

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Pristine Prairie

**Tellus & Lori Waddell Grow,
Harvest Native Plants**

Pages 8-9

Drive Out to a Drive-In!

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Building for the Future



Robert Raker
CEO/GM

Last September, I shared information about rising wholesale power costs and the financial pressures affecting electric cooperatives throughout our region. At that time, I mentioned that

addressing these challenges would likely require a multi-year approach rather than a single adjustment.

As we look ahead, that outlook remains largely unchanged. However, I believe it's important to recognize that these investments are about much more than costs. They are about ensuring that the electric system our members depend on remains strong, reliable, and ready for the future.

One perspective worth remembering is that much of the infrastructure serving our members today was built and paid for by previous generations. In many cases, we are

still benefiting from investments our parents and grandparents made decades ago. Their foresight helped create the reliable electric system we often take for granted.

Today, our industry is entering another period of significant investment. Across the region, utilities are responding to growing electricity demand, replacing aging infrastructure, expanding transmission systems, and developing new power generation resources to maintain reliability. While these projects come at a cost, they are designed to provide value for decades to come, just as prior generations' investments have done for us.

Here at West River Electric, we are seeing firsthand how demand for electricity continues to grow. This summer, we recorded a new all-time system peak during an extended stretch of hot weather. While our system performed as designed, it serves as a reminder that today's investments help ensure we can continue meeting our members' needs tomorrow.

Our wholesale power provider, Basin

Electric, is making major investments in power generation and transmission infrastructure across the region. These projects are intended to strengthen reliability, create additional capacity, and position the cooperative network to serve future growth.

No final decisions have been made regarding future rate adjustments, but we believe it is important to continue communicating openly with our membership. While additional rate changes are likely necessary as part of a longer-term plan, they would support investments that are intended to serve members not only today, but well into the future.

The members who came before us built an electric system that has served our communities exceptionally well. Now it is our turn to make sure that system remains strong for our children, grandchildren, and the generations that follow.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and membership.

Robert Raker
CEO & General Manager

A Little Cost. A Lot of Life.

For about \$150 a month, electricity powers hundreds of tasks that keep your home comfortable, connected and running smoothly—from brewing your morning coffee to keeping your family cool, safe and entertained.

- **720** hours of refrigeration
- **20+** loads of clean clothes
- **15+** home-cooked meals
- **90+** hours of lighting
- **Numerous** devices charged
- **Hundreds** of hours of cooling/heating
- **Countless** connections to work, school and entertainment

30 days of comfort



West River Electric Association sent five students to participate in Youth Excursion, a trip to tour energy infrastructure in Bismarck, North Dakota. From left are Walter Senger, Edward Senger, Brandon Treadwell, Gavyn Jones-Monington and Elena Teagle.

Youth Excursion 2026

What does it take to keep the lights on? Sixteen students representing six electric cooperatives from across South Dakota embarked on a three-day trip to Bismarck, N.D., in July to go behind the scenes and learn about electricity generation. Sponsored by their local electric cooperatives, students toured the energy infrastructure that generates and transmits electricity into residential homes and commercial buildings, learning firsthand from industry experts. 1025700

The group kicked off the tour by visiting the Coteau Properties Co. Freedom Mine, where they saw large equipment in action and coal being mined in real time. The group followed the coal to the one-of-a-kind Great Plains Synfuels Plant, where natural gas, liquid carbon dioxide, fertilizers and fuels are produced from coal. The group then toured Antelope Valley Station, a coal-fired power plant, to learn how coal is burned to generate energy. The group concluded their tour at Basin Electric Headquarters, where energy generation across the system is facilitated and managed.

Brodie Melichar of Tabor, a member of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association, said the trip provided a new perspective on how power is generated. Melichar said he plans to be an electrician once he enters the workforce.

"It was a great experience," Melichar said. "What stuck with me was the impressively large scale of the mining operation and facilities. I went on this trip with a few of my friends, and by the end of it, I got to meet some more."

