

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



The success of the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally requires many megawatts of power provided by member-owned electric cooperatives, including lighting the main stage at the Buffalo Chip

Photo by Travel South Dakota

The Rally

Keeping the Sturgis Rally juiced up
Pages 8-9

High-flying fun at Catfish Bay
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Learning what it takes to produce the power you use every day



Ben Dunsmoor
Editor

For most people, electricity is as easy as turning on a light switch. That is a good thing because it means we are doing our jobs at Northern Electric Cooperative to provide safe and reliable power.

However - in reality - delivering electricity is not as easy as turning on a light switch. Electricity takes a long journey from the generation source to your living room every day. A few weeks ago, nearly three dozen co-op members and employees learned about that journey during our annual VIP Tour of the co-op power plants in North Dakota.

It is an educational experience that will prove that electricity is not just as easy as turning on a light switch.

We brought the VIP Tour back this year following a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic. We were excited to get back on the road in 2022 because our co-op members at the end of the line own a share of the facilities that churn out electrons in an instant. And it is important for our members to see the entire process of generating power so they can be informed and educated about their cooperative and the resources that are needed to deliver reliable electricity.

The tour began at Basin Electric Power Cooperative headquarters in Bismarck, North Dakota. Basin Electric is the generation and transmission cooperative that is owned by 131 electric cooperatives in nine states.

2022 VIP Tour

A Northern Electric member takes a picture on the top floor of Basin Electric's Antelope Valley Station near Beulah, ND.

Northern Electric is one of the member co-ops of Basin Electric. Basin Electric operates the power plants and wind turbines that generate electricity for member systems throughout the central United States. VIP Tour participants toured the marketing area of Basin Electric where they learned about the electricity markets and how the supply and demand of power is balanced 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Northern Electric members also toured Basin Electric's dispatch center which answers after-hours calls for Northern Electric and dispatches crews during outages.

VIP Tour participants got an up-close look at power generation resources too. Participants toured the Wilton Wind Farm north of Bismarck and learned about wind energy. The tour also took us to Basin Electric's Antelope Valley Station coal-fired power plant near Beulah, North Dakota. Northern Electric members were able to tour all areas of the plant which can generate enough power for 450,000 average homes. The tour continued at the Freedom Mine which is a surface coal mine located next door to the Antelope Valley Station. We learned how coal is responsibly mined from the North Dakota soil and how the land is reclaimed following all mining activities.

From the deep coal strips to the towering wind turbines, Northern Electric members were able to see how electricity is generated from start to finish during this year's VIP Tour. It was great to be able to showcase these facilities to our members again in 2022. We hope more members can make plans to join us on the tour in June 2023. It's an educational experience that will prove that electricity is not just as easy as turning on a light switch.



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

NORTHERN ELECTRIC

(USPS 396-040)

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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.

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Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held June 17, 2022, via Microsoft Teams at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the May 20, 2022, minutes and May expenditures. The Board reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management. East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River Board at the June 2, 2022, meeting. The next South Dakota Rural Electric Association Board Meeting will be June 23-24, 2022, in Pierre.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Update on development projects.
- Update on Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) revolving loan fund.
- Reminded the board that nominating petitions are due July 15, 2022.
- Informed directors that they should choose a representative from each district for the Election and Credential Committee by the July board meeting.
- Reminded the board of the 35th American Coalition for Ethanol Conference, August 10-12, 2022, Omaha, Nebraska.
- Reminded the board of the SDREA Co-op Board Leadership Summit, July 21-22, 2022, Pierre.

BOARD REPORT

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved date and time of the next regular board meeting for 10:30 A.M. on Friday, July 22, 2022, at the Redfield Office.
2. Approved payment of legal fees to Harvey Oliver for \$1,738.08.
3. Approved 19 estate requests for out-of-order capital credit retirements totaling \$52,710.26.
4. Approved Work Order Inventory #22-05 for \$207,816.70 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
5. Authorized board attendance to the 2022 NRECA Region 5 & 6 Meeting, September 21-23, Minneapolis, MN.
6. Appointed Director Kirk Schaunaman to represent the cooperative on the East River Electric Board for another term.
7. Authorized board attendance to the East River Annual Meeting, September 7, 2022, in Sioux Falls.
8. Approved resolution for RD Apply Authorized Representative.
9. Authorized board to go on the SPP, Arkansas Statewide/G&T and Today's Power Tour, August 24-26, 2022, Little Rock, AR.
10. Special meeting of the board, July 8, 2022, starting at 8:30 a.m., at the headquarters building, to review and discuss Bylaw Committee proposed updates.

