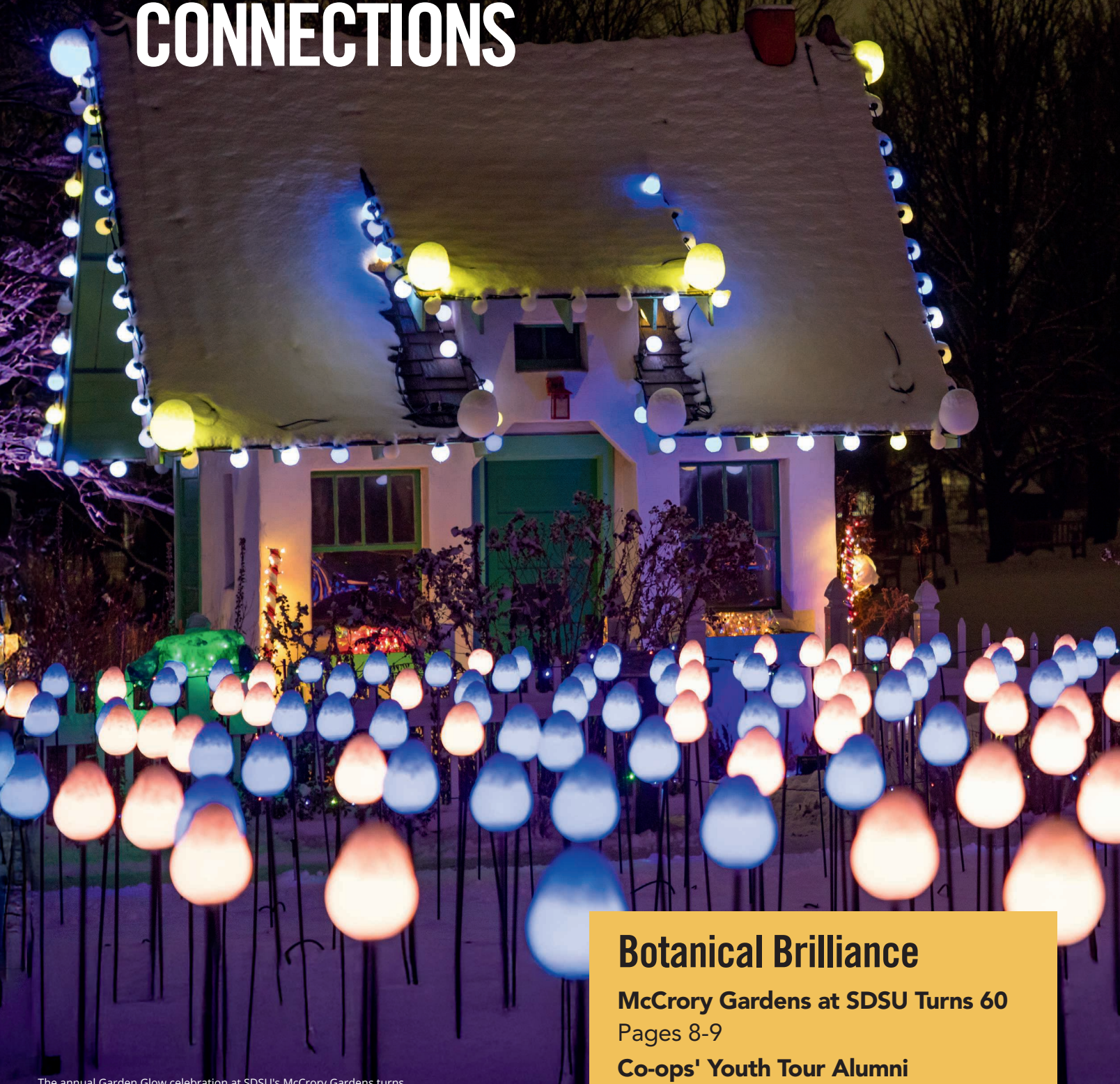


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Botanical Brilliance

McCrary Gardens at SDSU Turns 60

Pages 8-9

Co-ops' Youth Tour Alumni

Pages 12-13

The annual Garden Glow celebration at SDSU's McCrary Gardens turns the space into a winter wonderland with festive lights and decorations.

Photo by McCrary Gardens

Financial help available



Lorisa Rudolph
Chief Financial
Officer

This is my favorite time of year. While the holiday season is often a whirlwind of commitments, there's something special about the joy we infuse into the beginning of the long winter months. Strings of lights and decorations make the short days a little brighter. Time with friends and family makes our homes a little warmer.

This is the season of gratitude and generosity. Caring for our community is a core cooperative principle that Northern strives to embody every day, regardless of season. We're not here just to provide electricity. We are here to serve our members and the community. That's why Northern helps uplift new businesses, spotlight great people in our community, and contribute to local charities and nonprofit organizations.

We also know the holiday season can be a source of financial stress. On average, Americans spend almost a \$1,000 on holiday related purchases. Northern Electric offers various programs year-round that can help prevent surprise bills and offer rebates.

BUDGET BILLING

Budget billing allows members to stay on a budget by paying the same amount every month – no surprises! The member's energy usage from the previous year on our line is used to calculate the average monthly bill. No matter the amount used, more or less, the member's monthly bill will stay consistent.

While the members pay the same from month to month, the actual calculated month billings still vary. For this reason, at the end of the budget year the account is trued up. If the member's usage is less than predicted, the new budget for the next budget year will be reduced by the credit amount. If they use more than expected, the members can choose to either pay the difference or increase the new budget amount for the next year. Some regulations and exclusions apply depending on rate types.

