife, Tina, in Day County.

“My wife and I live north of Webster. That’s our connection with the area. I’ve hunted down in the Lily area for years. We’ve had our place here 18 years or better,” Dokken explained.

“My mom’s family homestead is down in the Selby area, so as kids we’d be back on the farm for a good portion of the summer,” he added.

Dokken said his business trains pretty much any of the sporting, pointing and flushing breeds. But in the Upper Midwest, the more popular breed tends to be the Labrador Retriever.

Dokken has a special place in his heart for labs, which he described as a hardy breed able to withstand the punishing winter conditions known to challenge hunters in South Dakota during pheasant season.

And in South Dakota, pheasants are

king, according to Dokken.

“As far as population of pheasant – up in our area the weather sometimes knocks them back a little bit. Last year we had rain in December, which is a little bit of a factor when it comes to pheasant numbers,” Dokken said.

“The further south and west you get, the population changes too. Regardless, South Dakota numbers will always be top in the U.S.”

Hunters who have a dog in their arsenal have a much greater advantage over those who do not. For one, they can flush birds out of thick cover and, unlike the average human, have an absolute blast doing so.

“Without a dog – if you’re a pheasant hunter – you’re not going to have the ability to get the birds up and get them out of higher and denser cover. Finding birds that you’ve shot is going to be a real challenge as well. A dog is a great conservation tool as well,” Dokken said.

From a training standpoint, Dokken advises dog owners to start teaching their hunting partners good habits when they’re really young.

The earlier the training begins, the more success you’re setting the dog up for down the line.



Dokken with two adult labs

“Try to buy the best bloodlines that you can because if you do, in most cases your success rate just gets higher.”

Dokken says it boils down to three things: teaching, repetition and reinforcement. For the human, practicing patience is crucial.

“A majority the time the dog is not in the wrong, it’s that the dog can’t understand what you want,” he said.

The entire job is a dream for Dokken and his team, and one he hopes to continue for decades more to come.

“It’s what we do,” he said. “It’s a labor of love.”



Source: Travel South Dakota

Our Revenue Came From:

	2021	2022
Farms and Ranches	\$3,507,642	\$3,936,239
Residential	\$20,123,514	\$22,516,851
Large Commercial	\$9,314,991	\$10,425,883
Small Commercial	\$3,022,890	\$3,394,611
Public, Irrigation, Other	\$1,803,861	\$1,612,577
TOTAL INCOME:	\$37,772,898	\$41,886,161

We Paid For:

	2021	2022
Power Purchased	\$20,275,544	\$22,554,281
Maintenance & Operations	\$2,236,982	\$4,489,353
Member Accounts	\$2,699,667	\$1,533,375
General & Administrative	\$2,784,724	\$4,752,790
Depreciation	\$3,997,031	\$4,369,951
Interest	\$2,443,660	\$2,735,488
Taxes & Other Deductions	\$798,549	\$797,840
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSE:	\$35,236,157	\$41,233,078
Operating Margins	\$2,536,741	\$653,083
Non-Operating Margins	\$305,348	\$246,495
Capital Credits	\$843,047	\$2,690,147
TOTAL MARGINS:	\$3,685,136	\$3,589,725

What We Own as of Dec. 31:

	2021	2022
Electric Plant	\$107,639,330	\$119,165,548
Other Property & Investments	\$18,959,190	\$21,598,230
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$3,017,766	\$2,054,035
Accounts Receivable	\$1,718,449	\$2,963,245
Material & Supplies on Hand	\$3,820,936	\$4,310,345
Prepayments & Interest	\$1,302,695	\$1,960,269
Deferred Debits	\$68,856	\$88,862
TOTAL WE OWN:	\$136,527,222	\$152,140,534

What We Owe as of Dec. 31:

	2021	2022
Total Long-Term Debt	\$83,348,411	\$95,323,050
Other Noncurrent Liabilities	\$388,546	\$440,564
Notes Payable - Line of Credit	\$ -	\$ -
Accounts Payable	\$2,419,153	\$3,024,338
Member Deposits	\$437,089	\$454,836
Taxes Accrued	\$1,046,014	\$1,141,900
Other Current Liabilities	\$623,334	\$673,900
Deferred Credits	\$1,543,826	\$2,646,419
TOTAL WE OWE:	\$89,806,373	\$103,705,007

OUR EQUITIES

Patronage Capital	\$46,720,849	\$48,435,527
TOTAL WE OWE PLUS EQUITY:	\$136,527,222	\$152,140,534

