

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



South Dakota 4-H Shooting

Shooters Prepare for
the State Competition
Pages 8-9

Wild Horses Roam at
Black Hills Sanctuary
Pages 12-13

Jackson Neprud, 4-H archer for Jones County, poses next to his target.

Save the Dates

Engage With Your Local Co-op



Char Hagar
General Manager

With winter winding down and spring approaching, most of us are looking forward to getting out and enjoying the warmer weather. As you plan your spring and summer activities, I encourage you to consider participating in events sponsored by your cooperative. Below are some of our upcoming events:

- **Northern Electric Annual Meeting** – The 78th Annual Meeting of Northern Electric Cooperative will be held at the Expo building on the Brown County Fairgrounds in Aberdeen on June 16. The annual meeting is not just a report session, but an opportunity for you to engage with your Cooperative. It's a chance to listen to reports from the board and staff about the operation of your cooperative, and more importantly, to meet with your district representative and the employees.
- **South Dakota Rural Electric Youth Excursion** – Electric cooperatives from across South Dakota sponsor this annual trip to give high school students the opportunity to learn how the electricity they use every day is generated. Youth Excursion is a tour that will take place from July 21-23 in Bismarck, North Dakota. The trip is open to all high school students who are children of Northern Electric members. In addition to touring electric generation facilities, the teens will also participate in team-building and recreational activities during the four-day event. The tour participants will stay at Bismarck State College during their time in North Dakota. Students who attend the Youth Excursion will be eligible to apply for the 2026 Rural Electric Youth Tour held in Washington, D.C.
- **Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast** – We will hold our Member Appreciation Pancake Breakfast at the Spink County Fairgrounds in Redfield in conjunction with the Spink County Achievement Days on July 31. Stop by for breakfast and take the opportunity to visit with directors and staff.
- **Farm Safety Party** – Northern Electric Cooperative, FEM Electric Association, Lake Region Electric Association and East River Electric are partnering again with Agtegra Cooperative to host the Farm Safety Party at the Brown County Fair. Families can expect to experience several interactive activities, including the “Power Town” display. Power Town is a presentation that teaches kids the importance of keeping a safe distance from power lines through the depiction of a rural farm scene. The Farm Safety Party will be held in the ‘Kid’s Zone’ at the Brown County Fairgrounds on Aug. 14.
- **VIP Tour** - Cooperative members from Northern Electric Cooperative, FEM Electric Association and Lake Region Electric Association will join together for a two-day tour to Bismarck and Beulah, North Dakota. Participants will ride on a motorcoach bus to North Dakota where they will tour Basin Electric Power Cooperative headquarters, Antelope Valley Station, Great Plains Synfuels Plant, Freedom Mine, and Wilton Wind Farm. Co-op members will learn how electricity is generated by wind, water, and coal during the tour. The dates for the 2025 VIP Tour are Aug. 19-20. All expenses for the bus, hotel, and meals are covered by the cooperatives. See page 10 of this issue for more information on the 2025 tour.

As you start planning for your summer activities, I hope that you will consider some of the informational and learning opportunities sponsored by your cooperative. For more information on the above events and others, check your monthly Cooperative Connections Magazine. I look forward to seeing you this summer!

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
- BJ. 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: Emily Johnson
ejohnson@northernelectric.coop

Executive Secretary: Amy Golden

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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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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JANUARY BOARD REPORT

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held January 24, 2025, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the December 20, 2024, minutes, and December expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on the East River Board meeting held January 9, 2025. Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC Meeting held January 7, 2025. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA Board Meeting Held on January 15, 2025, in Pierre. Directors Kirk Schaunaman, Nolan Wipf, and General Manager Char Hager reported on the SDREA Annual Meeting and Legislative Dinner, which was held January 16-17, 2025, in Pierre. Director William (B.J.) Hansen reported on the SDWEA Board Meeting, which was held on January 10, 2025, via teams. Director Todd Hettich gave a RESCO update.

MANAGER'S REPORT

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

- Report on Rural Electric Development (REED) Board Meeting held on January 7th, 2025.
- Report on East River MAC Meeting held on January 7th, 2025.
- Reported NEC CFO Lorisa Rudolph was seated on the Aberdeen Development Corporation board.
- Report on the status of the dissolution of Northern Wireless

Communications.