PREPAY

Prepay allows members to pay for their power up front, by putting funds on their account before the electricity is used. Each day, the member's energy usage is subtracted from the prepaid amount. With

this payment option, members can put money toward their power costs whenever the member has extra. As the account reaches zero, the member is notified to make a payment or be subject to disconnection. A benefit to a prepaid account is a regular deposit is not required since the member is paying in advance. Some regulations and exclusions apply depending on rate types.

REBATE PROGRAMS

Northern has various rebate programs for residential members. To see if you qualify for these rebates or if you have additional questions, please call 605-225-0310 and ask to speak with Member Services.

- **Water Heater:** Residential homeowners may be eligible for a \$6/month bill credit for having their electric water heater connected to load managements system. In addition, members who replace their water heaters with a qualified life-time warranty unit can get a one-time rebate based on the gallon capacity of the new water heater. New water heaters must have a minimum capacity of 50 gallons. Replacing an existing electric water heater is \$8/gallon and converting from gas or propane water heater is \$10/gallon. Construction of a new home without an electric water heater qualifies for \$8/gallon and new homes with electric water heaters qualify for \$10/gallon. One water heater rebate can be redeemed per structure every 10 years.
- **Electric Heat:** Northern Electric Cooperative offers a reduced electric heat rate for 240-volt electric space heating equipment. This rate is lower than the normal kWh energy charge to encourage responsible use of electric heat and keep costs low for consumers during the coldest months of the year. The electric heat rate is calculated using a secondary meter - or submeter - that is installed by a Northern Electric member services representative.

DSS ENERGY ASSISTANCE

The South Dakota Department of Social Services (DSS) offers energy assistance for households that meet the income requirements. Funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) are distributed on a first-come basis. Eligibility and assistance amounts are based on the number of people in the home and income.

Going into the holiday season, we at Northern Electric hope the rest of your year is filled with joy, surrounded by loved ones. If you have any billing questions, please call 605-225-0310.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Nolan Wipf

Board of Directors

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info@northernelectric.coop

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Operations Manager: Jerry Weber

Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology:
Derek Gorecki

Communications Specialist: Kathy Haas

Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is the monthly publication for the members of Northern Electric Cooperative, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427. Families subscribe to Cooperative Connections as part of their electric cooperative membership. The purpose of Northern Electric Cooperative Connections is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on electric cooperative matters and better rural living.

Subscription information: Northern Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals postage paid at Bath, SD 57427.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Northern Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box 457, Bath, SD 57427; telephone (605) 225-0310; fax (605) 225-1684

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OCTOBER BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held Oct. 27, 2025, at Dacotah Bank in Aberdeen with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the Sept. 29, 2025, minutes and expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the Oct. 2, 2025, meeting. The next East River Board Meeting will be Nov. 6, 2025.

South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the legislative committee meeting held Oct. 14, 2025. The next SDREA Board meeting will be Dec. 1-2, 2025.

MANAGER'S REPORT

General Manager Char Hager's report to the board included the following items:

- Update on Rural Electric Economic Development revolving loan fund activities held on Oct. 1.
- Report on the East River MAC Meeting held on Oct. 1.
- Report on the East River Joint 2026 Budget Presentation held on Oct. 1.
- Report on the employee meeting on Oct. 8.
- Informed the board that the Northeast Rural Utilities Legislative Forum will

be held on Nov. 18 at Moccasin Creek Country Club.

- Reminded the board that the Mid-West Annual Meeting will be held Dec. 9-11, Denver, CO.
- Reminded the board that the East River New Director and New Employee Orientation will be held on Nov. 12, Madison, SD.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

- Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 21, 2025.
- Approved Work Order Inventories #25-09 \$558,344.29 and #25-09MC \$40,514.73 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved the 2026 Capital Budget.
- Appointed Todd Hettich as authorized representative and Nolan Wipf as alternate representative for the Mid-West Electric Annual Meeting, Dec. 9-11, Denver, CO.
- Held Executive Session

Talk to your director or co-op manager if you have questions on these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	September-25	September-24
kWh Sales.....	19,805,138.....	19,455,853
Electric Revenues	\$2,307,395.....	\$2,268,969
Total Cost of Service	\$2,395,167.....	\$2,332,812
Operating Margins.....	(\$87,772).....	(\$63,843)
Year to Date Margins.....	(\$64,146).....	\$411,117

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

SEPTEMBER 2025	1,118 kWh.....	\$182.72	\$0.1634
SEPTEMBER 2024	1,171 kWh.....	\$187.87	\$0.1604

Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 81.8% of NEC's total cost of Service.

So, a Power Line Fell On Your Car...

Driving accidents can happen quickly and easily in the winter months with slick, inconspicuous coatings of black ice, reduced visibility and other weather-related safety hazards.

The important thing is that you know what to do if you find yourself in a collision with a utility pole – because what you don't know can seriously injure or kill you.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is no fire...

Call 911 and remain in your vehicle until help arrives — this is where you are safest. Your vehicle may be insulating you from the electrical current. Once you leave the vehicle and place your foot on the ground, the electricity may take a path through your body and shock you.

Never go off looks; a downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

If someone attempts to assist you, warn them to stay back until the utility can de-energize the line.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is a fire...

If your vehicle has caught fire, you must proceed with extreme caution. Again, even if a line isn't sparking, it may still be energized.