Contact your director with questions.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	May-22	May-21
kWh Sales	20,244,635 kWh	21,612,273 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$1,988,905	\$2,131,141
Total Cost of Service	\$1,920,923	\$2,128,914
Operating Margins.....	\$67,982	\$2,227
Year to Date Margins	\$511,920	\$149,454

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

MAY-2022.....	1,401 kWh.....	\$178.42.....	0.1274 per kWh
MAY-2021.....	1,259 kWh.....	\$168.45.....	0.1338 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 81.2% of NEC's total cost of service.

Electrical safety basics for children

The back-to-school season is a time when parents and school children fall back into the familiar routine of getting up early, getting dressed, grabbing breakfast, preparing lunch and shuffling out the door each day.

It's a time when students return to a learning mindset, ready to take on new ideas, knowledge and information.

Parents should seize the opportunity to teach school-age children a valuable and potentially lifesaving lesson: Respect electricity.

Here are several electrical safety basics every child should know:

- Mixing water and electricity can be deadly. Teach children not to use electric toys or other devices near water or in the rain.
- Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.

When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord. Yanking a cord out of an electrical outlet can damage the appliance, the outlet or the plug.

- Electrical cords can be strangling hazards and might cause electrical burns if they are misused. Make sure youngsters keep cords away from their mouths and necks. It's best to hide cords so they aren't a temptation.

- Electrical outlets are receptacles for electrical plugs only. Children should know from an early age that it's a no-no to put foreign objects or fingers into power plugs. Sticking any other items into an electrical socket can lead to electric shock or death. Use childproofing outlet covers.

- Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines. If a tree has a power line running through it - or if it's even within reach of the line - it's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.

- Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and animals out of the area. If a toy or small pet gets inside the fence, the child should inform a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it.

COOPERATIVES HELP OUR MEMBERS SOLVE PROBLEMS



Electric co-op member services personnel focus their attention on making sure co-op members get the power they need when they need it. They help homeowners and businesses solve problems and find solutions to operate more efficiently. A group of co-op representatives recently took a guided tour of the Riverview Dairy near Watertown to learn how the dairy functions and how the local co-op can provide better service to the facility.

You can find out more about the many ways our electric cooperatives serve our members by visiting Cooperative Connections Plus. Simply scan the QR code at right.



Swim safely

Alayna Smith

Alayna, age 10, alerts both the young and old alike to refrain from swimming when any thunderstorms are around. Alayna is the daughter of Myles and Amber Smith and they are members of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

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.

TASTY SUMMER SALADS

SHELL MACARONI SALAD

Ingredients:

1 7-oz. box of shell macaroni, cooked, rinsed and cooled
2-3 fresh tomatoes, chopped
1/3 green pepper, chopped
3 celery ribs, sliced thinly
1/4 c. chopped onion
1 cucumber, seeded & chopped

Toss ingredients together; set aside.

Dressing

1/2 c. canola oil
3/4 c. sugar
1/2 c. vinegar
3/4 c. catsup
Dash of lemon juice

METHOD

Mix dressing ingredients well with wire whip and add to veggies and macaroni.

Joan Antonen, Arlington

TUNA AND EGG SALAD

Ingredients:

3 6-oz. cans tuna packed in water
3 eggs hard boiled, peeled and chopped
2 small dill pickles diced
1 large celery rib diced
1/4 cup red onion minced
1 tbsp. lemon juice or red wine vinegar
2 tsp. garlic powder, optional
1/4 tsp. salt, to taste
Ground black pepper to taste
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt, 2%+ fat
2 tbsp. mayo

METHOD

Drain cans with tuna well by pressing hard on the lid while draining. Transfer to a large bowl and separate into flakes with a fork. Add chopped and peeled hard boiled eggs, pickles, celery, red onion, lemon juice, garlic powder (if using), salt, pepper, yogurt and mayo. Stir well with a fork and refrigerate. Serve cold in a sandwich or over salad greens.