Youth Excursion is organized by the statewide South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, S.D., and paid for by the students' electric cooperatives as part of the industry's ongoing support of the fifth cooperative principle: education, training and information. 3628900

As cooperatives, we value our communities and our youth. If you are interested in learning more about youth activities and opportunities, reach out to your local electric cooperative.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

WEST RIVER ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 675-840)

Our Mission:

To serve our members' best interest.

Our Vision:

We will be a high performing co-op.

Our Values:

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Board President: Andy Moon

Board of Directors

Stan Anders – Vice President
 Jamie Lewis – Secretary
 Chuck Sloan – Treasurer
 Taran Eisenbraun
 Peter Blake
 Jason Habrock
 Steven Edoff
 Sue Peters

CEO and General Manager:

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Editor

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

Other correspondence to: West River Electric Cooperative Connections, 3250 E Hwy 44, Rapid City, SD 57703; telephone (605)393-1500, Exts. 6564, 6531 or 6522; fax (605)393- 0275; e-mail amanda.haugen@westriver.coop.

STAYING PREPARED IN RURAL S.D.

As most South Dakotans know, weather on the Great Plains can be frightfully unpredictable. In fact, South Dakota holds the record for the fastest temperature rise ever recorded. On Jan. 22, 1943, the temperature in Spearfish climbed from 4 degrees below zero to 45 degrees above zero in only two minutes.

Winter storms also offer reminders of how quickly severe weather can reshape daily life. The Blizzard of 1966 brought wind gusts of 70 mph and snowdrifts reaching more than 30 feet. Roads remained blocked for days, and massive livestock losses made it one of the most severe blizzards in state history.

Winter Storm Atlas, another devastating blizzard in October 2013, dropped several feet of snow over the Black Hills. Heavy snow and strong winds toppled trees and power lines, and devastated livestock operations, leaving some residents without electricity for a week or longer.

Although not every storm will make the record books, severe weather can still disrupt a household. A little preparation on an ordinary day can make a difficult day much easier.

Make A Plan

Emergency preparedness begins with a plan. FEMA recommends that households develop a plan for alerts, appropriate shelter, evacuation and communication if family members become separated.

Start by identifying the types of emergencies most likely to affect your area. For rural South Dakotans, that may include anything from blizzards and tornadoes to severe thunderstorms and wildfires. A good safety plan starts by choosing a safe place inside the home for high winds and tornadoes, generally a basement or small interior room, away from windows.

Next, consider who in your household may need extra help during an emergency, including infants, older adults and pets. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do, then walk through the plan together.

Build A Practical Supply Kit

Once the plan is in place, start collecting and organizing supplies your household could rely on if the power goes out or travel becomes difficult. FEMA recommends keeping enough food and water for at least several days, with one gallon of water per person for each day. For example, a

family of four preparing for three days would need at least 12 gallons of water.

Choose nonperishable foods your household already eats and that can be prepared without electricity. Then add the basics needed to get through an outage, including flashlights, extra batteries, a first-aid kit and a way to recharge cellphones. A NOAA Weather Radio can also provide important updates even when cellphone service is unavailable.

Next, tailor the kit to your household. Set aside medications and other essentials.

There is no need to build the entire supply kit at once. Start with what is already in the house, then add supplies during regular shopping trips. Check the kit a few times each year to replace expired food, medications or batteries.

Preparedness cannot stop a storm, reopen a highway or restore electricity, but it can provide time and options when conditions begin to change.

For more information, visit Ready.gov for additional tips on making an emergency plan, building a supply kit and staying prepared.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Owen Williams, age 7

Owen reminds members to not plant trees near power lines. That is great advice, Owen! Thank you!

Owen's parents are Bruce and Jing Williams from Wakonda S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

FALL DESSERTS

GOLDEN GRAHAM/ SMORES BARS

Ingredients:

7 cups Golden Graham cereal
16 oz. mini marshmallows
1/2 cup butter
6 full size Hershey bars

Method

Unwrap Hershey bars and break apart on lines and then each piece again in half. Set aside. Melt the butter and 6 cups of the marshmallows. Stir in the Golden Grahams cereal. Cool for one minute. Stir in remaining marshmallows and Hershey pieces. Press lightly into a greased 9x13 pan with slightly wet hands. Cool and serve.