To make your escape, jump from your vehicle to the ground, making sure your body is not touching the ground and vehicle simultaneously. Making contact with both would make your body a direct conduit, and you would be electrocuted.

For that same reason, do not assist anyone else exiting the vehicle or accept help exiting the vehicle.

Once you're on the ground, keep your feet together and hop or shuffle away from the scene, at least 40 feet away. As you move, your goal is for there to not be a voltage difference between your feet. You do not want one foot off of the ground while the other foot is making contact with the ground.

Call 911 and warn others to stay away from the scene.

If you come across downed power lines...

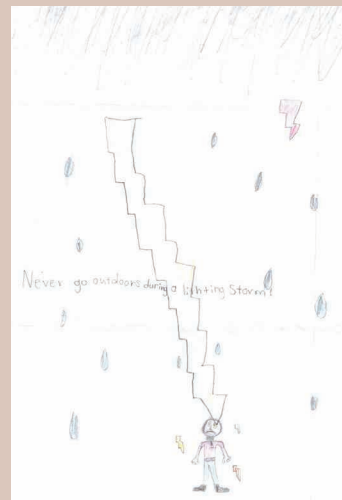
Stay no less than 40 feet away, as the ground can become energized. Never drive over downed power lines – not only do you risk electrocution and damage to your vehicle, but the added tension could pull down surrounding utility poles and create additional hazards.

If you're a first responder at the scene...

Always assume lines are energized. Contact the utility and wait for them to de-energize the lines and give you the all-clear.



"Never go outside during a lightning storm!"



**Josiah Krcil,
Age 9**

Josiah cautions readers on the dangers of going outside during a lightning storm. Great picture, Josiah! Josiah's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, 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.

Specialty SOUPS

CHEESEBURGER VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
2 lbs. block Velveeta cheese
(2) 12 oz. cans evaporated milk
(3) 10.5 oz. cans cream of mushroom soup
10.5 oz. can cream of celery soup
1 can French style green beans
1 can mixed vegetables
1 can diced potatoes

Method

Brown ground beef. Cut Velveeta into cubes. Put all ingredients into slow cooker. Cook on low six to eight hours, stirring halfway through or cook on high two hours, and then on low another two hours, stirring halfway through.

Wendy Thorson
Northern Electric

DUMPLING SOUP

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tsps. sesame oil
1 cup carrots, shredded
5 green onions, thinly sliced (whites and greens separated)
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 cup white miso paste
6 cups chicken vegetable broth, divided
1 lb. frozen mini dumplings
3 cups baby spinach
3 tsps. soy sauce (plus more to serve)
Hot sauce or chili oil to serve

Method

In a large pot, heat the vegetable oil and sesame oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, green onion whites, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften, two to three minutes. In a small bowl, combine the miso paste with 1/2 cup broth, whisking until the miso is dissolved. Add the miso mixture and remaining broth to the pot and bring to a boil.

Add the dumplings and bring to a simmer. Heat until the dumplings are heated through, three to five minutes. Stir in the spinach, cooking until the greens are wilted, one to two minutes. Add the soy sauce and green onion greens.

Serve hot with hot sauce or chili oil, and extra soy sauce.

Susan Forma
Union County Electric

PHEASANT CHOWDER

Ingredients:

2 pheasants (thighs and breasts: or only breasts if preferred)
4 celery stalks, sliced
1/2 lb. bacon strips, sliced
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 cups chicken broth
4 medium size Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 cloves garlic, diced
5 tsps. flour
2 cups half-and-half
1 cup parmesan cheese
Salt and Pepper

Method

Put cubed potatoes in a separate pot, cover with the chicken broth, and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until they are soft.

Slice the pheasant meat, across grain into 1/4 to 1/2 inch strips.

Cut bacon slices into small pieces and put in a Dutch oven on medium heat. Add diced celery and onion and cook until the bacon and celery are cooked through and onions are transparent. Add the garlic and pheasant. The meat should cook quickly because of the small sized pieces. Once meat is cooked, add the flour one tablespoon at a time while stirring the mixture, thoroughly coating the vegetables and meat.

Add the potatoes and broth from the separate pot. Once incorporated, stir in the half-and-half, then stir in the parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. This chowder is ready to eat once heated through, or you can let it simmer on low heat. Flavors should continue to meld.

Nick Kvernevig
Lake Region Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

RATE INCREASE EXPECTED IN JANUARY 2026

Basin Electric, NEC's wholesale power producer announces 9.9% rate increase

Northern Electric Cooperative is part of a Cooperative network. We buy wholesale power for you, our members, from East River Cooperative, a South Dakota transmission cooperative. East River, in turn, gets their power from a generation cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative. At each level, the same cooperative principles are upheld: providing affordable, reliable, and safe electricity to the member owners.

Rising costs have been a concern for electric utilities across the nation. The power sector has seen increasing infrastructure costs as well as explosive growth in demand for electricity. As discussed in the October 2025 issue, power supply makes up 64% of Northern Electric's costs and represents the largest portion of our uncontrollable expenses. Increasing costs of producing electricity and maintaining infrastructure means Northern Electric will have to increase rates in order to keep supplying

you with power.

While nothing is set as of yet, we want to be as transparent as possible during this process. We are committed to providing open communication about the rate increase and timing. At this time, Northern Electric's board and staff are focused on limiting the additional financial burden. Unfortunately, we will not be able to avoid a rate increase.