2021 Co-op Statistics

Members: 14,566
Meters: 18,789
Total # of Employees: 56
Service Area: 4,500 sq mi
Transmission line: 37 mi
Overhead Line: 2,051 mi
Underground Line: 569 mi
Avg Residential Usage: 982 KWH

Avg Residential Bill: \$124
Avg Sm Commercial Usage: 1,382 KWH
Avg Sm Commercial Bill: \$193
Avg Lg Commercial Usage: 15,538 KWH
Avg Lg Commercial Bill: \$1,737
Meters Per Mile of Line: 7.07

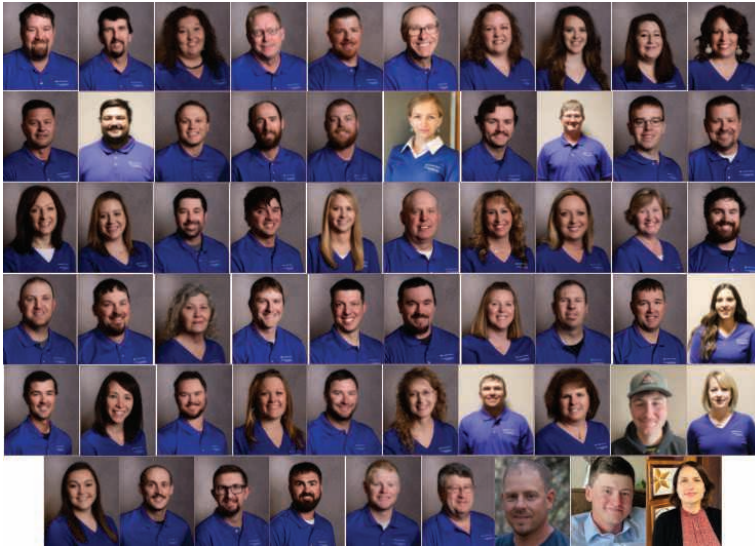
2022 Co-op Statistics

Members: 14,911
Meters: 19,357
Total # of Employees: 59
Service Area: 4,500 sq mi
Transmission Line: 37 mi
Overhead Line: 2,056 mi
Underground Line: 591 mi
Avg Residential Usage: 1014 KWH

Avg Residential Bill: \$133
Avg Sm Commercial Usage: 1,421 KWH
Avg Sm Commercial Bill: \$207
Avg Lg Commercial Usage: 16,032 KWH
Avg Lg Commercial Bill: \$1,807
Meters Per Mile of Line: 7.11



Years of Service



YOUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS VOTED TO RETURN

\$1,098,000

IN CAPITAL CREDITS

BACK TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Each year, the Board of Directors review West River Electric's financial condition to determine if a capital credit "retirement" (payment of capital credits) will be possible for the year. Because of the strong margins, the board voted to return this \$1,098,000 back to the membership. You will receive a credit on your bill unless you call and specifically request a check to be sent.



Board of Directors

Jerry Hammerquist	39	District 1
Howard Knuppe	35	District 1
Marcia Arneson	29	District 2
Larry Eisenbraun	27	Treasurer, District 3
Andy Moon	17	President, District 3
Stan Anders	17	Vice President, District 2
Jamie Lewis	10	Secretary, District 1
Chuck Sloan	7	District 2
Sue Peters	6	District 3

Management Staff

Mike Letcher	32	Operations Manager
Dick Johnson	29	CEO/General Manager
Dawn Hilgenkamp	27	CFO/Manager of Finance
Matt Schmahl	24	Construction Project Manager
Brendan Nelson	23	Operations Supt.
Sanden Simons	23	Operations Supt.
Jenny Patterson	16	Mgr of Office Services
Amy Thompson	16	Mgr. of Member Services
Robert Raker	15	Mgr. of Comm. and PR
Gerri Johnston	9	IT Manager