- Report on the 2025 Basin VIP Tour which will be held August 19-20, 2025.

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, February 21, 2025.
- Approved Work Order Inventories #24-12 for \$2,548,741.48 and #24-12MC for \$4,358.62 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Adopted Resolution to Amend the Rural Utilities Service Revenue Deferral Plan.
- Approved the 2025 Operating Budget.
- Authorized the board secretary to execute a current Subscriber's Agreement and Power of Attorney for Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange.
- Reviewed and approved various board policies.
- Reviewed draft of bylaw changes and article amendment.
- Approved considering the sale of towers located at the Bath headquarters.
- Held executive session.

Talk to your director or co-op manager with questions on any of these matters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

	December-24	December-23
kWh Sales	31,725,840	29,462,271
Electric Revenues	\$2,585,304	\$2,641,548
Total Cost of Service	\$2,752,016	\$2,518,846
Operating Margins.....	(\$166,712)	\$122,702
Year to Date Margins	\$1,938,712	\$2,351,957

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

DECEMBER 2024	3,094 kWh.....	\$295.34.....	\$0.0955 per kWh
DECEMBER 2023	2,849 kWh.....	\$248.00.....	\$0.0870 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 82.8% of NEC's total cost of service.

Falls Are Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed.
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment.
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job.
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment.
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather.
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended.
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open.
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder.
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface.
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge.
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support.
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top.
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom.
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use.



Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project, remember the following.

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned to the left.
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills.
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment.
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment.

Source: National Safety Council



"Don't cut trees near power lines."

Remington Welsh, Age 11

Remington warns readers to not cut trees around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Remington! Remington's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh, members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative.

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

Hearty FAMILY MEALS

EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground hamburger
1 lb. cooked pasta
5 oz. spinach
1/4 cup butter
2 cups heavy cream
1 tbsp. minced garlic
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

Method

In a large pan, brown hamburger and minced garlic. Remove any excess grease. Turn heat to low and add the butter and heavy cream. Stir and simmer for a few minutes until the butter melts and it starts to boil. Stir in the spinach and cook for about three more minutes. Stir in the parmesan and cooked pasta. Enjoy!

Lyndell Todd
Rapid City, S.D.

MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef
6 oz. chili sauce
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs
2 large eggs
1 tsp. onion powder
1 tsp. seasoned salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

Method

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook and crumble bacon. In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce. Divide the mixture into eight round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves. Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for two to five minutes.

Kayla Beaner
Centerville, S.D.

SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

Ingredients:

1/4 cup butter
1 cup chopped onion
1/4 cup flour
2 cups chicken stock
1 cup milk
1/2 cup apple cider
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. whole thyme leaves
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 cups cubed cooked chicken
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)
1 cup frozen peas
1 can (7.5 oz.) refrigerated biscuits, (10 biscuits)

Method

Preheat oven to 450°F. Melt butter in large ovenproof nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir five minutes or until softened. Sprinkle with flour. Stir with whisk until mixture is well blended. Add stock, milk, apple cider, garlic powder, cinnamon, thyme and pepper; whisk until mixture is smooth.

Stir in chicken, sweet potatoes and peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook and stir 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

Place biscuits on top of chicken mixture. Bake 10 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

McCormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

PETITIONS ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTOR SEATS

Nominating Petitions Due By May 2

During Northern Electric Cooperative's 2025 Annual Meeting (Monday, June 16, 2025) members will elect Directors for Districts 2, 5, and 9.

Incumbent directors Todd Hettich, Mina (Dist. 2), Scott Sperry, Bath (Dist. 5), and Nolan Wipf, Hitchcock (Dist. 9) are all eligible to run again and are up for re-election.

Northern Electric Cooperative uses a petition process to nominate directors. A petition must be circulated for each candidate. Candidates must be cooperative members and reside in the district they wish to represent. A designated representative of an entity may seek election. The representative must reside within the district in which they would represent. Each petition must be signed by at least ten (10) cooperative members residing in that candidate's specific district.