BASIN INCREASE

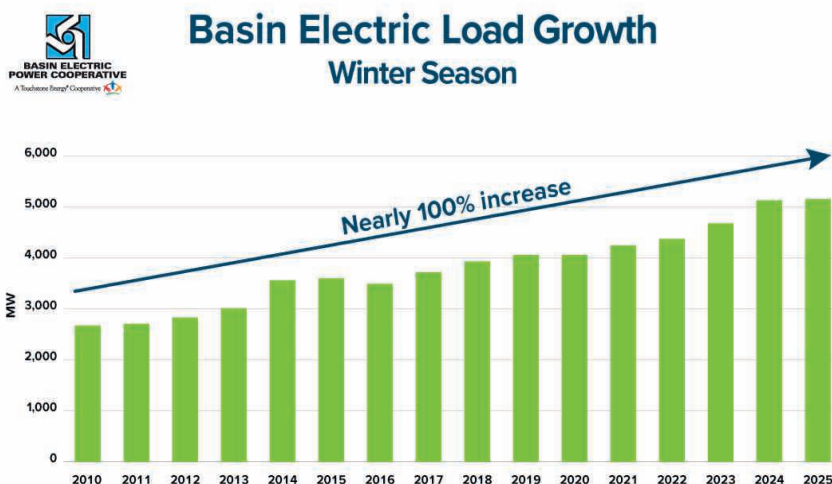
Recently, Basin Electric Power Cooperative has announced a 9.9% rate increase to their wholesale purchasers, which is approximately an additional \$6 per megawatt-hour. Basin delivers power to 114 cooperatives across nine states. This increase will allow Basin to invest in new generation infrastructure, as well as existing plants, lines, and substations to ensure reliability and efficiency. Basin Electric cites four main reasons for the increase:

• Higher Demand for Electricity:

Basin's load growth is projected to increase at 2.5% per year for the next decade, well above the national average. To serve this growth, Basin is investing in new generation and transmission projects, such as Pioneer Generation Station and Bison Generation Station. Pioneer Generation Station will add 580 MW from natural gas-fired generation, and Bison Generation Station will add 1,490 MW in natural gas-fired generation. The cost to build and run generation stations is higher than ever. Basin's current generation fleet has an average cost of \$800/kW to construct and future building costs are predicted to be \$2,700/kW.

• **Meet SPP Requirements:** Southwest Power Pool (SPP) is requiring Basin Electric to have higher capacity of dispatchable and dependable power. In essence, SPP is requiring Basin to build extra transmission and generation above and beyond what is needed for existing members and anticipated growth, in case of an emergency. Think back to the unexpected winter outages in February 2021. Extreme cold combined with generating plant outages meant there wasn't enough electricity being generated to meet the demand, resulting in outages across the nation. Some of Basin's upcoming projects will help fulfill the requirements. SPP is also requiring Basin to complete a new 160-mile transmission line for additional system reliability.

• **Investments in Reliability:** Basin needs to make significant investments in existing facilities to ensure ongoing reliability. Rising costs have made it more expensive to maintain and build infrastructure. Currently, it costs Basin



an average of \$400,000 to construct a mile of transmission line and future costs are predicted to skyrocket to \$2 million/mile.

- **Commodity Price Variability:**

Fluctuations in commodity prices affect the cost of fuel for Basin Electric, as well as sales revenue at its subsidiaries, such as Dakota Gasification Company.

The load growth and SPP requirements are not due to Artificial Intelligence Data Centers. Basin has created the Large Load Commercial Program that would require data centers or other large loads to help pay for the cost of supplying power, including paying for infrastructure and generation.

EAST RIVER INCREASE

The Basin increase will raise the East River wholesale power rates. This increase to East River will impact Northern Electric's wholesale power costs starting in January.

NORTHERN INCREASE

Northern Electric staff and board

are committed to keeping rates as low as possible. We understand the hardship any rate increase can place on our members. Unfortunately, most of Northern Electric's costs are uncontrollable.

Every dollar you pay goes directly toward providing reliable, affordable, safe electricity. As shown in the graphic below, out of every dollar you pay for electricity, 64 cents go toward paying the wholesale power costs. As a cooperative, we utilize loans to spread out the cost of infrastructure to everyone who will use it, including past, present, and future members. This way, one generation of users aren't solely responsible for paying for infrastructure that will power members for 30-50 years.

That leaves only nine cents cover all the administrative and general costs not covered elsewhere, such as billing, building maintenance, utility costs, safety education, and employee salaries. Maintaining the current grid, restoring power outages, and replacing unreliable infrastructure uses the last six cents per dollar. It would be detrimental to the