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GARDEN VEGGIES 'N ROTINI

Ingredients:

3/4 c. oil
3/4 c. white vinegar
3/4 c. white sugar
1 tsp. garlic salt
2 tbsp. onion flakes
1 tbsp. mustard
Bring the above ingredients to a boil and remove from heat.
Cook 4 cups colored rotini noodles. Rinse and chill.
Cut up the following in chunky pieces:
1 tomato
1 cucumber
assorted peppers
1/2 red onion

METHOD

Stir veggies together with the rotini and dressing. Chill before serving.

Ginny Jensen, Volga

NANCY'S MACARONI SALAD

Ingredients:

Dice:

1 onion
1 green pepper
1-2 carrots
1 cup celery
2 cups Velveeta Cheese

Add:

1 can peas
1 - 16 oz. pkg. macaroni cooked and drained

Dressing:

1 cup sugar
1 pint mayo
1 cup white vinegar
1 - 14 oz. can evaporated milk

METHOD

Mix together gently and refrigerate, best overnight. Add any type of meat, boiled eggs etc., as desired.

Nancy Nelson, Mission Hill

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Three high school students will represent Northern Electric during the 2022 South Dakota Rural Electric Association Youth Excursion

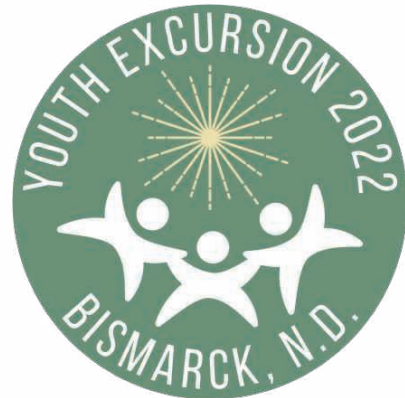
Northern Electric Cooperative is sending three high school students to the 2022 South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) Youth Excursion in North Dakota. During the four-day tour students will learn about cooperatives, energy careers, and the generation resources that are used to produce the power they use every day.

The SDREA Youth Excursion will be held July 25-27 at Bismarck State College in North Dakota. Students will tour Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Antelope Valley Station, the Dakota Gasification Company Great Plains Synfuels Plant, and the Freedom Mine. The three Northern Electric students attending Youth Excursion are listed on this page. They will join dozens of other students from other electric cooperatives across South Dakota during the four-day experience.

PARKER FLACK



Parker Flack is from Aberdeen and is going to be a freshman at Aberdeen Central High School in the fall. He enjoys pool, golf, camping, watching football and learning about economics. Flack has a job working for Carpet Master and attends church at Trinity Lutheran Church in Aberdeen with his family. Parker is looking forward to learning more about the co-op and how it works during the 2022 Youth Excursion.



KIERRA JOHNSON



Kierra Johnson is from Columbia and will be a sophomore at Frederick High School during the 2022-2023 school year. Johnson is looking forward to learning new things about energy and cooperatives during the 2022 Youth Excursion.

She enjoys spending time with her German Shepherd named Bailey.

COLLEEN WIPF



Colleen Wipf is the daughter of Nathan and Jan Wipf of Frankfort. Wipf will be a senior at James Valley Christian School in the fall. She plays volleyball and participates in the school's praise team for chapel services. She enjoys hanging out with

friends, being with animals, and making crafts. She currently works as a certified nursing assistant (CNA). Wipf also attended the SDREA Connect Con event for high school students during the summer of 2021.



Brett Kwasniewski (left) and Leonard Deibert (right) of Lake Region Electric Association explain the dangers of contacting power lines during the Farm Safety Party at the 2021 Brown County Fair.



