

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Get Out & Vote!

It's Your Civic Duty

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Upcoming Energy Projects

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Ways to stay involved



Kathy Haas
Communications
Specialist

We're creeping up on halfway through the year. How are your New Year's resolutions doing?

Mine have hit a couple bumps. This is about the time that I start making changes, concessions really, to my goals for the year. Does it really matter how fast I run (shuffle, really; jog, at best) a 5k this year? ...Does it need to be a 5k? ... What size hill constitutes a hike?

If one of your resolutions was to be more active in your cooperative, there are a couple of opportunities coming up!

Director Nominations: April 24

Want to help steer the Cooperative? Three districts have Directors with expiring terms:

District 4 — Josh Larson, Treasurer

District 6 — Kirk Schaunaman

District 7 — William (B.J.) Hansen

All three incumbent directors are eligible to run again.

Northern uses a petition process to nominate directors. A petition must be circulated for each candidate, signed by any 10 or more cooperative members in the candidate's district, and returned to our temporary headquarters by end of day on April 24.

Petitions are available at our temporary headquarters: 2914 Industrial Ave, Aberdeen. For more information scan the QR code, visit NorthernElectric.coop, or call the office at 605-225-0310.



Annual Meeting: June 10

Come for the cookies, stay for the updates. Northern's annual meeting will be June 10 at

6 p.m. This will be Northern's 78th annual meeting! The theme is "A Legacy of Service: Celebrating 78 Years."

Similar to last year, we will have two locations set up for the meeting. Members can choose which location they would like to attend:

- **Holum Expo Building**, Brown County Fairgrounds — *Live event*
- **Northern Electric Service Center**, 17140 N Highway 281, Redfield — *Livestreamed*

At the annual meeting, members can expect updates from Northern's board of directors and CEO/general manager, as well as our power providers. There will also be prizes, activities for adults and children at each location, and, of course, snacks!

Youth Excursion: July 20-22

South Dakota Rural Electric Youth Excursion is open to freshman, sophomore, and juniors whose parents or guardians are members of Northern Electric. On this three-day experience, students learn how the electricity they use every day is produced. Students will tour Freedom Coal Mine, Antelope Valley Station Power Plant, and Great Plains Synfuel Plant. The cost of transportation, lodging, meals, and entertainment are provided.

The deadline to apply is June 1. Apply at NorthernElectric.Coop/Youth Excursion or fill out and return the application on page 15 of this issue.

Pancake Breakfast: July 30

Fresh-made pancakes, coffee, and sausage are the best way to start off an early morning! Northern Electric employees and board members will be preparing and serving breakfast starting at 7 a.m. at the Spink County Fairgrounds on July 30. The annual Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast coincides with Spink County Achievement Days and is open to the public. This way, 4-H kids and attendees have a good breakfast before a day full of exhibits.

NEC offices will be closed on May 25 in observance of Memorial Day

— To report an outage, please call 605-225-0310 —

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Nolan Wipf

Board of Directors

- Todd Hettich - Vice President
- Scott Sperry - Secretary
- Josh Larson - Treasurer
- Thomas Lambert
- B.J. Hansen
- Kirk Schaunaman
- Bruce Schumacher, Jr.
- Mike Traxinger

CEO/General Manager: Char Hager
info@northernelectric.coop

Chief Financial Officer: Lorisa Rudolph

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.

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MARCH BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held March 19, 2026, at the Agtegra Cooperative building with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the Feb. 27, 2026, 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 March 5, 2026, meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported that the next SDREA board meeting will be held March 26-27, 2026. Directors Todd Hettich and Josh Larson reported on the 2026 NRECA PowerXchange/TechAdvantage meeting held March 6-11, 2026, in Nashville, TN.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Reported on the Rural Electric Development (REED) Board Meeting held on Feb. 3, 2026.
- Reported on the East River MAC Meeting held on Feb. 3, 2026.
- Reported on the employee meeting held on March 1, 2026.

- Reported that Landon Johnson had been hired to replace Kenny Swanson on the line crew.