Linemen & Office Employees

Byron Frank	36	Metering Foreman
Lane Butler	32	Enning Foreman
Tracea Ladner	25	Operations Adm. Asst.
Jannette Thayer	21	Metering Adm. Asst.
Becky Chihak	21	Member Services Rep.
Brandon Arnold	20	Staking Technician
Tyson Gunn	19	Maint./Const. Foreman
Lance Steiger	17	Staking Foreman
Mike Oyen	17	Warehouseman
Christine Ritter	15	Marketing Rep.
Alicia Fortune	15	Billing Supervisor
Justin Wermers	14	Service Technician
Robert Rancour	14	Administrative Assistant
Sallie Traver	14	Lead Member Services Rep.
John Garrigan	13	Utility Maintenance
Brandon Bisgaard	12	Journeyman Lineman
Bonnie Almeida	12	Member Services Rep.
Zach Hansen	12	Journeyman Lineman
Stacey Parkis	10	Member Services Rep.
Eric Emery	10	Maint./Const. Foreman
Adam Daigle	10	Energy Services Advisor
Lindsay Reagle	9	Accounting Support Spec.
Garrett Shearer	9	Work Order Specialist
Turner Donahue	9	Maint./Const. Foreman
Trent Madsen	9	Journeyman Lineman
Matt Kruse	8	Journeyman Lineman
Jared Stalley	8	Marketing Rep.
Derek Haug	8	Journeyman Lineman
Clint Stangle	7	Journeyman Lineman
Aarin Ainsworth	7	Staking Technician
Aimee Paulsen	6	Billing Specialist
Lucas Schreurs	6	Journeyman Lineman
Carolyn Schulz	5	Software & Database Adm.
Tucker Hohn	5	Journeyman Lineman
Keenan Caesar	4	Journeyman Lineman
Tucker O'Rourke	4	Journeyman Lineman
Cameron Price	4	Journeyman Lineman
Camden Sawwell	3	Apprentice Lineman
Sean Bestgen	3	Electrical Engineer
Marissa Delaney	3	Member Services Rep.
Amanda Haugen	2	Communications Specialist
Trevor Schryvers	2	Apprentice Lineman
Liliya Stone	1	HR Generalist
Ty Cooper	1	Journeyman Lineman
Andria Ruffledt	1	Member Service Rep.
Selena Parce	1	Member Service Rep.
Cristina Nesseth	1	Billing Supp. Specialist
Tyson Selby	1	Apprentice Lineman
Riley Ruland	6 mo.	Warehouse & Facility Tech.



Touchstone Energy Celebrates 25 Years with Commercial Debut

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives is encouraging member electric cooperatives and their member-owners to pop some popcorn, settle in, and join them in celebrating the organization's 25th anniversary on Nov. 29, when they'll debut their

newest line of 2024 commercials.

The historic milestone will commemorate a quarter-century of Touchstone Energy's drive to establish a universal brand – seen on t-shirts, logos, and even soaring hot air balloons – for co-ops nationwide. Select commercials from the lineup, which will feature on the Touchstone Energy website, will highlight the local South

Dakota prairie landscape and local co-op employees with Sioux Valley Energy.

Touchstone Energy Board of Directors President and Sioux Valley CEO Tim McCarthy said he is glad to see South Dakota being represented on a national scope. "We are excited to be celebrating this historic milestone," said McCarthy. "Touchstone Energy continues to be an invaluable resource for co-ops in South Dakota and throughout our nationwide network."

Touchstone Energy's journey began 25 years ago when a group of movers and shakers recognized the need for an outward-facing organization that would connect the image of

co-ops across the nation. Although individually small, cooperatives from all around the nation believed a unified brand would broaden and strengthen their presence. Together, these co-ops owned and operated more distribution lines than any other sector in the electric utility industry and served more than half of the American landmass. On Nov. 26, 1998, 17 founding co-ops established Touchstone Energy, powering through a time of regulatory uncertainty.

“In the late ‘90s, there were some revolutionary things happening in the energy industry,” said Jana Adams, executive director of Touchstone Energy. “The cooperatives really wisely said: as individual entities we are small, but if we come together and create a recognizable brand, we will have a better opportunity to compete in this evolving energy landscape.”

From the start, Touchstone Energy was set on making an impression. By purchasing six iconic Touchstone Energy branded hot air balloons and sponsoring notable events such as the famous NASCAR Talladega 300 race, Touchstone Energy quickly transformed into a nationally recognizable brand.

To date, Touchstone Energy’s membership has grown to nearly 700 co-ops, which now reaches more than 30 million member-owners across 46 states. Along with this remarkable growth, Touchstone Energy has enhanced its services, including advertising, social media management, and web development, among others. Over time, Touchstone Energy’s wide range of services, said Adams, have become a crucial communication resource for their membership.

“Our first national ad was in the early 2000s, and to this day, we run advertisements in every single zip code served by a Touchstone Energy cooperative,” said Adams. “We are

constantly innovating and giving our cooperative members the opportunity to highlight the great work they do and the achievements they have.”

Looking back on the last quarter century, Adams said Touchstone Energy is thrilled to connect to its original roots and celebrate its longstanding service to co-ops across the country.



Touchstone Energy celebrates 25 years while producing new commercials in South Dakota.



“We encourage everybody to join us on Nov. 29 for our 2024 national ad premier and to celebrate the 25 years behind us, but more importantly the many years ahead of us where we continue to work together,” she said.