Only one party of a joint membership may sign a petition; but not both.

Petitions are available at the Northern Electric offices in Bath. Director's petitions must be submitted not more than one hundred-twenty (120) nor less than forty-five (45) days before the Annual Meeting to have names placed on the official ballot and the Notice of the Meeting.

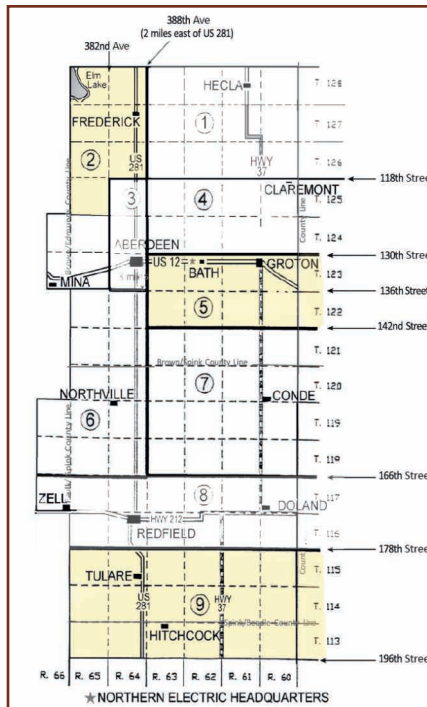
Petitions must be filed at a Northern Electric Cooperative office by close of business (4:30 p.m.) Friday, May 2, 2025. No petitions filed after May 2, 2025, shall

be considered valid.

Nominations are not permitted from the floor during the meeting.

Members may only sign ONE nominating petition for a director candidate from their district of record.

For a complete copy of the Northern Electric Cooperative Bylaws contact Northern Electric at 605-225-0310 or stop by the Bath office. The bylaws are also available online at www.northernelectric.coop/cooperative-bylaws.



NORTHERN ELECTRIC SEEKS TWO TEMPORARY APPRENTICE LINEWORKERS

Northern Electric Cooperative is accepting applications for two temporary apprentice lineworkers.

Temporary lineworkers will assist line crews with construction and maintenance of distribution lines. This is a seasonal position and applicants must have a commercial driver's license (CDL).

Applications are available online at <https://www.northernelectric.coop/employment> or by calling 1-800-529-0310.

Please submit an application and resume by mail, or e-mail, to:

Jerry Weber
Operations Manager
Northern Electric Cooperative
PO Box 457 Bath, SD 57427.
jweber@northernelectric.coop

Applications will be accepted until positions are filled.

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DIRECTOR NOMINATION AND ELECTION PROCESS

2025 Annual Meeting Scheduled for Monday, June 16

Director Qualifications

Northern Electric Cooperative Bylaws Article IV Section 4

No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director who:

- a. Is an employee of the Cooperative.
- b. Is not a member and bona fide resident of the service area served by the Cooperative located within the particular District provided that if the member is an entity other than a natural person then such person must be the Designated Representative of the entity, and such Designated Representative must reside within the district they represent.
- c. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative.
- d. Has been previously removed as a director in accordance with the procedures provided for removal in these Bylaws.
- e. Has failed to attend at least 2/3 of all regular board meetings during any consecutive twelve (12) month period.
- f. Has been employed by the Cooperative in the past five (5) years.
- g. Has pled guilty or has been convicted of a felony, any crime involving dishonesty, or any crime involving moral turpitude.
- h. Does not have the capacity to enter into legally binding contracts.

NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE BYLAWS ARTICLE IV SECTION 6

Section 6. Nomination of Directors. Any ten (10) or more members including a Designated Representative of an entity, in such District may file or sign a nominating petition, in the form provided by the Cooperative, with the Secretary placing in nomination any qualified member from such District. Each signatory shall place the date of signing and the member's address on said petition. No member may sign a petition to nominate more than one candidate, and to do so shall invalidate the member's signature on the petition signed on the latest date.