Valerie Marso
Oahe Electric

THE BEST APPLE CRISP

Ingredients:

6 cups sliced apples
1 1/2 cups white sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
6 tbsp. flour

Topping

(makes enough for two pans)

2 cups flour
2 cups soft butter
1 tsp. baking powder

Method

Mix ingredients in a bowl and place in a 9x12 glass baking dish. Mix topping ingredients together until crumbly and sprinkle over apple mixture. Don't pack. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until apples are done.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

VERY GOOD PEACH DESSERT

Ingredients:

First layer:

1 cup flour
1/2 cup nuts
1 stick margarine
Mix together and press in 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 F for 10 minutes.

Second layer:

1 (8 oz.) package cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
Cream together and add 1 cup Cool Whip. Spread on top of cooled crust.

Third layer:

1 cup sugar
2 tbsp. white corn syrup
3 tbsp. cornstarch
1 cup water
Combine ingredients, cook until thickened, then remove from heat. Add 3 tbsp. of peach-flavored gelatin and 1/4 tsp. almond flavoring. Cool. Peel and slice fresh peaches, then combine with the cooled mixture. Spread on top of cheese filling. Top with a layer of whipped topping and chill.

Ginny Jensen
Sioux Valley Energy

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

87th Annual Meeting

 Saturday, October 10, 2026

 Registration: 9am | Meeting: 10am

 Wall Community Center

Together Towards Tomorrow



**West River Electric
Association, Inc.**

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
"Powering You For A Brighter Future"

Heat Season Begins October 1st



Justin Wermers
Metering Foreman

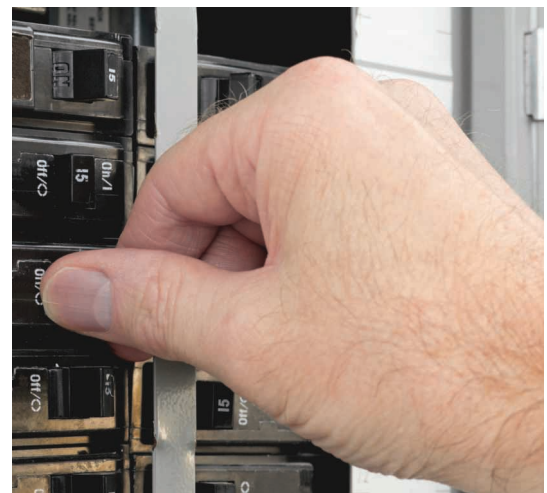
Please ensure your heat meter breaker is turned on before October 1st. The discounted heat rate will begin then and go until May 1, 2027. Any usage between those two dates on the heat meter will receive the heat rate discount. If you have any questions, please call our metering department at 605-393-1500.

How to Tell if your Heat Meter is Off?

First, locate your meter. This is the second meter with a smaller enclosure than your main meter. 3950000

Second, look at the digital display. If there is not a blinking display, it is off and the meter does not have power. You will need to locate your electrical panel and look for a 2-pole break that is labeled "heat meter." Once located, turn that breaker back on. 2963600

Finally, verify that your meter display is now on and rest assured knowing you will be getting a discount on your electric heat when the time comes. If you are not comfortable performing this process, consult with an electrician. You may also call our office and a member service representative can verify your heat meter is communicating.