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, INC. WALL, SOUTH DAKOTA ANNUAL MEETING, OCT. 8, 2022

The meeting was called to order by President Andy Moon at 10:00 a.m. at the Wall Community Center in Wall, South Dakota.

All Veterans in attendance were asked to stand and be recognized. The membership and all in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance. The National Anthem was sang by Ms. Athena Simons for the membership.

Secretary Jamie Lewis reported for Roger Scott, Chairperson of the Credentials and Election Committee, that 100 members of West River Electric Association, Inc. were registered and that a quorum was present at the meeting. At the present, we have a total of 14,911 members. 11215300

A motion was made and seconded to dispense with the reading of the Notice of Annual Meeting and the Affidavit of Mailing and filed in the Minute Book for September 19, 2022. Motion carried.

The minutes of the October 9, 2021 Annual Meeting were presented for approval. President Moon asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented. A motion was duly made and seconded to approve the minutes as mailed. Motion carried.

President Moon introduced the guests in attendance.

Greg Erlandson, Attorney for West River Electric, read the Notice of Incumbent Directors seeking re-election for the position of Director from April 18, 2022 based on Section 4 Article 5 of the Bylaws. The Directors seeking re-election; Jamie Lewis from District I, Marcia Arneson from District II and Sue Peters from District III.

Greg Erlandson announced that if any member had not yet registered, they should go and register at this time. He then announced registration is now closed.

Attorney Erlandson asked for a motion to cast a unanimous ballot for Jamie Lewis from District I, for Marcia Arneson from District II and for Sue Peters for District III. A motion was made, seconded and carried to cast a unanimous ballot for each district.

President Andy Moon welcomed the membership and stated it was great to see everyone at our 83rd Annual Meeting. Our theme this year is Focus on Success. He introduced the Board of Directors who work alongside Moon and work so hard on your behalf. This job requires many hours focusing on the success of your electric cooperative in Board meetings, training, education, and visiting with our member owners about their needs. He stated that he appreciated all they have done this year to continue the tradition of meeting the needs of our members and the communities we serve, while providing a safe environment for our employees. Moon highlighted the general capital credit retirement for 2022 and announced it is the second year we have retired over two million dollars by returning the Basin and Rushmore capital credits we received by paying all of 1995- 2000 of WREA's credits and spread \$250,000 to everyone who had been a member from 2001-2021. The Board believes that returning money back to the members shows the power of a cooperative membership. Further stating that all active members saw a rate decrease on their October, November and December 2021 bills with having excess margins due to revenue deferral funds, the forgiveness of our SBA Paycheck Protection Program loan during 2021, and reduced expenses in large part due to the pandemic.

Dick Johnson, CEO/General Manager, began with highlighting the theme of Focus on Success. He spoke of the cooperative margins, assets, equity, and sales with 630 new services installed in 2021. The growth moving into our area is from a variety of states and the continued building of apartments, new affordable housing and further to accommodate the B21 in 2025. The more services we have, we can spread the fixed costs out. Dick talked about supply chain issues, the June storm, technology, electric vehicle industry and the grant SD received

for charging station infrastructure. He spoke of concerns with reliability of power supply and how we need a smooth transition from baseload generation to intermittent resources such as wind and solar. We are currently retiring too much baseload generation. He talked about safety for employees, the Board, first responders and our members. He touched on the retirement of Betty Haerer and Veronica Kusser along with our IT Manager set to retire the first of 2023 bringing a lot of changes. He thanked the employees for their commitment to community and the Board for their continued support.

Employee years of service were presented: 35 years-Byron Frank, 20 years-Jannette Thayer & Becky Chihak, 15 years-Jenny Patterson & Amy Thompson, 5 years-Aimee Paulsen & Lucas Schreuers. Director milestones: 5 years-Sue Peters.

President Moon called for old business. There was none. President Moon called for new business. There was none. Operation Round up presentation to: Wall Rodeo Booster Club Drawings were held for door prizes.

A prize drawing was held for the kids drawing. The winners are Briggs Kjerstad and Bo Stangle.

The drawing was held for 6 - \$500 Scholarships for a high school senior or full time student currently attending college or technical school. The winners were Jett Mohr, Shelby Derner, William Housman, Deyton Skillingstad, Breinn Richter and Dakota Burke.

The grand prize winner was Ned Geigle.

The jackpot winner of \$100.00 was John Fortune. Come back next year, the jackpot will be \$2,100. The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.