This procedure shall be followed in each director district in which the director term shall expire. Upon receipt of such petition and having found the same to be in order, the Secretary shall post such nomination in the principal office of the Cooperative. Candidates so nominated shall be identified in the Notice of the Meeting and shall also be named on the official ballot. Such Petition for Nomination shall be filed with the Cooperative not more than one hundred-twenty (120) nor less than forty-five (45) days before the

membership meeting. The order in which the nominees shall appear on the printed ballot shall be determined by lot under the supervision of the Secretary. If any nominee should refuse to become a candidate or is not qualified, in accordance with the requirements of these Bylaws, the Secretary of the Cooperative is authorized and directed to remove the name or names from the list of posted nominees and/or from the ballot.

The Secretary shall be responsible for mailing with the notice of the annual meeting, or separately, but at least ten (10) days before the date of the meeting, a statement of the number of directors to be elected and the names and addresses of the candidates nominated. No nominations shall be permitted from the floor. Each member of the Cooperative present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote for one candidate from their specific district from which a director is to be elected. Upon establishment of a quorum the annual member meeting shall be deemed convened. Voting may occur in accordance with the procedure established by the Board. The candidate from each district receiving the highest number of votes at the meeting shall be considered elected as a director.



West Central Electric CEO Jeff Birkeland, left, is the retired archery coach, and IT Coordinator Derek Wolf, right, is a first-year rifle coach for Jones County, South Dakota.

SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Dedicated practice is the price each marksman pays to qualify and compete at the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports state event.



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

This year, hundreds of shooters will compete on April 25-27 to showcase marksmanship. Their hard work will be on display as every shot will impact the final score. Among these competitors is a dedicated group from Jones County, South Dakota. For the past two decades, employees from West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, S.D., have dedicated their time to coaching various 4-H shooting disciplines.

“It’s the cooperative giving back to the community and promoting our youth,” said Jeff Birkeland, CEO of West Central Electric. “A few years ago, we took 41 kids to state, and we brought home 43 state trophies. I’m proud of our kids.”

Birkeland coached archery for 15 years and happily recounted the experience with his two boys during that time.

“Kids want to shoot. We have the best participation in shooting sports

than we have in anything else.”

Birkeland’s son, Jacob, competed for 10 years in shooting sports among other 4-H competitions.

“While I explored many aspects of 4-H, shooting sports became my primary focus,” Jacob said. “I began my journey in shooting sports with BB gun and was introduced to archery. Archery quickly became my main area of competition, and it has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful part of my 4-H experience.”

This experience offered him a competitive edge as well as bonding memories that Jacob vouches as life shaping.

“One of the greatest highlights of my time in 4-H has been the lasting friendships and memories I’ve built along the way,” Jacob said. “Whether it was constructing a trophy shelf with my grandpa, having archery competitions against my dad to see who had to do the chores or representing South Dakota at the national shooting sports event – each experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I would not be where I am today without it.”



Matthew Birkeland, left, stands with Hayzen Sealey, right, at the spring state competition.

Derek Wolf, IT coordinator for West Central Electric and first-year coach for Jones County 4-H, said, “We begin practicing once a week in January. We work on safety first – getting the kids comfortable with their firearms. Then, we step into practicing for competition.”

Each county competes in three matches leading up the state competition, and every participant must make a qualifying score in at least one match to qualify for state.

“We encourage every kid to enter and compete in all three matches,” Birkeland said. “It’s better to practice at it instead of getting to state and having the wheels fall off.”

The art of practicing perfectly is what brings these competitors to state. Birkeland noted that those who practice, will win. And those who overcome a disappointment may come home with the trophy.

“It teaches those kids a lot about life,” Birkeland said. “You practice and practice, you put the time in and then one thing happens – one flinch,

one mistake and it’s over. Emotionally, hopefully it strengthens them a bit. Instead of breaking down and crying, you better be able to handle it...Limit your problems. Don’t increase them with a mental meltdown.”

Wolf agreed with this sentiment and described how overcoming a bad shot and being mentally tough is sometimes more important than being a skilled shooter.

“There are a lot of kids who find success in this, so I find it rewarding to be involved as a coach,” he said.

Wolf’s daughter, Sophie, competes in .22 rifle and archery and remarked that the highlight of the competition was that it challenged her and made her a stronger competitor. She trains twice per week for several hours while preparing for the state competition.

“I feel excitement when I compete,” Sophie said. “I love the challenge.”