West River Electric has the following vehicles for sale by sealed bid. *Bids will be accepted until 5pm, Friday, September 18, 2026.* Sealed bids can be sent to any WREA office. All items are sold “as is” and WREA reserves the right to reject any and all bids. Vehicles can be seen at our Rapid City Office by asking for Mo or Brendan. *Bids will be opened at the September 21, 2026 Board Meeting.*

Bids can also be submitted online by scanning the QR code or visiting
<https://www.westriver.coop/vehicle-bids>



Item #303

2014 Toyota Tundra 5.7L V8 4x4 | 204,566 mi



Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____

Item #219

2013 Toyota Tundra 5.7L V8 4x4 | 181,406 mi



Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____

Item #315

2015 Titan Flatbed 8' x 26'
6' stationary with 20' tilt | 82" inside wheel wells



Name: _____

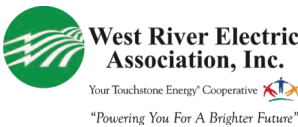
Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____

Item #230

1994 Felling Pole Trailer



Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Bid: \$ _____

A photograph of a man and a woman, Tellus and Lori Waddell, sitting in the back of a tractor. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is a lush green field with some purple wildflowers. The tractor's frame and controls are visible in the foreground.

WONDROUS WILDFLOWERS & PRAIRIE PRESERVATION

Tellus and Lori Waddell.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

Waddell Native Seeds Turns Rural Acreage into Prairie Paradise

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Journeying east on U.S. Hwy. 12 toward Milbank, as you make a steep descent into Whetstone Valley, you'll pass the usual South Dakota crops – corn, soybeans, some wheat here and there.

But for Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative members Tellus and Lori Waddell of Marvin, the most fascinating – and lucrative – harvest is one most of us would overlook, growing tall in roadside ditches and uncut fields.

For more than 30 years, the Waddells have allowed their Grant County acreage to run wild as they grow, harvest and sell the seeds of dozens of native wildflowers and grasses.

"We started noticing wildflowers up in the pasture, and at that time [the internet was] coming out so we could do some research on what they were," Lori recalled. "Tellus started calling nurseries asking them if they wanted this or that ... and that's how we built into this – and there are not a lot of people that do this."

When Lori says "this," she's referring to more than just collecting seeds. She means getting up early before the weather

is too hot, rolling up her sleeves and driving around the property in a side-by-side scanning the ground for patches of whichever wildflower type is ready to be harvested – by hand – for seeds.

"It's very, very labor-intensive," Tellus added. "It's not like picking flowers – because we don't pick a flower. You have to let [the seeds] develop. Right now, we're picking things that blossomed about six weeks ago."

With dozens of plants and just as many harvest schedules, the Waddells have a steady amount of work to do from mid-spring all the way into fall.

Traversing the lightly traveled trails over their expansive, glacially carved property, (this reporter was joined by two labs in the back seat of the side-by-side) Tellus and Lori are quick to point out distant patches of coneflowers, blazing star, wild turnips, vervain and their personal favorite flora they cultivate, milkweed.

"It's for the butterflies," Tellus explained as he pulled the vehicle up to the family's newest experiment: milkweed planted as a row crop.

"It's the first time we've ever done that," Tellus said, proudly explaining his youngest son, Levi Waddell, is heading up the initiative.

Tellus added, "As every generation takes over, you'll get different things."

Most outbuildings on the Waddells' land double as drying rooms for at least one harvest during the season.

That includes their three-stall garage – a more accurate description may be the seed processing facility – where the Waddells dry the seeds, separate them from the chaff and package them for shipment to area greenhouses and other customers.

Demand has grown to the point where the Waddells have hired about a dozen part-time summer workers to help harvest seeds.

Their harvesting efforts don't stop at the

The Waddells are row cropping milkweed for the first time. Monarch butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed, making it an important resource for conservation efforts.

Photo by Jacob Boyko





Lori Waddell enjoys photographing native flowers on the acreage.
 Top row: prairie lily, pasque flower (S.D. state flower), wild turnip.
 Bottom row: blazing star, scarlet gaura, coneflower.
Photos by Lori Waddell

fence line – Tellus is known to park his car, knock on the doors and ask to collect seeds if a patch of prairie catches his eye.

"We have picking rights [agreements with property owners] from here to Pierre down to Grand Island, Nebraska," Tellus said, recounting an especially vibrant purple field of vervain near Forestburg.