FARM SAFETY PARTY



Thursday, August 18 at the Brown County Fair

SAFETY AT THE FAIR

2022 Farm Safety Party Scheduled For August 18 At The Brown County Fair

Northern Electric Cooperative is teaming up with Lake Region Electric Association of Webster, FEM Electric Association of Ipswich, and Agtegra Cooperative to host a Farm Safety Party at the 2022 Brown County Fair. The Farm Safety Party will be held in the Avera Kids' Zone on Thursday, August 18, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the afternoon.

The Farm Safety Party will feature several different interactive activities for children and families. There will be an ATV safety exhibit, an

electrical safety display, and several giveaways and handouts with farm safety information.

“There is less room for error on the farm as equipment gets larger,” Northern Electric Cooperative Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor said. “It is important to teach children how to stay safe at a young age so they can develop safe habits as they grow up on the farm.”

This is the fourth year the Farm Safety Party has been held at the Brown County Fair. The event is free and open to the public.

Presented by:



CO-OPS KEEP THE RALLY ROLLING



Electric co-ops are committed to keeping The Rally energized

Billy Gibson

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The frenetic atmosphere that has come to be associated with the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally can be loud, chaotic and - well let's just say - very colorful.

But behind those vivid scenes are electric cooperative employees working hard to make sure the Rally has the juice required to keep the lights glaring, the amps blaring, the air conditioners humming and the blenders blending.

The three local co-ops that serve the Black Hills and surrounding area are Butte Electric, West River Electric and Black Hills Electric. In conjunction with wholesale supplier Rushmore Electric in Rapid City and power generator Basin Electric based in Bismarck, N.D., the co-ops deliver much of the electricity used by campgrounds, restaurants, shops, concert stages, biker bars and other entertainment venues.

The power providers are diligent about keeping pace with the increasing growth of The Rally, which is rebounding from a temporary drop in attendance brought on by the coronavirus pandemic over the past two years.

Corey Trapp, chief engineering officer at Rushmore Electric, said power demand can increase significantly during The Rally. For instance, he indicated the area north of Sturgis served by Butte Electric that includes Full Throttle and other sites can jump from 1-2 MW to 8-9 MW during the event.

At the Buffalo Chip, West River Electric has nearly 40 meters located across the 600-acre spread serving scores of bars, campgrounds and cabins, as well as the main stage. Power use skyrockets from about 30 KW to more than 4.2 MW.

This year marks the 82nd installment of The Rally. Ten years ago, organizers were concerned about the potential future of the event if younger riders didn't start joining in on the fun. According to data gathered by local government agencies, Mount Rushmore National Park and other sources, attendance is back on the upswing.

An estimated 555,000 riders participated in the Rally last August, up nearly 14 percent from 2020 and an increase of 9.5 percent over the five-year average from 2016 to 2020.

Statistics show that nearly 30 percent of attendees were first-timers in 2021, which is welcomed news for promoters who work year-around to keep The Rally rolling, including



RALLY FACTS

- 🏍️ 555,000 – No. of 2021 participants
- 🏍️ 54 – avg. age in 2019
- 🏍️ 46.5 – avg. age in 2021
- 🏍️ 52% - campground attendees
- 🏍️ 18% - hotel attendees
- 🏍️ \$81,005 - avg. household income
- 🏍️ \$382 - spent per day
- 🏍️ 85% - motorcycle owners
- 🏍️ 81% - Harley owners
- 🏍️ \$1,090,398 - raised for charity

the city of Sturgis, the South Dakota Department of Tourism, the Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association and scores of business owners who depend on the seasonal revenue to sustain their operations.

The increased buzz of activity keeps the V-twin economic engines purring throughout the Black Hills area, but delivering the power has its own set of challenges that may not be apparent to partiers. Electric cooperative officials report that global shortages in materials and supplies make it difficult to meet the increase in power demand, but they're committed to doing everything possible to meet that demand.