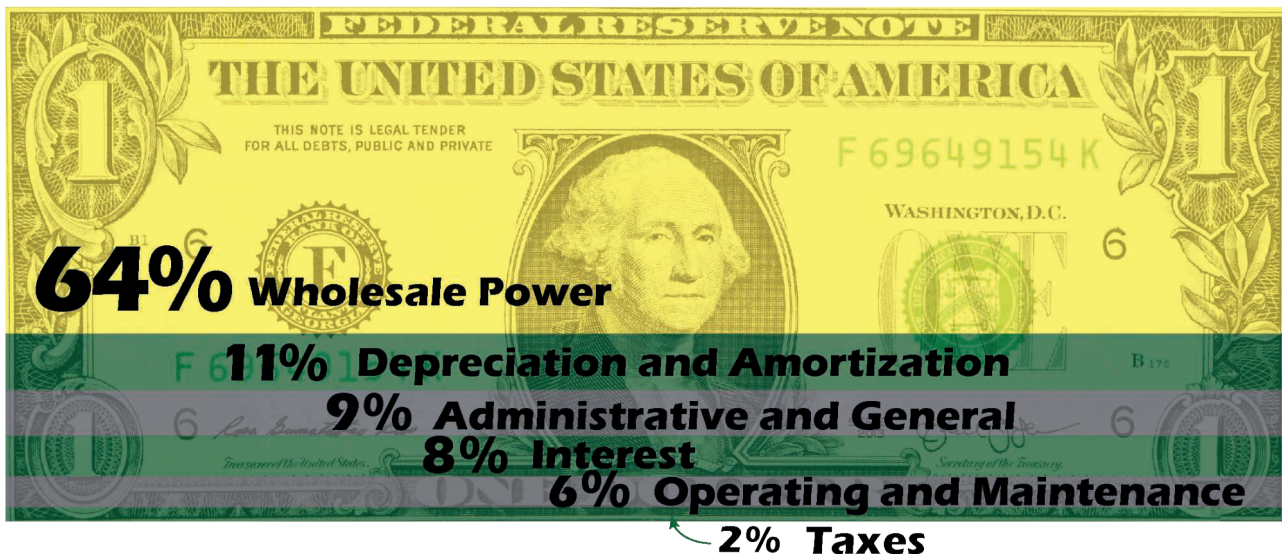
cooperative in the long run to try to save money by removing jobs, ignoring old infrastructure, or delaying upgrades.

We understand rate adjustments are difficult, especially back-to-back. Northern Electric board and staff do not take this decision lightly. The board and staff will continue to make financial decisions that allow Northern Electric to continue providing members with the power they need for years to come. Basin initially requested a 20% increase for the coming year. Distribution cooperatives in the Basin network negotiated to lessen the impact by spreading the rate impact over two years, resulting in a 9.9% increase instead. Basin may be asking for another increase in 2027.

While Northern Electric has not determined the 2026 rate as of yet, the change will most likely go into effect in January. Once the 2026 rate has been determined, we will notify our members as soon as possible through our various communication channels, including bill messages, website, social media, and Cooperative Connections.

NEC COSTS BREAKDOWN

The majority of each dollar paid to NEC goes toward wholesale power costs.





During the annual Garden Glow event, McCrory Gardens in Brookings is transformed into a winter wonderland.
Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

NATURE GROWS & GLOWS AT MCCRORY GARDENS

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Tucked among the towering pines at the busy corner of 6th Street and 22nd Avenue in Brookings, S.D., you'll find a little plot of botanical paradise.

For 60 years, South Dakota State University's McCrory Gardens has not only served as a mecca for horticulture enthusiasts, but also a versatile, community-focused space for weddings, workshops and other seasonal festivities.

"Here, our mission is connecting people and plants through education, research, discovery and enjoyment of the natural and built landscape," said Lisa Marotz, director of McCrory Gardens.

Working toward that mission, Marotz and staff keep a schedule full of activities for SDSU students and community members with a variety of seasonal events: a spring-time syrup-making workshop where participants are taught to tap trees; the summer-time TuliPalooza where more than 15,000 tulip bulbs are planted in a colorful display; and the family-focused fall festival during Hobo Day weekend featuring horse-drawn hay rides and food trucks.

"There really is always something to see — just maybe not always what you expect," said Kathryn Bowar, an SDSU ag science

student and McCrory Gardens intern from Hoven, S.D.

Bowar says the space is increasingly popular for students looking to take a break from busy campus life to study, hang out with friends, or just enjoy time alone in a tranquil, outdoor environment surrounded by nature.

"I grew up as a ranch kid and adjusting to city life was overwhelming at times," Bowar added. "Coming to McCrory Gardens was a breath of fresh air and helped me recenter in the beauty of nature."

The garden's hallmark event is the regionally renowned Garden Glow, which transforms the dormant grounds into a winter wonderland with bright and festive Christmas lights and decorations.

"Garden Glow is a way that we are able to bring thousands of people to a botanical garden in South Dakota in December," Marotz said with a laugh. "We started out in 2015 when about 51 people came. Last year we were up to about 13,000, so it's grown a lot in popularity."

At the upcoming Garden Glow, visitors will meander through the reindeer meadow, travel across the life-size "Candy Land" board, warm up with a stop at the hot cocoa hut and peek inside Santa's summer-time home while exploring all the garden has to offer.

And there's been a lot of change over the garden's 60-year history, from new flowerbeds and gardens to patios and memorials.

But despite that, Marotz says she and her staff work to ensure the original vision of the garden and the contributions of those who worked before her are preserved.

Rather than tearing out and replacing sections of the gardens, the staff update and add to the space, with each parcel of the 25-acre garden bearing the fingerprints of past enthusiasts who cultivated, researched and appreciated the flora that make the Midwest beautiful.

"We have visitors comment that they now know what heaven looks like," Marotz said. "That's what people feel here: sanctuary and peace."



Lisa Marotz – McCrory Gardens Director since 2016 – with intern Kathryn Bowar, who is beginning her third fall working at the garden.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

With bright, blooming flowers, McCrory Gardens is the perfect stop for migrating butterflies and other helpful pollinators.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Many area visitors recognize this cottage as the 1928 Lawson Gas Station in Lake Preston, which was moved to McCrory Gardens in 1996 and renovated in 2024.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Each cactus in the cacti garden is dug up each fall and moved into a greenhouse on campus before being replanted in the spring.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



The 1991 Sioux Quartzite rock garden and 2013 waterfall are a favorite fixture in the garden — and the site of numerous summertime marriage proposals.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



A labyrinth of pathways and trails lined with mature trees and vines give garden visitors a sense of exploration — even though they're right in the middle of Brookings.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



During the Garden Glow event, the East Terrace Lawn and Gazebo becomes The Enchanted Forest. Marotz notes this was the site of the first Garden Glow in 2015 — miniscule compared to today's expansive decorating.