This led Tellus to a more solemn conversation. Piece by piece, he and Lori have bought surrounding acreage in an effort to isolate their native plants from the effects of drifting pesticides. Tellus said that when mixed into a slight breeze, the chemicals are potent enough to wipe out their native broadleaf plants for years at a time – even if the spraying takes place miles away.

Tellus and Lori's observation is that biodiversity is shrinking throughout the region for this same reason – diverse fields of native flowers and grasses are becoming more difficult to find, and the wildlife that relies on native plants for food are becoming increasingly scarce.

"You talk to people in their 80s, and they'll talk about walking through a field of lilies," Tellus said. "And then they just sit there for a bit and try to think of the last time they've seen that. Sometimes 40 or 50 years ago."

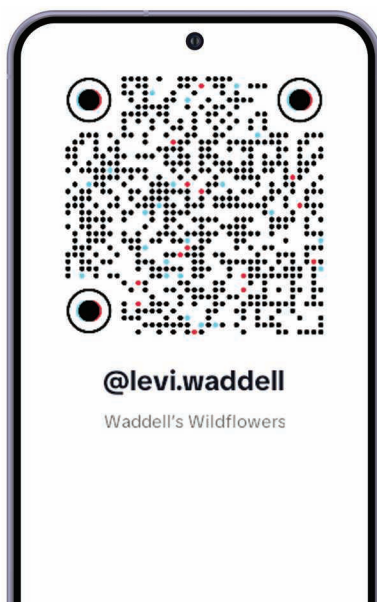
He continued, "that's when people realize the prairie is pretty much gone."

Levi Waddell uses social media to spread awareness about native plants, conservation and his family's operation.

His TikTok page, Waddell's Wildflowers, has more than 1,000 followers and 19,000 likes and chronologizes the day-by-day life of a native plant harvester.

The Waddells hope to share their story to educate others on the importance of conservation and inspire them to preserve the native prairie for generations to come.

"God gave us this beautiful earth and we're ruining it," Lori said. "If we can at least preserve and protect our little corner, I feel like we've done our job."



PROCESSING NATIVE SEEDS



The harvested seeds are spread indoors to dry for several weeks.



The dried seed heads are broken apart to loosen the seeds from the surrounding plant material.



The seeds are fed into a hammer mill to break apart remaining plant material from the seeds.



The cleaned seeds are sifted one final time to remove any extra material. The separated chaff is spread where the seeds were harvested so any unseparated seeds can germinate.

Electricity Brings Everyday Value



Amanda Haugen
Communications
Specialist

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The members who came before us built an electric system that has served our communities exceptionally well. Now it is our turn to make sure that system remains strong for our children, grandchildren, and the generations that follow.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and membership.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

September kicks off the fall shoulder season, when cooler mornings and milder evenings often mean you can give your heating and cooling system a break. Open windows, use ceiling fans and enjoy the fresh air whenever temperatures allow. It's also the perfect time to schedule annual HVAC maintenance before colder weather arrives. Because demand is typically lower during the fall, heating and cooling professionals often have greater availability, making it easier to book an appointment. Regular maintenance can improve your system's efficiency, help prevent unexpected breakdowns and keep your home comfortable all year long.

Source: Department of Energy



Explore Co-op Country

Looking for your next road trip adventure? West River Electric recently partnered with neighboring electric cooperatives to create the Western South Dakota Adventure Route, a guide featuring some of the region's favorite hidden gems and must-see destinations.

While iconic attractions like Mount Rushmore, Crazy

Horse, Spearfish Canyon and the Black Hills itself draw visitors from around the world, this route also shines a spotlight on the small towns, scenic stops and local treasures that make western South Dakota unique.

Whether you're planning a summer getaway, traveling west for the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally or simply looking for

a weekend drive, the Western South Dakota Adventure Route offers plenty of inspiration to explore Co-op Country.

See our regional map above to discover featured stops throughout western South Dakota or explore an expanded statewide map online at rushmore.coop/this-is-coop-country.