"We're seeing delays in equipment necessary for infrastructure upgrades, but we know how important electricity is for The Rally to run successfully," said Brett Fosheim, director of operations at Butte Electric based in Newell. "A lot of visitors and business owners are

An estimated 555,000 visitors enjoyed the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally last year. As attendance climbs, electric cooperatives are committed to delivering the power needed to keep the party going. *Photos by South Dakota Travel*

depending on us, so we're prepared every year to step up to the plate with power that's affordable, reliable and there when everybody needs it."

Fosheim said just as organizers work all year long to plan and promote the 10-day event, electric cooperatives also anticipate the rise in electricity demand and coordinate with their common power generator, Basin Electric, to fill the need and handle peak loads. Butte Electric serves Full Throttle, Days Inn Campground and the Sons of Silence Campground, among other venues.

Because electric cooperatives are created by their members to serve their members, they've been delivering electricity since the early days of The Rally. The annual event traces its roots back to 1938 when a group of Indian Motorcycle enthusiasts led by local franchise owner Clarence "Pappy" Hoel got together to race one another, pull off some riding stunts and party together around a common interest in the brand.

What started as a quaint occasion called the Black Hills Classic with just

nine racers and a sparse crowd has become an international attraction.

Except for the World War II years between 1939 and 1941, The Rally has been a much-anticipated mainstay attracting visitors from across the planet. During the war, organizers suspended the event due to gas restrictions in support of the war effort.



While the current supply shortages mentioned by Fosheim have kept power providers on their toes and doubly prepared for The Rally, he said cooperatives are committed to delivering quality service not only during the event but long after the riders have peeled out of town.



Cathi Podoll (center) receives a plaque for 10 years of service during the 2018 Annual Meeting from Board President Donna Sharp (left) and CEO/General Manager Char Hager (right).



Cathi Podoll

Podoll worked with Northern Electric CEO/General Manager Char Hager at WEB Water and they both started their roles in the Northern Electric

PODOLL RETIRES

Cathi Podoll has served as Northern Electric's Chief Financial Officer since 2015

Ben Dunsmoor

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You could say Cathi Podoll has been keeping the books for Northern Electric Cooperative since she was a young girl. Podoll grew up on her family's farm near Claremont and remembers reading the Northern Electric meter as a kid so they could turn it into the co-op and receive their monthly electric bill. Podoll's career has come full circle since recording those readings on

the farm. Podoll retired on July 1 as Northern Electric Cooperative's Chief Financial Officer after working on the other side of the meter for the past 13 years.

"It has been instilled in me all my life, from farming to my work ethic, you don't leave until you get the job done," Podoll said.

Podoll began working for Northern Electric in 2008 as its senior accountant. Podoll came to Northern Electric from WEB Water where she was the office manager.

accounting department within three years of each other. When Hager was promoted from CFO to CEO in 2015, Podoll was also promoted and moved into the CFO role.

"The smaller company is nice," Podoll said about working for a cooperative. "From one co-op to the next it is like a family."

Reading the electric meter as a young girl was not the only connection Podoll had to Northern Electric before she began working for the co-op. Her father, Charles Anderson, served on the Northern Electric Board of Directors from 1990-1999, so Podoll knows the importance of working for a member-owned business.

"We are all in it to meet the same goal to provide for the members," Podoll said.

As the Chief Financial Officer, Podoll, oversaw all accounting



Cathi Podoll retired from Northern Electric Cooperative on July 1. She began working for the co-op in 2008 and was promoted to Northern Electric's Chief Financial Officer in 2015.

Cathi Podoll waves to the crowd from a Northern Electric bucket truck during the 2019 Frederick Homecoming parade.

and billing operations as well as employee benefits and the cooperative's work plans. She said one of the most enjoyable parts of her job has been accounting for the work happening in the field and seeing how it has benefitted the co-op back in the office.

"The whole process of the business has been enjoyable," Podoll said. "I enjoyed working with crews on what they did and how it feeds back into the balance sheet."

Podoll will also continue to value all the relationships she has built over the years with co-workers, colleagues at other electric cooperatives, and the members of Northern Electric. She is looking forward to spending more time with her family in retirement. Podoll and her husband, Lyle, have four children, 12 grandchildren, three great grandchildren and they are expecting three more great grandchildren by the end of the year.