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 Thursday, April 23, 2026.
- Approved Work Order Inventory #26-02 for \$76,850.02 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved 21 estate requests for out of order capital credit retirements totaling \$29,898.47.
- Nominated Director Todd Hettich as a candidate for the RESCO South Dakota Board Seat.
- Approved updates to Section 5 of the Electric Tariff Rules and Regulations.
- Approved updates to Third-Party Irrigation Management System Rebates.
- Approved the authorization and execution of the loan documents with Cobank.
- Held Executive Session.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

	February-26	February-25
kWh Sales.....	26,558,873	31,496,351
Electric Revenues	\$3,062,592	\$2,886,416
Total Cost of Service	\$2,983,170	\$2,984,541
Operating Margins.....	\$79,423	(\$98,125)
Year to Date Margins.....	\$285,741	\$64,253
RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL		
FEBRUARY 2026	2,502 kWh.....	\$303.16
FEBRUARY 2025	3,318 kWh.....	\$303.69
Wholesale power costs, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 86.3% of total cost of Service.		

ELECTRICAL SAFETY MONTH: TIPS FOR PRIORITIZING SAFETY

At your local cooperative, Electrical Safety Month is recognized every May, but the importance of practicing safety year-round is always emphasized. From co-op crews to the consumer-members served, everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity that powers daily life, but it can also be dangerous — something your local cooperative understands firsthand from working with it 365 days a year.

Safety is more than a catchphrase. Cooperative leadership recognizes the responsibility to keep employees safe while also helping protect members and the broader community. That's why your local cooperative hosts safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year, highlighting the dangers of electricity. These demonstrations often include emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines, along with discussions about the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the widespread use of electrical devices, tools and appliances, here are a few practical electrical safety tips:

Watch for frayed wires. Power cords can become damaged from age, heavy use or excessive current flow. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them to avoid shock hazards.

Avoid overloading circuits. Circuits can only handle a limited amount of electricity. Running too many devices on one circuit can lead to overheating and potential fire risk.

Label circuit breakers. Understanding your home's electrical system can help prevent overloads. If your home is more than 40 years old and you plan to install large appliances, contact a qualified electrician.

Use extension cords properly. Never plug one extension cord into another. "Daisy chaining" can cause overheating and fire hazards. Do not exceed the cord's wattage, and avoid using extension cords as permanent solutions. If additional outlets are needed, consult a licensed electrician.

Parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk with children

about playing it safe and smart around electricity, including staying aware of overhead power lines near outdoor play areas.

Providing a reliable energy supply 24/7, 365 days a year is a top priority. Equally important is keeping the community safe around electricity.

Contact your local cooperative for additional electrical safety tips or to request a safety demonstration at a school or upcoming community event.



"Do not fly kites by power lines!"

Casen Yuker

Casen cautions readers not to fly kites around power lines. Thank you for sharing your picture, Casen! Casen's parents are Lance and Tarah Yuker from Aberdeen 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.

Delicious DESSERTS

RHUBARB CAKE DESSERT

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 cup sugar
4 cups rhubarb, diced
2 cups half and half

Method

Prepare cake mix as directed on package and pour into a greased 9x13 pan. Mix sugar and rhubarb together. Spoon evenly over cake batter. Pour half and half over top of rhubarb mixture. Bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes. This is like an upside-down cake with custard on the bottom of the cake.

Marla Gilbert
Southeastern Electric

FUZZY NAVEL CAKE

Ingredients:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix
1 instant vanilla pudding
(large, 5.1 oz. size)
3/4 cup peach schnapps
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/2 cup orange juice
4 eggs

Glaze

1 cup powdered sugar
4 tbsps. orange juice
2 tbsps. peach schnapps

Method

Spray a 12-cup fluted baking pan with cooking spray, dust with flour. Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended, spread evenly in pan. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes until golden brown and cake springs back when lightly touched. Cool cake for 20 minutes. Run a long, sharp knife around the edges to loosen, and invert onto platter. Whisk glaze ingredients together until smooth. With wooden skewer, poke holes on top and around sides of cake. Spoon glaze over the warm cake, allowing to seep in holes, and drizzle down the sides and center. Cool completely before slicing.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix Electric

HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE CAKE

Ingredients:

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. vanilla
Pinch salt
1 20 oz. can crushed pineapple,
undrained (in natural juice, not
heavy syrup)

Frosting

1/2 cup butter, softened
1 8 oz. cream cheese softened
1 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

Method

Mix all cake ingredients together until well blended. Bake in greased 9x13 pan at 350° for 35-40 minutes or until top is golden brown.