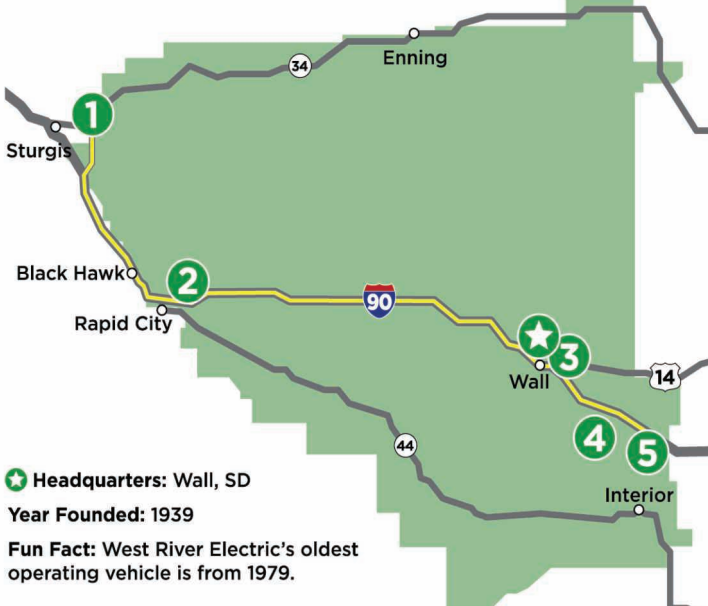


West River Electric Association, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Co-op Country

ROAD TRIP MAP

West River Electric powers communities across western South Dakota, supporting the places and experiences that make this region a memorable stop along the Co-op Country Road Trip.



Featured Road Trip Stops

- 1 Sturgis Buffalo Chip**
20622 Fort Meade Way, Sturgis
Category: Attraction
 Catch live music, explore vendor areas and soak in the high-energy atmosphere that defines the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. Even outside of rally week, the Buffalo Chip offers a glimpse into one of the most iconic motorcycle destinations in the country.
- 2 Black Hills Visitor Information Center**
1851 Discovery Cir, Rapid City
Category: Attraction
 Plan your trip with maps, recommendations and insider tips from local experts. Browse displays, plan your route and get a better sense of what to see and do throughout the Black Hills region.
- 3 Wall Drug**
510 Main St, Wall
Category: Food/Shopping
 Stretch your legs, grab a bite to eat, buy a souvenir and explore a maze of shops, Western art and photo opportunities. Don't miss the famous free ice water that has drawn travelers in for generations.
- 4 Badlands National Park**
25216 Ben Reifel Rd, Interior
Category: Outdoors
 Drive scenic overlooks, hike through rugged formations, visit one of the world's largest fossil beds and watch for wildlife like bison and bighorn sheep. The dramatic landscapes and wide-open views make this one of the most unforgettable stops in South Dakota.
- 5 Minuteman Missile National Historic Site**
24545 Cottonwood Rd, Philip
Category: History/Attraction
 Step inside the visitor center to learn about the Cold War through authentic sites, exhibits, videos and personal stories.

★ **Headquarters: Wall, SD**
Year Founded: 1939
Fun Fact: West River Electric's oldest operating vehicle is from 1979.



DRIVE OUT TO A DRIVE-IN

Outdoor Movie Theaters Offer Old-Time Fun

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

It's one of the defining cultural behemoths of the 20th century. Load the family into the station wagon – or someone you fancy in a borrowed hot rod – and head over to the drive-in theater. You pick up popcorn and soda pop, tune your car stereo to the transmitter, and settle in for an unforgettable experience.

It all started in 1933, when Richard Hollingshead of Camden, New Jersey, began developing an accessible and comfortable way to bypass the confining indoor theater seats and allow moviegoers a way to enjoy a show from the comfort of their own vehicle.

The Smithsonian Magazine reports a peak of more than 4,000 American drive-in theaters in 1958. But with cities continuously expanding and the price of property increasing, most of them have closed in the time since. Today, it's estimated that fewer than 300 drive-in theaters remain.