LORISA RUDOLPH NAMED NEW CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Senior Accountant Lorisa Rudolph has been named Northern Electric



Lorisa Rudolph

Cooperative's new Chief Financial Officer. Rudolph is a Webster native who began working for Northern Electric in February. Rudolph

previously worked for Agtegra Cooperative as a senior accountant. She graduated from Northern State University with a degree in Professional Accounting and a minor in Banking.

Rudolph was the recipient of the Lake Region Electric Association scholarship in 2014 and is looking forward to advancing her career at an electric cooperative.

"Growing up in a cooperative system and then working at a cooperative, I love the unique business model and what a cooperative can do for its members," Rudolph said. "Northern Electric Cooperative has a great record of providing outstanding service and looking out for the members they serve."

Rudolph is married and has two Labrador retrievers. She took over as the cooperative's CFO following the retirement of Cathi Podoll on July 1.



FAMILY FUN AT CATFISH BAY

Summer fun for the entire family awaits at Catfish Bay Water Ski Park in Sioux Falls. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Pigs fly and family fun abounds at Catfish Bay Water Ski Park

Billy Gibson

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If you stop by Catfish Bay, you probably won't see a single catfish during your stay. But you will definitely see a pig flying, a chicken hurtling through the air and water skis sprouting up from a pocketful of magic seeds.

Catfish Bay Water Ski Park, located just off I-90 in Sioux Falls, is a family entertainment venue where a squad of highly skilled skiers leap and spin and build four-tier human pyramids as they skim across the water's surface.

Billed as "The Greatest Show on H2O," the event attracts spectators from miles around who show up each Friday evening during the summer months to see the high-flying theatrics reminiscent of Florida's famed Cypress Gardens. The show features ski jumpers dressed as chickens, Hee Haw-inspired corn pone humor and a daredevil in a pig costume elevating 30 feet into the air astride a water-propelled fly board.

The show is the brainchild of Jim

Bruns, an idea that spawned from his mind as "a God thing." While he was a college student in the early '90s, Bruns joined the Sioux Falls Water Ski Club and honed his skills enough to turn pro.

It was during college that he hatched a plan to establish a show similar to those being staged at SeaWorld and other similar sites. First thing he needed was a lake. He found the perfect spot when a contractor dug out a 25-acre borrow pit adjacent to the interstate. He bought the pit and – voila! – one man-made lake...just add water.

Second thing he needed was a performing cast. Bruns gathered some of his fellow skiers of all ages and sizes, pulled together a program and then plowed forward for a few years determined to make the show a success. Just when he began wondering if he was going to be able to keep the labor-intensive venture alive, he experienced another epiphany. He needed to rededicate the program to building youth, strengthening families and developing leaders. He formed a

mission statement: "MV2 – Mission, Vision and Values."

"It was a simple plan from the start," Bruns said just before the start of the season-opening show on Memorial Day. "But in 2007 I hit a wall. I sat down and prayed about it and came up with MV2. Now I have so many stories of kids who have come out here and learned a skill and learned about teamwork and goal-setting. They learn how to overcome obstacles."

One of those youngsters is Beth Bruggeman, who serves as assistant show director. A recent college graduate, she has been involved in the program for 10 years. She was a 13-year-old gymnast and cheerleader when she decided to try out for the ski team and now she's a star in the show with boundless energy, a beaming smile and a scar on her eyebrow as her personal badge of courage and grit.

"One of the things I like about it is there are people who participate of all skill levels who are anywhere from 6 to 60 years old. You don't find groups with that kind of diversity. You get to form different kinds of connections and friendships," she said.

Bruns' own children, James and Amara, are two other stars of the show. Amara, 13, professes to be the more gushingly dramatic. A student at O'Gorman Junior High, Amara has been part of the act since she was 2, riding on her dad's shoulders. Today she barefoots, swivels, climbs the pyramid and charms the crowd with her effervescent smile.

"I like entertaining people and making them feel like they've come to a special place," she said.