Combine cream cheese, butter and vanilla. Beat until smooth and creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar. Spread frosting on cake while still warm. Garnish with some toasted coconut if desired.

Sally Florey
Charles Mix 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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by William Berry via Shutterstock.



LAUREN NIKOLAS IN SPOTLIGHT FOR COMMUNITY CENTER

Kathy Haas

khaas@northernelectric.coop

Lauren spent five years ruminating and researching. Once she decided to start, the Wo'takuye Oyate: Kinship Nation Inter-Tribal Network came together within two months. Wo'takuye Oyate opened in late 2024. Wo'takuye is the Lakota word for "kinship," and the organization's mission to rebuild a thriving kinship in the community.

Wo'takuye Oyate brought together three overlapping desires to create strong community bonds. Kelsi Vinger, Diversion Specialist for Brown County State's Attorney's office, had recently started a juvenile diversion program for Native youth. Lara Nelson, American Indian Circle Program Director at Northern State University, partnered with Kelsi to create peer mentor network between NSU students and youth in the diversion program. Lauren wanted to create a place to celebrate and connect with Tribal cultures.

"Lara used to say, 'We're building the plane as we're flying it,' and that's very true, but there was a lot of consideration

and leg work, that went into it before even launching," Lauren said.

The Kinship Center is designed to be a grassroots effort and therefore isn't reliant on having a specific amount of involvement. Lauren credits Dan and Angie Kleberg, owners of the Red Rooster, for helping her design a community center that could handle operating on both large- and small-scales.

"Because it's primarily all volunteer, things can ebb and flow, and that's honestly how I designed it," Lauren said.

For Lauren, the desire to create a space in the community for Native Americans came from her work in healthcare. Lauren has a master's in clinical mental health counseling and works as a community health worker.

"I saw a real need for an opportunity for people to engage with each other in a healthy way," Lauren said. "So, of course, I did a lot of work looking into the connection between well-being, good mental health, and cultural identity."

While she had been kicking the idea around for several years, it wasn't until Lauren attended the Billy Sutton Leadership Institute that she got the push she needed to bring her ideas to life. Being surrounded by other people motivated to create

“

Culture isn't just traditional. Culture is the magic that happens when you get a group of people from that background or a similar background together. You get the unique perspective that only they share. That's so special. That exists in everything we do.

- Lauren Nikolas

”

real change in their communities helped Lauren get over her fear of failing publicly. After that, Lauren connected with Kelsi and Lara, and the Kinship Center took off.

Wo'takuye Oyate has been very successful, Lauren said. They've had good community involvement and support. In the coming years, she hopes to have more events, build more bridges with community organizations, and expand the traditional arts out into the community. From family nights to beading kits available at the ARC, volunteers help shape the Center and its direction.

"With the grassroots organization, if people are doing what they love and are passionate about, it will be sustainable," Lauren said. "I'm doing the thing I love. Laura's doing the thing she loves. It's self-sustaining."

It also works because volunteering at the Kinship Center "feeds the hearts of the people who are part of it," Lauren said. The Center gives the community a way to live their values, she said.

"It's not just Native people connecting to each other. It's really trying to bring our presence into these organizations in an authentic and respectful way. So that's been a huge success too," Lauren said.



Scan the QR code to visit the Wo'takuye Oyate website



Dani Frost (back row, second from left) gave a painting lesson at Wo'takuye Oyate. Photo courtesy of Lauren Nikolas



LANDON JOHNSON JOINS NEC

A Groton local will be joining Northern Electric Cooperative's crew as a lineman. Journeyman Lineman Landon Johnson was hired after Kenny Swanson, former Redfield foreman, retired earlier this year. Landon has been hoping to work at Northern since he graduated from line school.

Most of Landon's family lives in the area and he wanted to stay local. Except for his half-sister who lives in Montana, Landon's two brothers, dad (Alan Johnson), mom (Kristi Eckrich) and stepdad live in the Groton/Columbia area. While he waited for a position to open up, Landon worked as a traveling lineman for several years before becoming a lineman for the City of Groton.

Safety is Landon's number one priority when on the job. "The second most important part is going home at the end of the day," Landon said. "I think it's nice that everybody at Northern is on the same page."

Landon has five years under his belt as a journeyman lineman already. He's experienced handling high-stress situations and knows the value of adhering to safety protocols.