But don't fret! If you're reading this magazine, there are still some nearby drive-in movie theater options for you and your family (or your date) to enjoy!

Midway Drive In – Miller, S.D.

In Miller, mid-May through Labor Day weekend is drive-in movie season. Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights are illuminated by the distant glow of the local drive-in movie theater.

Sarah Resel is one of the owners of the Midway Drive-In. Growing up in Miller, the drive-in was her weekend hangout and the site of so many cherished memories. Years later, that's still the case – just under slightly different circumstances.

A show is about to start at the Midway Drive In near Miller.
Photo submitted by Midway Drive In

"We pretty much don't have weekends during the summer," Resel said. "We're committed to being here with the theater. We all have full-time jobs; we always call this our community service."

Despite the hefty commitment, Resel says seeing people turnout from all over the country for an authentic drive-in experience makes it worthwhile.

"I think with us in our Miller community, we take it for granted that it's just here," Resel said. "It's crazy the support we get from other towns coming to our community."

Pheasant Drive-In – Mobridge, S.D.

Cam Wal Electric Cooperative members Jon and Jill Olson of Mobridge have experience with both indoor and outdoor theaters.

"The day-to-day prep is a little bit different," Jill said, explaining



The Pheasant Drive-In sits on the Missouri River hills near Mobridge.
Photo submitted by Pheasant Drive-In

the maintenance needed for the property and screen, along with weather surprises.

"I think weather is probably the number one issue," she continued. "We had a windstorm that came through Sunday [July 19] and caused some damage for us."

Even with the unexpected challenges, Jill said owning the drive-in theater is a positive experience, and on summer nights as people from near and far gather for a showing, she's reminded why she does it.

"It's a completely different vibe than sitting inside a dark theater," Jill said. "Parents do such a good job making it a fun experience, like bringing a pickup, backing it in and letting the kids sit in the back end. The other weekend, we had a family bring a bunch of blow-up air mattresses. The kids can talk and run back and forth – it just isn't your typical thing."

Hilltop Drive Inn Theater – Gregory, S.D.

"It's awesome," Rosebud Electric Cooperative member Dawn Boyer said when asked about running a drive-in movie theater.

"It's like owning a piece of the past while being in the present – and hopefully the future."

When Dawn was a kid, her mom worked at the ticket counter, sometimes taking Dawn along too. When she learned in 2018 the theater was looking for a new owner, it just seemed right.

"Two weeks later, I was running a theater I knew nothing about," Dawn laughed.

The drive-in is an 80-year-old landmark in Gregory County, and the oldest operating drive-in theater in the state. The age is catching up with it, Boyer said, explaining the heavy maintenance schedules necessary to keep the theater running.

Though the theater is becoming harder to operate, Boyer says the smiles on visitors' faces make it all worth it.

"The people who come through that have never seen a drive-in before – that's who we do it for," Boyer continued. "The expression on somebody's face when that big screen lights up at night is awesome."

Pheasant City Drive-In Theatre – Redfield, S.D.

Redfield's drive-in theater has been open continuously since 1953, and thanks to Dave and Stacey Marlow, it will continue for many years.

"We bought it at the time the industry was changing over to digital projectors," Stacey said, recalling the 2014 sale. "And [the previous owner] wasn't going to do it, so we went to him and asked if he'd like to sell it."

Since taking over, they've upgraded the display system again, installing a brighter, higher-contrast laser projector that allows shows to begin earlier and helps future-proof the theater.

While modern, the theater retains its original elements: the speaker poles are functional (Dave spends hours wiring each spring) and the propane popcorn maker satisfies hungry moviegoers.

"People tell us all the time, 'We are so glad you took this and have kept it going,'" Stacey said. "This is a part of our town we didn't want to lose, so we decided we were the ones to step up and save it."

Winner Drive In Theater – Winner, S.D.