Beside Bruns, Jeremiah Newman is another example of the motto: the family that skis together stays together. He and his children, 14-year-old Marissa and 12-year-old Tyler, are involved in all aspects of the show. He's a member of the military and a former international professional skier who still competes around the region and specializes in performing flips and twists on an air chair hydrofoil.

"This is such a family-friendly environment. It's priceless. It keeps me active and it keeps our family close. Instead of sitting on the sidelines watching my kids, I get to be out there with them," he said. "We talk about the importance of making a life-long commitment to fitness and good nutrition and things that will serve them well along the way."

While the skiers are preparing for their next set, attention turns toward the stage area and a charming recurring character named Norman, who always comes up with some crackpot scheme that never fails to fail. Bruns explains that the Norman character stands as a metaphor for anyone who has had a dream and felt the frustration of failure.

"The thing about Norman that makes him different is that he never loses his enthusiasm and keeps on trying," Bruns said. "His motto is to dream big and never give up."

Bruns is living out the dream he had as a younger man. To this point, Norman has never revealed his last name. But it could very well be Bruns.

Below, Catfish Bay performers pull off a "four-stack" configuration. At right, the character known as "Norman" rides a flying pig.



The Touchstone Energy flag has flown proudly at the last 20 State High School Rodeo Finals. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

Electric co-ops support high school rodeo through popular Short Go Shirt program

Billy Gibson

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Folks who attended the State High School Rodeo Finals in Fort Pierre this summer could see Tobi Hintz coming from halfway across the arena.

Hintz is a student at Timber Lake High School and serves as the association's 2022 Rodeo Queen. She cut a dashing figure at the event with her decorative sash, bright red lipstick, fringed shoulder bag, buckle-shaped sterling silver earrings and baby blue cowgirl hat with a sparkling tiara wrapped above the brim.

Oh, and she can also ride pretty well, too. Over the past two years, she's earned Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirts at the state finals in recognition of her rodeo skills in barrel racing and pole bending.

This year marked the 20th celebration of the Touchstone Energy Short Go

Shirt program. Since 2002, Touchstone Energy cooperatives have donated more than \$140,000 towards the program that honors contestants who make it to the Short Go round of the state finals competition in their respective events.

This year in Fort Pierre, 145 student-athletes visited the Touchstone Energy booth to sign up for their shirts, which will be embroidered with the TSE logo and delivered to contestants this fall.

While Hintz has a bubbly personality and a flair for fashion, she takes pride in wearing her two Short Go Shirts that identify her as an accomplished competitor.

"It's so cool and it's such an honor to win a Short Go Shirt," she said. "It's so unique for us competitors because I don't know how many states actually get the opportunity to receive something like this. Every contestant appreciates it. The more shirts the merrier!"

Tobi, a national finalist in the rodeo

queen competition two years ago, has been involved in rodeo from a young age and said she likes the friendships that are forged with her peers.

"You meet so many people and make so many friends. Sometimes you wonder why you're doing it, but then you learn that there's a rhyme and reason for all the chaos and madness," she said.

Ann Sundermann has served as executive secretary for the High School Rodeo Association for the past 17 years. She describes the level of enthusiasm surrounding the TSE Short Go program that she's experienced over the years.

"Winning one of these shirts is the thing the kids anticipate the most," Sundermann said during a brief pause in the rodeo action. "We'll have 40 kids coming into the office asking where do they sign up for their Short Go Shirts. Then once they've been ordered they want to know when is their Short Go Shirt coming in. All the kids know about Touchstone because they've seen these shirts for the past 20 years."



Over the past 20 years, electric cooperatives have distributed more than 3,200 Short Go Shirts.

Sundermann said she's seen a lot of value from the program that demonstrates the electric cooperative system's ongoing involvement in youth development, education, sports activities and overall community support.

"It's been a privilege to work with the local electric cooperatives. They take pictures of the kids with their shirts and run them in their magazines and the kids send the pictures to us. They give the kids a lot of recognition for all their hard work and all they've achieved. With the commitment cooperatives have to their communities and their support for this outstanding program, I think it's a great long-term partnership and we look forward to continuing for many years to come," she said.

Marty Philips is public relations coordinator for the association. He noted that Short Go Shirts don't spend much time stashed away and gathering dust in the closet.