"There's a lot that can go wrong when you're doing line work. It doesn't need to go wrong if you follow protocol and don't cut corners," Landon said.

Landon became a lineman because he enjoys spending time outdoors. That extends to his hobbies. In his downtime, Landon hunts, fishes, and spends time with family.

ONE VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE



Chuck Sloan • Piedmont, S.D.

Board Treasurer, West River Electric Association

U.S. Air Force 1983-2003

Chuck Sloan has spent much of his life serving his nation.

Sloan enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1983 and served 21 years on active duty

before retiring as a master sergeant in 2004. In that time, he was stationed at bases all around the world, including Oman, South Korea, Turkey, and the Pacific. Since 2004, Sloan has worked as a civilian at Ellsworth Air Force Base, where today he is Chief of Operations Compliance.

Serving in the military, Sloan observed firsthand how seriously service members took absentee voting and civic participation, despite being thousands of miles from American soil. Their passion helped ignite Sloan’s own admiration for America’s democratic system of government.

“If I found somebody a little laissez-faire about voting, saying, ‘my vote probably won’t count,’ I would give them a spiel,” Sloan explained. “Yes, your vote does count, and you’ll want to be able to say that you made that vote.”

He continued, “If you don’t choose to exercise that responsibility, then later on if you’re displeased, you really can’t

complain about it because you didn’t make a choice – If anything, vote and give yourself the opportunity to legitimately complain!”

Sloan said people should never underestimate the importance of showing up and making their voices heard, because in close races, one vote can tip the scale.

“There are many instances when one vote may have been a determining factor,” Sloan said. “It may not be a general election, but how about in a state or local election where one vote can be the deciding factor? That happens more often than one would think. Your vote matters, no matter what you do.”

Sloan brought that civic-mindedness along with him to West River Electric Association, where he serves on the Board of Directors and helps make decisions in the interest of his neighbors and communities he represents.

Sloan said it all just comes back to civic responsibility and staying involved.

“From the time I turned 18, I’ve never missed a vote,” Sloan said. “It’s second nature. It’s too important to not do.”



VOTING STRENGTHENS COMMUNITIES



Evan Buckmiller • De Smet, S.D.

General Manager, Kingsbury Electric Cooperative

De Smet School District Board

For Kingsbury Electric Cooperative General Manager Evan Buckmiller, his call to public service came after a mid-term resignation on the De Smet School District

Board left a vacancy that needed to be filled.

“The board had to appoint someone to fill the seat,” Buckmiller said. “Initially when I was asked, I didn’t know if I wanted to do it, but I also knew that my wife and I have two young kids in the school system, so I agreed to fill the spot until the next election.”

Buckmiller wasn’t expecting to develop a passion for civic-service, but six years and two election cycles later, he’s still representing the De Smet community on the school board.

“It’s for my kids, to make sure they have the best education opportunities possible to prepare them for their future,” Buckmiller added.

He said that while serving on the school board has been a

rewarding endeavor, there are also moments that are discouraging; some people will sit out elections, but are also vocal about board decisions they disagree with.

“I receive phone calls about how we are doing everything wrong, but they don’t want to step up to be a part of change,” Buckmiller explained.

His advice is simple: show up.

“Public participation at the monthly school board meetings is always encouraged,” Buckmiller said. “When a community is engaged, there is more diverse input and you get to see the needs of everyone. The needs for one person might not be the same as another, and when you are sitting on a board you want to hear the needs of everyone so you can make the best decision possible for everyone.”

Buckmiller said when more people get involved and exercise their civic duties, the communities like his are better for it.

“Being active in the community makes the community stronger and allows different opinions to be heard,” Buckmiller said.

“When you show up to meetings and vote, you are giving the board direction so they can make decisions that are in the best interest of everyone.”

STICK UP FOR YOURSELF & VOTE



Don Schurdevin • Elk Point, S.D.
Board President, Union County Electric Cooperative
U.S. Navy 1962-1968

Serving on the Union County Electric Cooperative board for more than 25 years, Don Schurdevin has built a reputation for steady leadership and a strong commitment

to the cooperative and its members. But before serving his neighbors and community on the co-op board, Schurdevin first served in a different way. He served not just his Union County neighbors, but his entire country in the U.S. Navy. Schurdevin enrolled during his junior year of high school in 1962, serving active duty in Vietnam from 1963 to 1965, some of that time aboard the USS Midway. The experience helped shape his views on patriotism, civic duty and personal responsibility.