This winter, Garden Glow is open 5-9 p.m. from Dec. 6, 2025 through Jan. 6, 2026.

Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

60TH ANNIVERSARY THE MCCRORY STORY

*Photos submitted by
McCrory Gardens*

1964

The S.D. Legislature approves funds to construct Bailey Rotunda and Wagner Hall on the site of SDSU's Horticulture-Forestry Gardens. Samuel A. McCrory, head of the horticulture department at SDSU, advocated for a research garden filled with S.D. flora that would also serve as a learning center for students. McCrory passed away March 10, 1964.



1966

The new horticulture garden is formally dedicated "McCrory Gardens" to honor the late department head.



1977

McCrory Gardens receives the prestigious All-American Display Garden Award. The Garden is now designated to receive and showcase winning plant selections each year.



1979

McCrory Gardens is named on a list of the top 10 small gardens in the U.S. by ARCO Travel Club Magazine.



1988

The first annual Garden Party is held to fund the maintenance and operating costs of the garden.



1994

The late Gov. George Mickelson is honored in the newly-constructed Mickelson Grove.



2012

The new Education & Visitor Center is dedicated.



2025

McCrory Gardens celebrates its 60th anniversary!



LINEMAN CAREER SPARKS UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

Kathy Haas

khaas@northernelectric.coop

In his 35 years with Northern Electric Cooperative, Tyler Marken's job has taken him all over the Midwest and even overseas. Early in his career, Tyler went to Sudan once and twice to the Dominican Republic to help bring electricity to communities devastated by natural disasters and civil war. He's traveled to Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, and around South Dakota helping restore power after winter storms. As a journeyman lineman, Tyler has done a variety of jobs at Northern in addition to lineman, including dispatching, staking, ESRI/GIS-based mapping, and acquiring easements. His career taught him how to be disciplined, how to have courage, and how to have pride in his accomplishments, he said.

Each travel opportunity was a unique experience and had its own rewards and hardships. While most places in the United States use the same or similar infrastructure, the systems are different, Tyler said. Since 1990, electric providers have seen major changes and improvements in infrastructure and gear. While some cooperatives had made the jump to newer technology, such as electronic instead of hydraulic powered equipment, others were still using analog devices. In addition, Tyler traveled to help during times of duress, which meant stressed out communities.

"The first thing is safety, though," Tyler said. "When we go on a storm job, we have to restore their electricity safely."

Snow, wind, and ice made working with unfamiliar equipment even more difficult on storm assistance jobs. Most of the work linemen do is in the right of way, aka the ditch. After a winter storm, the ditches are filled with snow. The linemen are then trying to work safely in deep snow that hinders the equipment.

"Some of the equipment we have can reach from on the road, but some of it you have to be right by the pole," Tyler said.



TOP: Tyler, center, poses with the group of men he helped train to become linemen in Sudan. *Courtesy photo from Tyler.*

ABOVE: Tyler, far right, stands with his fellow linemen in front of the yellow bucket trucks that NEC used in the 1990s.



In Sudan, Tyler, right, helped teach local men how to install electric infrastructure. Courtesy photo from Tyler

Having four-wheel drive vehicles is a very valuable resource, Tyler said. When he started at Northern Electric, the bucket trucks were two-wheel drive and crews had to put chains on the wheels for extra traction on slippery roads. Those trucks had manual transmissions, and most did not have air conditioning. Now the bucket trucks look less like regular pickup trucks, and more like what they are: specialized equipment with built-in safety measures. The hardest winter jobs were the storms that struck between February and March, he said.

"You get the weather event that makes it warm enough to rain to form ice, but then it gets cold and everything you touch is covered in ice or snow," Tyler said. "If the line falls down, then it usually gets covered up with snow and you're constantly digging for it and trying to find it. Getting the wire up on the overhead is a battle because it's full of ice."

Helping in other countries had unique challenges as well. In some places, it wasn't just fixing damaged infrastructure. It was building an electric system from the ground up,

including getting community buy-in for the cooperative principles and teaching residents how to construct and maintain the grid. In addition, Tyler had to overcome the language barrier.

"In the Dominican Republic everything was Spanish. I speak no Spanish. In Africa, it was Swahili or Arabic or German or Italian or French, and I speak none of those," Tyler said.

The jobs in other countries that Tyler went on were organized by National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International. Northern Electric Cooperative is a member of NRECA, which upholds the same cooperative principles. Since 1962, NRECA International has established more than 250 electric utilities and cooperatives in 54 countries.

"The NRECA sent a posting looking for linemen who could climb, because there's no equipment over there. And for people who had discipline in adverse living conditions and extraordinary working conditions. So, I volunteered," Tyler said.

Through his career, one thing has stood out the most: the members. Tyler has had the opportunity to meet and

connect with people from all walks of life. As a lineman, Tyler is constantly engaged with the public. From answering questions about service calls and easements, to addressing concerns and complaints, linemen are constantly engaging with the membership, he said.