"The shirts get worn out because the kids wear them constantly. They're right at the front of their closets. It's such a great honor for them. They wear them to work, they wear them to school, they wear them to college and even when they're adults. I see them all over the state," Philips said. "They wear them

with pride because they know they earned it and they know they did the work to make it to the Short Go round. A lot of kids think it's better than a buckle. We appreciate what TSE has done for the kids because that's what this is all about, it's all about the kids. Everything we do is for the kids."

Todd Eliason, a recent retiree from Rushmore Electric in Rapid City who administered the program for Touchstone Energy since it began in 2002, said he looked forward to working with rodeo organizers and the student-athletes each year.

"These kids are our future, and to see how goal-oriented and determined they are and to see how hard they work, it really makes you feel positive about the future," he said.

Eliason cited Layni Stevens as a prime example. Not only did Layni earn a Short Go Shirt but she also punched her ticket to the national event in Gillette, W.Y., by finishing first in the girl's cutting competition.

"It's such an honor to receive a Short Go Shirt. The more shirts, the merrier!"

- Rodeo Queen Tobi Hintz

"I'm just grateful to be at the finals and it's an even greater blessing to get to wear a Short Go Shirt," Layni said. "It's one of your goals to get to the Short Go round. Sometimes it doesn't always go your way, but to know you get the reward of getting a shirt is just really cool. You can wear it all year long, to all kinds of events and to college."

To see a video of the event, visit www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT-oZ1Oxn7o



REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____

AUGUST 16-18
Dakotafest

Photo Credit: AFBF photo/Philip Gerlach



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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

JULY 25-30
Days of '76 Rodeo and Parades

18 Seventy Six Dr., Deadwood, SD, daysof76.com

JULY 29-31
Badlands Astronomy Festival
Ben Reifel Visitor Center, Interior, SD, 605-433-5243

JULY 29-31
Bruce Honey Days
Various Locations, Bruce, SD, 605-627-5671

JULY 29-31
Paha Sapa Cowboys and Indians Art Festival
Outlaw Square, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

JULY 30
South Dakota Chislic Festival
Prairie Arboretum, Freeman, SD, sdchislicfestival.com

AUGUST 5
Wine on Nine
Olive Grove Golf Course, Groton, SD, 605-397-8422

AUGUST 5-7
Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park, Canton, SD, facebook.com/SDFOTM/

AUGUST 5-13
Sioux Empire Fair
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, siouxempirefair.com

AUGUST 5-14
Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
Main St., Sturgis, SD, sturgismotorcyclerrally.com

AUGUST 10
Clay County Fair
515 High St., Vermillion, SD, claycountyfair.net

AUGUST 12-14
Fort Pierre Trader Days
Various Locations, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-412-8549

AUGUST 15-21
Brown County Fair
400 24th Ave. NW, Aberdeen, SD, browncountysdfair.com

AUGUST 19-21
Black Hills Threshing Bee
13380 Alkali Road, Sturgis, SD, 605-490-2024

AUGUST 19-21
Yankton Riverboat Days
Citywide, Yankton, SD, riverboatdays.com

AUGUST 19-27
Central States Fair and Rodeo
800 San Francisco St., Rapid City, SD, centralstatesfair.com

AUGUST 24-28
Corn Palace Festival
604 N Main St., Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

AUGUST 24-28
Kool Deadwood Nites
Citywide, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

AUGUST 25-28
Prairie Village Steam Threshing Jamboree
45205 SD Hwy. 34, Madison, SD, 605-256-3644

AUGUST 26-27
Hill City Wine, Brew and BBQ
Elm St., Hill City, SD, hillcitywinebrewandbbq.com

AUGUST 26-27
Sizzlin' Summer Nights
Main St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-3441

AUGUST 26-28
Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, fallriverballoonfest.com

AUG. 30-SEPT. 4
Sturgis Mustang Rally
Thunderdome, Sturgis, SD, sturgismustangrally.com

SEPTEMBER 1-5
South Dakota State Fair
890 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD, sdstatefair.com

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