By: Jamie Lewis, Secretary

2023 Annual Meeting

West River Electric Annual Meeting
 Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023
 Wall Community Center

AGENDA

1. Registration – 9 am
2. Call to Order – 10 am
3. Pledge of Allegiance
4. National Anthem
5. Report of Credentials
6. Notice of Annual Meeting
7. Affidavit of Mailing
8. Meeting Minutes, Oct. 8, 2022
9. Introduction of Guests
10. Director’s Election Report
11. Registration Closes
12. Voting of Director
13. President’s Report
14. Manager’s Report
15. Drawing for Prizes
16. Old Business
17. New Business
18. Election Results
19. Scholarship Drawing
20. Grand Prize Drawing
21. Adjournment



Dick Johnson
 CEO/General Manager



Andy Moon
 Board President
 District 3



Stan Anders
 Vice President
 District 3



Jamie Lewis
 Secretary
 District 1



Larry Eisenbraun
 Treasurer
 District 3



Marcia Aneson
 District 2



Jerry Hammerquist
 District 1



Sue Peters
 District 3



Howard Knuppe
 District 1



Chuck Sloan
 District 2

LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER

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

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC OFFICE HOURS

RAPID CITY OFFICE

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

WALL OFFICE

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

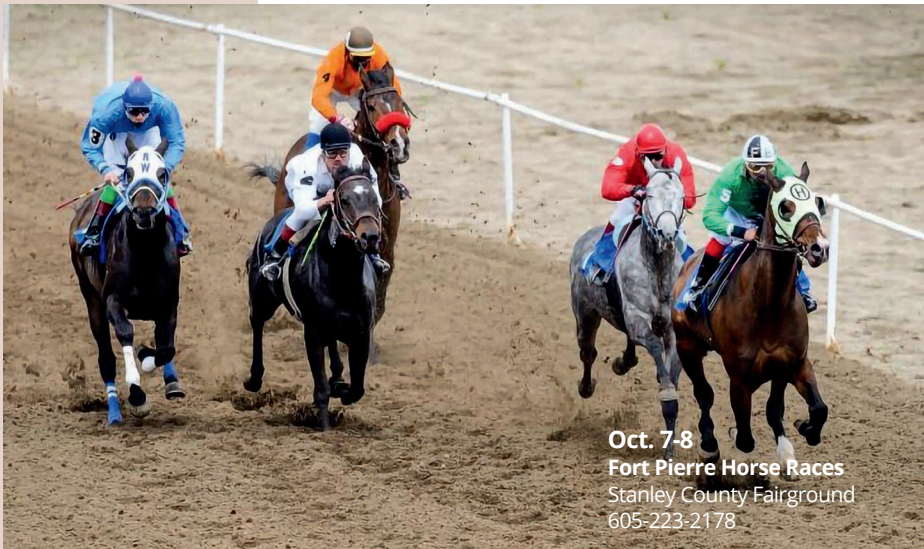
A night depository is available at both offices for your convenience.

SERVICE AND BILLING QUESTIONS?

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

OUTAGE OR EMERGENCY?

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



Oct. 7-8
Fort Pierre Horse Races
 Stanley County Fairground
 605-223-2178

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.

SEPT 22-23
Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair
 9 a.m.
 Davison County Fairgrounds
 Activity Center
 Mitchell SD
 605-359-2049

SEPT 22-24
Coal Springs Threshing Bee
 Meadow, SD
 605-788-2229

SEPT 23
German Fest
 Webster, SD
 605-380-0588

SEPT 23
Springfield Dakota Senior Meals Fall Festival
 9 a.m.
 Springfield Community Building
 Springfield, SD

SEPT 24
Annual Bazaar & Fall Fest
 4-7 p.m.
 St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
 Wagner, SD

SEPT 30
Day of Wellness
 10 a.m.
 Sturgis Armory
 Sturgis, SD

SEPT 30
Mission Quilt and Bake Sale
 Zoar Lutheran Church
 Revillo, SD

SEPT 29-30
Junkin' Market Days
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

OCT 6-7
Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show
 Philip, SD
 605-441-1060

OCT 7
Harvest Festival
 10 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

OCT 7-31
Pumpkin Patch
 RVUMC
 Rapid city, SD

OCT 14
Oktoberfest
Leo Lonney Polka Band
 6 p.m.
 Menno, SD
 605-660-1839

OCT 19-21
Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale
 Spearfish Senior Center
 Spearfish, SD
 605-642-2827

OCT 21
Craft/Vendor Fair
 8 a.m.
 Minneluzahan Center
 Rapid City, SD

OCT 21
Community Rummage Sale & Bake Sale
 8 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

OCT. 28-29
Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association
 Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-731-9155

NOV 5
Thanksgiving Dinne/Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

NOV 12
Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

NOV 24
Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Dakota Avenue
 Huron, SD
 605-788-2229

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