"Probably the fondest memories I have are all the times dispatch called at 2 o'clock in the morning, asking us to go turn a member's lights back on," Tyler said.

Although being woken up in the middle of the night doesn't sound like a fond memory, Tyler said it's because of the trust placed in him by the members.

"It's a fond memory because, yes, I had to get up in the middle of the night, but in their darkest hour, they called us," Tyler said.

Even with 35 years at the same company under his belt, Tyler doesn't plan to retire for at least a couple more years. His son, Eilert, is following in Tyler's footsteps. Eilert recently graduated from Michell Technical Institute and is working toward Journeyman Lineman at NorthWestern Energy in Aberdeen.

"I want to still be in the occupation when he gets his journeyman card," Tyler said.



Tyler pounds in a stake to mark where underground cable will go.



The 2006 Youth Tour group takes a photo on the Albert Einstein Memorial in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan

YOUTH TODAY. LEADERS TOMORROW.

South Dakota's Youth Tour Continues to Inspire Leadership Years Later

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdeca.coop

Each summer, a new group of South Dakota teens will board a plane for Washington, D.C., full of excitement for the trip of a lifetime. They're part of the South Dakota Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, a weeklong experience that connects rural students to the people, places and ideas that shape our country.

The Youth Tour began after a 1957 speech by former Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, who encouraged electric cooperatives to send young people to the Capitol so they could "see what the flag stands for." Since South Dakota sent

its first group in 1963, more than 1,300 students have made the trip.

During the trip, students visit landmarks like Ford's Theater, the National Archives and the U.S. Capitol. They meet members of Congress, make friends from across the country and see firsthand how decisions made in Washington affect people back home.

For many, the most meaningful part of the trip happens long after they return. The experience lights a spark that shapes how they view their communities and their roles within them.

Two of those alumni, Kevin Larsen and Andi Fouberg, still carry lessons from their Youth Tour experiences today.

Kevin Larsen

Kevin Larsen remembers applying for Youth Tour in 2006 as a junior from Howard High School to represent Central Electric Cooperative.

"I've always been a history nut," he said. "My parents, like a lot of farmers, weren't made of money. This was a chance to go see the nation's capital, and I figured, why not apply?"

Once he decided to apply, he approached his high school English teacher, who helped him polish his essay, which landed on the desk of longtime Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen. "Lo and behold, the legendary Ken Schlimgen gives me a call," Larsen said. "And the rest is history."

Larsen now serves as the public information officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society in Pierre. He is also active in local organizations and community leadership roles, serving as president of the Pierre Kiwanis Club, incoming exalted ruler for the Pierre Elks Lodge, and in 2025

he ran for a position on the Pierre City Commission, only to come short by a handful of votes.

“These types of trips instill a passion for civics, and I think they mean a lot more for rural South Dakota kids,” Larsen said. “I’m from the middle of nowhere, Canova, South Dakota – a lot of people don’t even know where that is. The nearest town from our farm was six miles away, and that town is 100 people if everybody’s home. I think the opportunity to travel means more coming from somebody that was raised on a farm.”

He laughs when he thinks back to the trip. He keeps in touch with one of his roommates from that week. “You build connections you don’t expect,” he said. “One of the guys I roomed with ended up being a friend of my wife’s, and years later he attended our wedding.”

Larsen also credits his former Youth Tour Director, Brenda Kleinjan, for making the trip a success. “She was so passionate about the places we visited,” he said. “We weren’t just seeing historic monuments; we were learning what they meant.”

For Larsen, that week in D.C. helped set him on a lifelong path of leadership. “That trip really instilled that leadership ability and finding that inner voice to apply for something you might not think would ever happen,” he said. “When I sent off the essay in high school, I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams that I’d get an all-expenses-paid trip to D.C. We even ate well, too.”

Andi Fouberg

When Andi Fouberg applied for the Youth Tour, she was a high school student from Letcher. “I’m pretty sure my best



Kevin Larsen
2006 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo



Andi Fouberg
1994 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo

friend went the year before, and I thought that seemed pretty cool,” she said.

Also representing Central Electric Cooperative, she joined the 1994 Youth Tour, a year she remembers vividly for an unusual reason.

“The night before we left was when O.J. Simpson went on the white Ford Bronco run through Los Angeles,” she said with a laugh. “We watched it on TV in the hotel in Sioux Falls because we met there and stayed the night before we all flew out together.”

The trip instilled an early passion for civic life in Fouberg. After college, she moved to Washington, D.C., and spent 10 years as Sen. John Thune’s communications director.

“Youth Tour was what prompted me to want to be in D.C. at some point,” Fouberg said.

While working for Sen. Thune, Fouberg would regularly meet new Youth Tour students visiting the Capitol every year in June.

“I’d see these students walking the same halls I once toured, wide-eyed and curious, and I’d think, that was me,” she said.

Now, Fouberg leads the South Dakota State University Alumni Association as its president and CEO. She credits that early trip with showing her what public service and connection can look like.

“The trip had an impact on me wanting to be out there and be part of that environment,” she said. “It made me want to be part of the process and feel like you are part of the government machine, but in a way that helps people.”

Reflecting on it now, she believes the experience gives students from small towns something they might not otherwise see.

“Growing up in Letcher or any small community in South Dakota, I don’t know that civic engagement is something you naturally imagine yourself doing without exposure from something like Youth Tour,” she said. “Without exposure to Washington D.C. through something like that, I probably would not have pursued that path. It all had its roots in Youth Tour.”