In 2022, Rosebud Electric Cooperative members Austin and Jill Moser were looking for more space for their family. They finally found the perfect house on a nice chunk of land – with a catch.

"The movie theater was included," Jill said. "We thought, 'Why not?'"

The Mosers say running the drive-in theater with their three kids has been a good experience for the family and has given the kids an opportunity to work concessions.

During the Mosers' second season in operation, a windstorm damaged the screen, necessitating a lengthy rebuild. Luckily, the theater was able to reopen for the 2025 season.

"It's really great to see how many people still support drive-in movie theaters," Jill said. "There's not that many left in the country. We meet people from all over – we've had people from France come to the theater."

Verne Drive In – Luverne, Minn.

Half an hour east of Sioux Falls, the Verne Drive In welcomes hundreds of I-90 travelers Wednesday through Sunday each summer.

Owner and operator Doug Rozeboom said his goal is to provide an experience that is affordable, fun and unique for both locals and travelers.

"I don't want to say drive-in theaters are a thing of the past, but they're becoming it," Rozeboom said. "It's a unique experience because you can't just go anywhere to watch a movie outdoors on a big screen."

He continued, "Kids are able to run around and throw a football, so they can blow off some steam."

Rozeboom described the enthusiasm of moviegoers, recounting creative truck-bed setups, typically with lawn chairs, sofas or mattresses.

"For the Toy Story 5 premiere, someone had a tree-trimming truck, so they had the boom arm out," he laughed. "I was like, 'Huh, that's interesting.'"

Making the perfect setup is part of the drive-in movie theater experience!
Photo submitted by Verne Drive In



Winner's drive-in features a curved screen.
Photo by Kim Boyko



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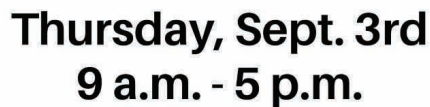
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SEPT. 25, 2026 | 11AM - 7PM



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605-393-1500
Info@westriver.coop

WALL OFFICE

1200 W 4th Ave
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SEPTEMBER 2026 | COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS 15

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SEPT. 3 (ONE DAY EVENT)
Touchstone Energy Cooperatives
at the South Dakota State Fair
Horticulture Park, State Fairgrounds
Huron, SD

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

SEPT. 1
Deadwood Trolley on the Trail
Deadwood, SD

SEPT. 1-6
20th Annual Sturgis Mustang Rally
Sturgis, SD
SturgisMustangRally.com

SEPT. 4-6
Arts & Crafts Fair & Farmers Market
Way Park
Custer, SD

SEPT. 6
Studebaker Car Show
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
South 6th St.
Custer, SD

SEPT. 8
Summer Music
6:30-8:30 p.m.
Harbach Park
Custer, SD

SEPT. 12
Salute to Ellsworth
3-8:30 p.m.
City Hall & Phelps Pond
Box Elder, SD
605-390-9341

SEPT. 11-13
Stratobowl Balloon Launch
Stratobowl Trailhead
Rapid City, SD

SEPT. 12
Farmers Market
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Eras Event Center
Hill City, SD

SEPT. 12-13
Harvest & Kuchen Festival
Delmont, SD
605-505-0535

SEPT. 13
Rails to Ails Bike Ride
Hill City, SD to Custer, SD

SEPT. 17-19
8th Annual Black Hills Plein Air Paint Out
Hill City, SD

SEPT. 18-20
Mickelson Trail Fall Trek

SEPT. 19
Fall Festival
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Everyone Welcome
Rapid Valley UMC
5103 Longview Rd.
Rapid City, SD

SEPT. 24-26
Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival
Custer State Park
Custer, SD

SEPT. 26
Black Hills Moon Walk
Mystic Ranger District
Willow Creek Trailhead
Custer, SD

SEPT. 27
Crazy Horse Memorial Volksmarch
7 a.m.
Crazy Horse Memorial
Custer, SD

OCT. 3
Pumpkin Train/ SoDak Vendor Showcase
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

OCT. 3-4
The Black Market
Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.,
Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-332-6004

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