In 2024, more than 1,600 participants competed in various disciplines at the spring state shooting event. These disciplines

are pistol, archery, rifle, hunting and western heritage. An additional 270 participants competed in the fall state shooting event for shotgun and muzzleloading. Each year, the top five shooters win trophies and this year’s winners may be chosen to represent at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb., on June 22-27. Last year, South Dakota tied for 2nd place with Missouri at the national event.

John Keimig, South Dakota State University Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, emphasized that the shooting program is made great by the people who volunteer.

“One of the great things about small communities in South Dakota is people who give their time to volunteer,” said Keimig. “If it wasn’t for people who volunteer, we wouldn’t have this successful program – whether it be volunteers who work full-time for an electric cooperative or farmers and ranchers. They are the backbone of this program.”



Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.

Join us for a VIP Member **TOUR**

See first hand where your power comes from as we guide you on a tour of Basin Electric Power Cooperative and generation facilities.



**August
19-20
2025**



Charter Bus Tour to Bismarck

***Free for members of Northern Electric Cooperative**

Travel, tours, hotel accommodations, meals and evening entertainment are provided for you by your cooperative.

TO GET ON THE LIST or FOR MORE INFORMATION



Contact: Amy Golden

Call: (605) 225-0310

Email: agolden@northernelectric.coop

Visit our website: www.northernelectric.coop



'WHO POWERS YOU' HONORS LOCAL HEROES

Nominate friends and neighbors that are making a difference in your local community

Nominations are now open for 'Who Powers You,' a contest being hosted by Northern Electric Cooperative and the region's other Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. This is the fourth annual 'Who Powers You' contest which seeks to highlight local figures who are making a difference in their communities.

In the rural communities we live in individuals take pride in volunteering. The people nominated for this award don't do it for the recognition, but for the joy it brings them to serve their communities. A theme among last year's winners was making sure local kids and adults didn't go hungry. All three of the winners felt a calling towards what they do and call it a passion!

Member-owners, employees, and residents who live or work within

Northern Electric Cooperative's service territory are eligible to be nominated. Nominations are currently being accepted starting Feb. 3, 2025. Three final winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. Weekly finalists will be announced and featured on Keloland Living starting March 13, 2025, and the three contest winners will be announced on Keloland Living on May 22, 2025.

The 'Who Powers You' contest grand prize winner will receive a \$3,000 prize. The second-place winner will receive \$1,500 and the contest's third-place winner will receive \$500.

Becky Krause who is a member of H-D Electric Cooperative, was the grand prize winner for the 2024

Nominate Someone 'Who Powers You'

Visit Whopowersyoucontest.com to nominate an individual

- Anyone who is making a difference in the communities served by Northern Electric Cooperative can be nominated.

Weekly finalists will be announced on Keloland Living

- Finalists will be featured on Keloland Living starting March 13 and go through April 11.

Three winners will be announced May 22

- The three winners of the contest will be announced on Keloland Living and receive cash prizes.
 - o 1st Place - \$3,000
 - o 2nd Place - \$1,500
 - o 3rd Place - \$500

contest. Becky is very involved in her local and religious communities. She is part of the 'Stewards Against Childhood Hunger' committee and mentors Deuel School teachers. Her passion is making sure no child in her community goes hungry! Along with doing all that she also promotes the South Dakota farming industry.

The 'Who Powers You' contest highlights the commitment of our co-op to the communities and member-owners that we serve. We know that our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Help us with honoring them!

To learn more about the 'Who Powers You' contest and to nominate someone in your community, visit Whopowersyoucontest.com.



RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In the southern Black Hills, a watchful eye will catch a rare and breathtaking sight: a herd of wild mustangs galloping freely across thousands of acres of grassland in the Cheyenne River Valley.

For the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary staff and the hundreds of rescued horses they care for, it's just another day on the ranch.

The sanctuary operates like most working ranches, says Susan Watt, the president and CEO of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. Staff regularly travel over 15 miles across the 10,000 acre ranch to fill water troughs and set out hay, mineral blocks and horse cake. It's a trek that takes them across picturesque grasslands, hills, bluffs and the muddy banks of the Cheyenne River. A bulwark against suburban sprawl, the land remains as nature intended.