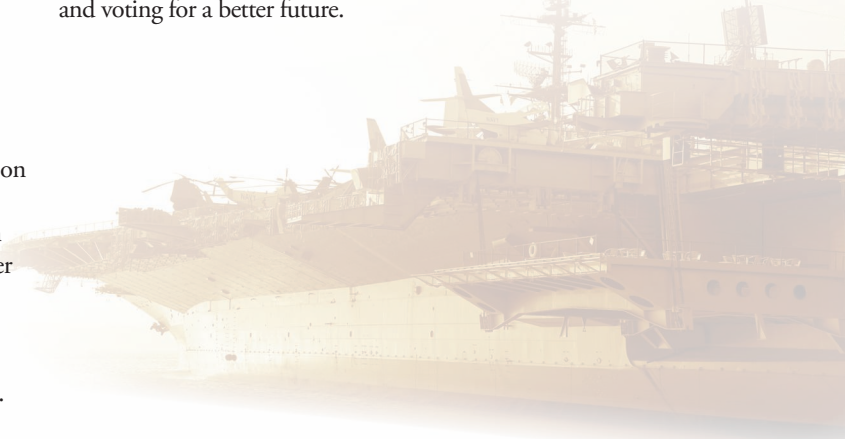
“In the navy, you learn to get along with people, but you learn to also stick up for yourself, because nobody else – is so you better take care of your own business,” he said.

That’s the attitude that Schurdevin brings to his civic participation. He said serving in the military gave him a deeper appreciation for the freedoms Americans enjoy, including voting.

Schurdevin believes participating in elections is one of the most important ways citizens can stay involved in their communities and help shape the future of their community, state and country.

“I think I voted in every election since I could,” Schurdevin recalled. “School board election, county, state – if I was able to vote I was voting.”

That sense of duty carried into his years of cooperative service. As a director, Schurdevin remains focused on serving members and ensuring the co-op continues to meet local needs. Schurdevin encourages others to “stick up for yourself” by staying informed and voting for a better future.



LEADERS DEPEND ON YOU SPEAKING UP



Chris Rahn • Mission, S.D.
Member Services Manager, Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative
Todd County School District Board, Rosebud Sioux Tribe

Chris Rahn was not always interested in his local government. In fact, up until just several years ago, he sat many elections out.

But through his work at Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative and the commitment to community that came with it, Rahn gained a new perspective on civic participation, realizing that change only happens when peoples’ voices are heard.

“I believe everybody who has an opinion should come out and vote,” Rahn said. “One vote matters. One vote can change an entire election.”

Rahn’s indifference to voting began to change as he was asked to take on more responsibilities with the co-op. Cherry-Todd Electric General Manager Tim Grablander nominated Rahn to the Rushmore Electric Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, where Rahn now serves as president.

Shortly after, he was encouraged by local community leaders to apply for a board seat with the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. The tribal

council voted to seat Rahn on the judiciary committee, leading to his first real experience with public service. Like flipping a switch, Rahn’s enthusiasm led to his appointment to other tribal boards, including the Tribal Utilities Commission, Tribal Tax Commission, and the Rosebud Energy Services Company.

Rahn said serving in tribal government opened his mind to the impact he can have on his community. That realization inspired Rahn to run for his first publicly-elected position as a school board member for the Todd County School District.

“I wanted to be more involved in my daughter’s education and just listen to the community’s input,” Rahn said, restating the importance of community members actively engaging with elected officials and sharing feedback.

He continued: “I feel like I’ve been able to bridge the gap between the people I represent and the administration and other public leaders.”

As Rahn looks ahead to years of future public service to work for a better community, he encourages others to step up as well — and all it takes is a vote.

“If you speak up, your voice is heard,” he continued. “When everyone’s voice is heard, we can make better decisions for the community as a whole.”

Photos by Shutterstock



FLOCKING TO SAND LAKE

Kathy Haas
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Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge is a great place to relax and take a breather. A hundred thousand or so birds think so too. During the spring migration, more than 100,000 birds have been documented at the refuge. Some birds view Sand Lake as more than a rest stop. Over 100 different species nest and raise their young on the refuge. In addition, 266 bird species, 40 mammal species, and a variety of fish, reptile, and amphibian species can be found on the refuge during different times of the year.