Kevin Larsen (left) takes a photo with Youth Tour friends at the FDR Memorial in 2006.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan



Journeyman lineman Collin Gades, center, shows one of the items up for auction to potential bidders.

ACROSS SD, EMPLOYEES OF ELECTRIC COOPS DONATE TO GOOD CAUSE

Kathy Haas

khaas@northernelectric.coop

At their core, cooperatives are about community. They're about caring for each other and working in tandem toward a common goal. Across the state, electric cooperative employees have embodied those values as they pool resources for the Line Patrol Fund – a charity that benefits electric cooperative workers and families.

The fund provides financial assistance throughout South Dakota to electric co-op employees and their families for serious injuries and illnesses, natural disaster relief, or other financial hardships. In 2025, 18 families received assistance from the South

Dakota non-profit organization, totaling a little over \$94,000. Over 300 families have been helped since the charity was established in 2003 and distributed nearly \$900,000.

“While it’s heartbreaking to see the requests that come in, it’s incredibly rewarding to know that our co-ops have a charitable organization ready to help,” said Jessie Tucker, West Central Electric Cooperative Manager of Members Services. Jessie served on the Line Patrol Charity committee for several years.

A variety of fundraisers have been held by cooperative employees across the state including golf tournaments, auctions, 5K runs, raffles, bowling tournaments, and bake sales, leading up to the main event in September: the Line Patrol Charity Ride. Former Northern Electric General Manager Jim Moore was one of the original organizers of the Charity Ride and still tries to attend every year. The Charity

Since 2003, Line
Patrol Charity has
helped over
300
families.

In 2025,
\$94,000
of assistance was
given to 18 families.

Ride rotates between electric cooperatives throughout the state, and the area electric cooperatives decide the route and entertainment. This year, the Charity Ride was in Yankton on Sept. 6. The ride started early in the morning, followed by dinner and a big auction.

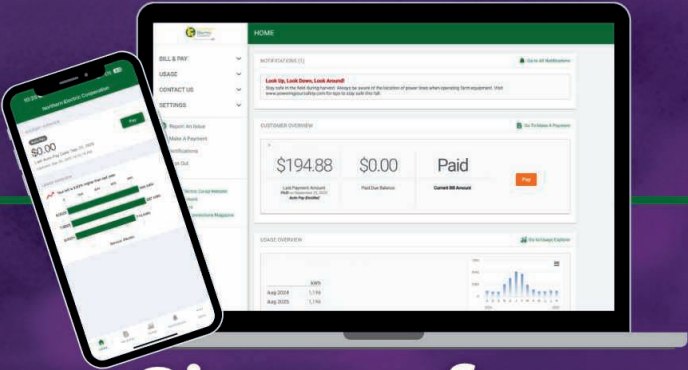
“The Charity Ride is an incredible event. It’s a great opportunity to see co-op employees in action and to witness how willing they are to come together to raise funds for such a meaningful cause,” Jessie said. “It’s always a blast — attend once, and you’ll want to come back every year!”

This year, the Charity Ride raised around \$52,000. There were employees from 25 cooperatives from across South Dakota at the 2025 Charity Ride, along with vendors who helped sponsor the event. Other fundraisers and donations throughout 2025 brought in an additional \$103,000.

Northern Electric Cooperative employees have hosted an internal fundraiser almost every year since 2009. Employees, former employees, board members, and community members have raised over \$60,000 for the Line Patrol Fund over those 14 years. This year, Northern employees held a variety of fundraisers, such as lunches, cookie swaps, and auctions. Northern employees and board members donated items to bid on live or in silent auctions, as well as the opportunity to see a coworker take a whip cream pie to the face. On average, each attendee donated a little over \$175 to support each other during times of crisis.

“Line Patrol truly reflects the cooperative spirit — like a family, always willing to support one another. You won’t find a more meaningful organization,” said Jessie.

We would like to thank everyone for supporting Northern Electric’s charity auction and the Line Patrol Fund. These funds have directly benefited many families, locally and across the state.



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NorthernElectric.Coop

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Enter your account number, last name, and email address.

Manage your account

Pay your bill, set up automatic payments, and view your daily and monthly electric usage.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



NOV. 25-DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m. (holidays included)
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

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. 27
Community Thanksgiving
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Groton Community Center
Groton, SD

NOV. 28
Snacks With Santa
2-4 p.m.
Hill City Center
Hill City, SD

NOV. 29
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 5-6
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-890-2974

DEC. 6
Hometown Christmas
All Day
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656

DEC. 6
Parade of Lights
6 p.m.
Redfield, SD
605-472-0965

DEC. 6
KJAM Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Madison, SD
605-256-4514

DEC. 6
Holly Jolly HoeDown on Ice
Fort Pierre Expo Center
Pierre, SD
605-289-1334

DEC. 7
KCBA Hometown Christmas
10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

DEC. 13
Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Aberdeen, SD

DEC. 14
A Poker Alice Christmas
2 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

DEC. 14
Shaun Johnson Big Band Experience Holiday Show
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

DEC. 15
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
7-9 p.m.
H.S. Performing Arts Center
Mitchell, SD

JAN. 22
Gentleman's Quartet: Instrumental Quartet with Erin Shields
7 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 21
Bellator Titans Casino Night Fundraiser
6-11 p.m.
Blackjack, Scorpion (horse) Races, Find the Titan, Live Auction & More
City Lights Bar & Event Center
Aberdeen, SD

FEB. 22
C Street Brass
4 p.m.
Johnson Fine Arts Center
Aberdeen, SD

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.