"Wild horses have been part of North America since time immemorial," Watt explained. "We have a large population of American mustangs, Spanish mustangs, horses with blood lines that trace back to Spain and Portugal, and a small herd of Choctaw Indian ponies that were part of the Trail of Tears

– They are a very important part of American history we need to preserve."

The story of the sanctuary begins in the late 1930s with a young man named Dayton Hyde. At 13 years old, Hyde left his home in Michigan for his uncle's cattle ranch in Oregon after hearing captivating tales of the wild west's excitement and beauty.

Once he arrived, Hyde was completely enthralled by the western lifestyle. With each passing year, his connection to the land and the wildlife strengthened, shaping his identity as a cowboy, conservationist and writer.

Decades later in 1987, while on a trip to Nevada to purchase cattle, Hyde came across corrals of wild horses the federal government had rounded up using low-flying helicopters. Devastated by the idea of the free-roaming herds confined to pens, Hyde was inspired to create a refuge for wild horses where they could run free.

Hyde petitioned congress to allow him to take some of the captured horses and create a sanctuary. South Dakota Governor George Mickelson, who had learned of Hyde's ambitions and was supportive, invited Hyde to inspect a piece of land known as Chilson Canyon near Hot Springs, S.D.

For nearly 40 years now, that piece of land plus Hyde's hard work has given hundreds of wild horses another chance to roam wild. However, it's a luxury very few wild horses receive.

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported

WILD HORSE SANCTUARY

rounding up over 40,000 wild horses to control herd populations, which can grow rapidly in the wild. Their fates vary; At government holding pens, they await auction where if sold they'll be rehomed with owners who agree not to sell them for slaughter outside of the U.S.

According to Watt and other wild horse advocacy groups, those assurances don't always matter.

"The horses are supposed to be protected from slaughter," she continued, "But unfortunately, you put them in a trailer and cross the border into Canada or Mexico and they don't always check to see what's in the trailer."

The horses that come to the sanctuary are generally in "emergency situations," Watt said, which means the horses are being sent to slaughter or their previous caretaker died or is unable to take care of the horses.

In addition to preserving the herds of wild horses, Hyde envisioned the sanctuary as a means to protect and preserve the land's natural beauty and rich historical legacy, which includes long-ago remnants of human activity.

"This particular tract of land was the location for ancient petroglyph writings that ancient man did on cliff walls," Watt explained. "And we're protecting the pioneer history of this land; Our buildings that we use are pioneer homesteads."

Though Dayton Hyde passed away in 2018, his legacy lives on. Today the sanctuary is home to several hundred wild horses, a herd of cattle, thousands of acres of pristine prairie

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

"He used to say every ache and pain he ever had was from a horse," Watt laughed. "What Dayton Hyde really wanted was to protect this land from subdivision, to let it be for wildlife and wild horses, and keep it safe and protected. I think South Dakota should be immensely proud of what Dayton Hyde has done."

For more information about the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, visit www.wildmustangs.com.



(Above) Dayton Hyde, founder of the sanctuary.
(Below) The sanctuary encompasses more than 10,000 acres of land along the Cheyenne River near Hot Springs, S.D.
Photos by Alvis Uptis





The Vinyl Record Club at the Custer County Library meets once each month. Photo submitted by Custer County Library

CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

Fun Awaits At Your Local Library!

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In honor of Dr. Seuss’s birthday, March is National Reading Month – and the best place to celebrate is at your local library. Whether you are into reading or are just looking for a fun weekday activity, your local library is sure to have something that interests you and your family. Stop in at your local library to learn about fun activities like the ones below!

Custer County Library – Vinyl Record Club, Seed Library, Letterboxing

As the snow melts and the first leaves of spring begin to unfurl, the Custer County Library transforms into a hub of inspiration for community gardeners of all skill levels. With engaging seminars and resources for everyone to enjoy, Custer’s library is the perfect place for community members of all ages to cultivate a love for gardening.

One of the library’s most beloved initiatives is the seed library, made possible by the contributions of the Custer Mile

High Garden Club. This unique resource invites visitors to explore a collection of seeds that they can use whether they’re growing vegetables in their garden or flowers on the kitchen counter.