The spring migration has its own dedicated day: Migratory Bird Day. The migration is celebrated on the second Saturday of May. This year, that will be May 9. This year's theme "Every Bird Counts – Your Observations Matter," highlights the importance of public participation in collecting data on the birds.

Sand Lake doesn't have a formal event planned for the day, but the public is welcome to visit and observe the migration any time. Sand Lake has a good variety of birds that pass through, said Shilo Comeau, Station Manager for Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

"This time of year, especially in May, there's a lot of waterfowl that are coming through," said Shilo. "But you also start to see shorebirds, some colonial nesting birds, marsh birds, and, of course, hawks, and a lot of grassland birds.

It's a great time to watch birds that are moving through."

The refuge was created in 1935 as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds. Almost half of the 21,498-acre refuge is the namesake body of water: Sand Lake. While migratory birds are a main focus, visitors can enjoy what the refuge calls the "Big Six": hunting, fishing, photography, wildlife observation, wildlife interpretation, and education.

"There's always some portion of the refuge that is designated to provide refuge and habitat for migratory birds," said Shilo, "We have activities available to the public, but our primary goal is to provide habitat for migratory bird species."

Sand Lake can be explored on foot or in a vehicle. There are walking trails and picnic areas, as well as an observation tower for visitors on foot. The Wildlife Drive is 13.5 miles and has 10 stops with different learning and observation opportunities. The drive takes about an hour.

Visitors wanting more in-depth information can stop at the Visitor Center. The Center is open weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. all year round.

"Anybody interested in coming to the refuge and learning more can talk to one of the staff members and we'd be happy to help you learn more about the refuge system, habitats, and migratory bird species," Shilo said





Noah Felderman, right, was presented the Scholar of the Week award by NEC Communications Specialist Kathy Haas.

FELDERMAN NAMED SCHOLAR OF WEEK

Kathy Haas

khaas@northernelectric.coop

Noah Felderman likes to stay busy. Between expanding his business, participating in Future Farmers of America, and taking dual credits, he's definitely keeping busy. At school and in the business world, Noah has been recognized for his dedication and achievements. Noah was named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week for April 13.

"I'm always looking for the next opportunity or next thing to get myself into. And sometimes that can put too much on my plate, but I'd rather have too much than have nothing at all," Noah said.

Since the Scholar of the Week program began, more than \$80,000 in scholarships have been awarded to more than 530 students. As Scholar of the Week, Noah was awarded a \$250 scholarship from Northern Electric and will have the chance to receive a \$1,000 scholarship, or one of two \$500 scholarships that will be given away at the annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the

Year banquet.

A Doland High School senior, Noah was nominated for the Touchstone Scholar of the Week by Bailey Coats, Doland Ag Teacher and FFA Advisor. Noah has been active in FFA since he was in seventh grade.

"There are times I don't even feel like Noah's advisor as much as I feel like I'm simply along for the ride," said Bailey. "His drive, responsibility, and self-motivation speak for themselves."

The drive to stay busy is why Noah started his ice cream business, Feldy's Ice Cream, when he was 12. Since then, Noah has been able to expand his business to two mobile units and a permanent location. It helped that he only operated the business during the summertime, Noah said. In addition, he's been able to incorporate his academics into his business. At FFA career development events, Noah was able to get an in-depth look at milk quality, as well as explore other topics of interest, such as veterinary science.

"A lot of the dual credit classes that I'm in require you to write different papers. I can usually find a way to tie in my business, so I'm kind of doing both things at one time," Noah said.

Noah credits FFA as being highly influential on his successes in his personal and academic careers. Through the program, he's been able to explore different opportunities and grow, he said.

"I've gotten to meet a ton of people through FFA," Noah said. "If it wasn't for FFA, I wouldn't have met the people who led me to participate in different events, such as speaking at the South Dakota Retailers Association and the Big Idea Competition."

Noah recommends students not be afraid to gain new experiences. Those opportunities can create connections that take you further and gain new knowledge inside and outside the classroom, he said.

"You're not going to know if you will succeed if you don't try it. It's better to fail, learn from that failure, and then start over and build something bigger," said Noah.

That mentality has helped Noah expand his business, as well as thrive academically.

"What he has accomplished in just 17 years is nothing short of remarkable. Through his business and his FFA work, he has already reached milestones that many adults spend years striving to achieve," said Bailey.

Noah was featured on Dakota News Now during the 6 p.m. news on Monday, April 13 and again on the Dakota News Now morning news on Tuesday, April 14 at 6 a.m. Scan the QR Code to see a replay of Noah's interview, as well as the other Scholar of the Week winners.



BUILDING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

Basin Electric's Pioneer Generation Station, located near Williston, N.D.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Basin Electric Expands Generation Capacity to Meet Growing Demand

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Although the flick of a switch can seem close at hand, the electricity that powers our world is often generated many miles away.

For rural cooperative members, electricity often comes from North Dakota, where Basin Electric Power Cooperative operates a fleet of power plants to serve rural communities across nine states. As demand continues to build across that system, the infrastructure behind it is growing right alongside it.

This steady growth has shaped the work now underway across Basin Electric's service territory. In response, the cooperative has kept up with demand by expanding existing generation facilities, building a new power plant and supporting the system with additional transmission projects in just a few short years.

"We're seeing load growth across our system, and it's coming from a combination of residential, agricultural, commercial and energy development," said Gavin McCollam, Basin Electric's senior vice president and chief operating officer. "When you step back and look at it as a whole, it becomes clear that we need to continue building to keep pace with that growth."



New transmission lines in western North Dakota support Basin Electric's newest generation assets.
Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

Pioneer Generation Station

To maintain reliability and keep the lights on for their members, Basin Electric recently expanded its generation capacity through new development to Pioneer Generation Station near Williston, N.D.

Originally developed in the early 2010s, the facility grew in phases over time. Those additions turned Pioneer Generation Station into one of Basin Electric's most important generation assets, but within a decade, the pace of that growth had begun to change.

"Coming out of COVID, not just us but everybody

was seeing rapid increases in loads,” McCollam said. “At that point, we were asking what we could do the quickest to add capacity.”

To meet the need, Basin Electric moved forward with Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV. The cooperative completed the project in 2025, adding about 580 megawatts of generation and bringing the site’s total capacity to 822 megawatts, enough to power roughly 400,000 homes.

The expansion moved quickly in part because Basin Electric built on what it already had.

“We had the site and the people that worked there, so we could add onto it a lot quicker than we could analyze and research new sites,” McCollam said.

Bison Generation Station

Still, Basin Electric continued building for traditional member load growth, beyond Pioneer Generation Station Phase IV, turning to a new project: Bison Generation Station.

Located near Epping, N.D., the natural gas-fueled generation project is being built from the ground up as a large-scale, natural gas facility designed to meet future demand. Once completed, the combined-cycle power plant will produce approximately 1,490

megawatts of electricity, making it the largest power plant solely owned by Basin Electric – almost double the capacity of Pioneer Generation Station. The plant is expected to come online in two phases, with the first unit operating in 2029 and the second in 2030.

Unlike Pioneer Generation Station, which expanded over time, Bison Generation Station is being built as a single, large project.

“We had a history of building small units, piecemealing them in as quickly as we could. That worked for a long time, but eventually we reached a point where we needed to think about building differently,” McCollam said. “There was a point where we recognized that continuing to add smaller pieces wasn’t going to be the most effective approach. We needed to build something at a scale that would allow us to stay ahead of that growth.”

Serendipitously, the transition from Pioneer Generation Station to Bison Generation Station happened on the same day. Basin Electric finished construction at Pioneer and turned the facility over to operations, then received the permits to begin construction on Bison.

“I’m kind of a nerd,” McCollam

said, laughing. “I’m nerdy enough to think this wasn’t a coincidence, and the power plant gods were smiling on us.”

Once complete, it will become a central part of Basin Electric’s generation portfolio.

“It’s going to be the flagship of our gas fleet,” McCollam said. “It’s being designed with the understanding that the system we’re serving today is going to continue to grow.”

Looking Ahead

According to McCollam, these new generation assets are a response to the organic growth Basin Electric is seeing across its traditional membership, including residential demand, agriculture, commercial activity and energy production.

“We support that growth where it happens, and we make sure the system can deliver power where it’s needed,” he said.

For Basin Electric, the work underway now is part of a longer process to ensure reliability in a time of growing energy demand.

“The entire purpose of Basin Electric is to provide reliable service to our membership,” McCollam said. “As that system grows, we have to continue building to keep up with it.”