Seeds are sorted by type, Myers explained, with sections dedicated to seeds you start indoors, seeds you start outdoors, root vegetables, leafy greens, flowers, herbs and so on.

The library also hosts educational seminars covering topics including hydroponics and sowing seeds in the wintertime.

“Master gardeners come to talk on related topics and we’ll have free plant clippings and free seed packets available for people to pick up,” Myers explained. “It just kind of kicks off our gardening season.”

Gardening isn’t the only thing bringing people together at the Custer County Library. The Vinyl Record Club transforms the library into a relaxing lounge where community members connect over their shared love of music.

“Everyone brings their favorite albums,

and you can play a song or two to share,” Librarian Sarah Myers explained. “We just saw it as a potential to bring people together and capture that interest of vinyl. It’s kind of fun to see different generations of people interacting together.”

Myers also promotes outdoor opportunities through a scavenger hunt activity called letterboxing.

Similar to geocaching – just without the coordinates – letterboxing requires players follow hints and clues about their surroundings. Myers prepares clues in a similar fashion to the one below that guides players to a cache on the Mickelson Trail.

“Park near search and rescue, ready for a quest. Walk toward Hill City, following the rest. From the little stop sign, take 220 steps on track. Search high and low for a quartz throne, no looking back. If you see the football field sign, you’ve gone too far. Take a seat on the throne, reach down, and there’s your star.”

From under benches to tucked between rocks, players scour the area for the hidden stamp to ink their logbooks and continue to the next step of their adventure.

“We love getting people outside,” Myers continued. “This was a way for families to have little mini adventures. Libraries

are more than just books – they’re a place where you can build community and find community.”

Madison Public Library – Chess Club, Trivia Night

In Madison, Librarian Lisa Martin keeps her community sharp with brain-building activities and clubs for people of all ages.

The library’s reach extends beyond its rows of books and walls; On Thursday nights, The Office Bar & Grill in downtown Madison transforms into a bustling trivia hotspot where the community tests their knowledge on an array of topics to lead their team to victory.

The library hosts five rounds of trivia. Participants can count on a round focused on current events, but the rest remain a surprise to keep everyone on their toes.

“Sometimes we do a theme to go along with a month,” Martin explained. “Last January, we decided to do “Dry January” where you try and go without drinking, but it was really just an excuse to have trivia about soda pop!”

The night’s winner receives a gift card to The Office Bar & Grill, but at the end of the year, the team with the most points walks away with a trophy.

The library also hosts a chess club, which Martin says attracts community members of all ages.

“It’s hard to get the boys in sometimes because they might not want to sit through things,” Martin said. “Chess club attracts that crowd, and we’ll have 10 guys sitting here anywhere from sixth grade to retirement talking to each other and teaching each other – sometimes smash talking – and it’s a lot of fun.”

Martin strives to offer something for everyone. Whether it’s inviting Lake Herman State Park rangers to demonstrate outdoor skills, holding puzzle competitions or hosting talented musicians, Madison Public Library will have something to get you involved.

Gregory Public Library – STEAM Club

At the Gregory Public Library, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Club, is working to spark children’s imaginations and show them opportunities for new

hobbies, or even future careers.

The after-school club focuses on hands-on lessons where students often have an active role in the experiment.

“We started off by inviting Sanford in and the kids were able to do an experiment where they extracted DNA from strawberries,” Librarian Tara Engel said of the early days of the club. “We’ve also used our LEGOs to introduce engineering, we’ve used a lot of art supplies, we’ll do chemistry experiments with microscopes – Our STEAM Club is really getting kids thinking and doing things in a different manner.”

One of the most popular initiatives has been the bridge construction lab, where students use recycled materials like cardboard tubes to construct different bridges and learn basic engineering concepts.

“We use some of our bridge and construction books in our nonfiction section as examples,” Engel explained. “Then we have them use cardboard, construction paper, straws and strings to try and hold their bridge up.”