This architectural rendering depicts Bison Generation Station, a natural gas-fueled plant project slated to begin operations in 2030.

Photo Submitted by Basin Electric

SIGN UP FOR YOUTH EXCURSION

Northern Electric Cooperative member's high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are eligible to for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion 2026! Participants will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state, and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from. This year, the trip will be July 20-22. The deadline to apply is June 1.

On this three-day, all-expenses-paid trip, students will learn "The Story Behind the Light Switch." During their stay, students will get to hear from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. After touring the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine, and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant, students will gain deeper understanding of how South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, visit local attractions and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers. Participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College.

To be eligible for Youth Excursion, students must be in high school and their parent or guardian must be an active member-owner of Northern Electric. To apply, fill out the application on the next page or scan the QR to apply online.



Students pose on one of the massive trucks used at the Freedom Coal Mine.

A Legacy of
SERVICE



2026 Annual Meeting
Wednesday, June 10

Two locations:

Holum Expo Building
Brown County Fairgrounds
Redfield NEC Service Center
17140 N Highway 281

People • Power • Purpose



South Dakota Rural Electric – – – – – YOUTH EXCURSION – – – – – July 20-22, 2026

Application Form


To apply for 2026 Youth Excursion, complete the form below and return it to Northern Electric Cooperative. The deadline to apply is June 1, 2026. If you have any questions, please call 605-225-0310.

2026 Youth Excursion Application

Name: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone#: _____ Email: _____
School: _____ 2025-2026 Class/Year: _____
Gender: _____ T-shirt Size: _____

Return this information by June 1, 2026:

Email to: khaas@northernelectric.coop
Mail to: Northern Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 457, Bath, SD 57427
Deliver to: Temporary headquarters, 2914 Industrial Ave, Aberdeen, SD 57401



MAY 18
Voter Registration
Deadline for Primary
Election
5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 1
Last Day to Request
Absentee Ballot.
5 p.m.
(South Dakota)

JUNE 2
Primary Election
7 a.m.-7 p.m.
(South Dakota)

Photo by Shutterstock

MAY 2
Spring Citywide
Rummage Sales
Groton, SD

MAY 2
Consignment Auction
7 a.m. Gates Open
10 a.m. Auction
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 2
Cinco de Mayo Fiesta
2-8 p.m.
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656

MAY 3
Prairie Village Opening Day
2 p.m. Train Ride
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

MAY 6-7
Energize! Exploring Innovative
Rural Communities Conference
Hosted by SDSU Extension
Community Vitality
Community Center
Wall, SD
extension.sdstate.edu/energize

MAY 9
1880 Train Opens
Hill City, SD

MAY 15-17
Open House Weekend
Free Entrance
Custer State Park
Custer, SD

MAY 16
2nd Annual Bird Bash
8 a.m.-1 p.m.
Bear Butte State Park
Sturgis, SD
605-390-2901
valleyhummingbird@yahoo.com

MAY 23
Free Christian Men's Event
8 a.m.-2 p.m.
The Barn at Aspen Acres
Spearfish, SD
Register: RiseUpMen.com

MAY 30
Familyfest Fun Cruise
& SDSC Safety Fair
9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Bucket Trucks, Safety & More
Sioux Falls, SD
thehoodmagazine.com/ff-faqs/

MAY 30
Frühlingsfest
Spring Street Market
1-5 p.m.
Main Street Square
Rapid City, SD
605-718-8484

MAY 30
Miss Prairie Village/Miss
Prairie Princess Pageant
6:30 p.m.
Lawrence Welk Opera House
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JUNE 4-6
Black Hills Quilt Show
Thurs. 5-8 p.m.
Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Rushmore Hall
at the Monument
Rapid City, SD

JUNE 6
Citywide Rummage Sale
Sales Throughout Community
- Treasures Guaranteed!
Redfield, SD

JUNE 13
America's 250th
Baseball/Softball Day
Train Day, Carnegie Library
Open House, Fireworks
Redfield, SD

JUNE 13
Luce Pioneer Day
10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Rope & Candle Making, Butter
Churning, Dutch Oven Cooking
Lake Herman State Park
Madison, SD
605-880-5077

JUNE 19-20
77th Annual Czech Days
Tabor, SD
www.taborczechdays.com

JUNE 26-27
Buckhorn Rodeo
Britton, SD
605-880-5077

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.

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.