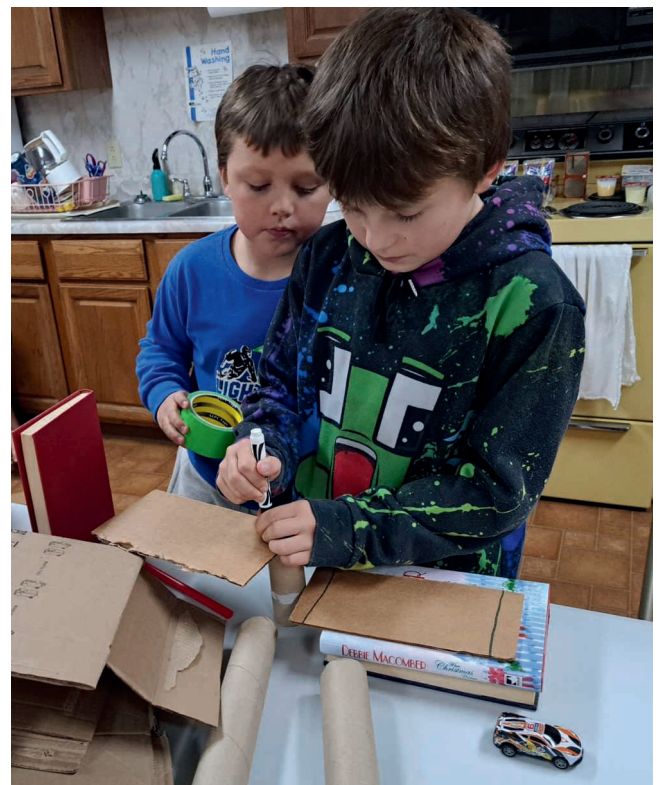
The moment of truth comes when the bridge’s structural soundness is tested by the weight of a Matchbox car driving across the deck.

The library also makes use of challenge cards for LEGOs, where students draw a card with a creation challenge and students ranging from making the tallest tower to building a musical instrument that makes a sound.

“It’s fun to see how the students come together to form teams and work together,” Engel said.



(Above) Trivia Night winners in Madison.
Photo submitted by Madison Public Library



(Right) Gregory students work on a cardboard bridge.
Photo submitted by Gregory Public Library



MARCH 14-15
St. Patrick's Day
Weekened
Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

FEB. 28-MARCH 1
Mardi Gras Weekend
 8 p.m. Fri.-10 p.m. Sat.
 Main Street
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

MARCH 6
SD Jazz Festival Concert
 Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7:30 p.m.
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Aberdeen, SD
 Tickets Available at Concert

MARCH 8-9
Philip Area Annual Gun Show
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 American Legion Hall
 Philip, SD

MARCH 8
Epiphany Sausage Sale
 10 a.m. until gone
 Parish Hall
 Epiphany, SD

MARCH 14-15
Badlands Quilter Weekend
Getaway
 Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 8 a.m.
 Community Center, Wall, SD
 605-685-5718

MARCH 20
Sixtiesmania: A Journey
Through the Sixties
 Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7 p.m.
 Aberdeen Civic Theater
 Purchase Tickets at
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org
 or Interior Design Concepts
 21 N. Main St, Aberdeen, SD
 605-229-0510

MARCH 22
Annual Banquet & Bash
 Britton Area Chamber of Commerce
 5:30 p.m.
 605-448-8130

MARCH 26
Hill City Garden Club
Trip to Central Asia
 1 p.m.
 Kathryn Cleveland
 Hill City Super 8
 Hill City, SD

MARCH 29
Ready. Set. Grow!
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners
 Codrington CTY Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 605-838-7098

APRIL 3
Bachelors of Broadway:
Gentlemen of the Theatre
 Aberdeen Community Concert Association
 7 p.m.
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center
 Purchase Tickets at
aberdeencommunityconcerts.org
 or Interior Design Concepts
 21 N. Main St, Aberdeen, SD
 605-229-0510

APRIL 4-5
Annual Schmeckfest
 German Heritage Celebration
 748 S Main St
 Freeman, SD
 605-925-4237

APRIL 4
Mitchell Technical College
2025 Alumni Gathering
Cornhole Tournament
 5 p.m. Social
 6:30 p.m. Tournament
 The World's Only Corn Palace
 Mitchell, SD
 605-995-7342

APRIL 4-6, 11-13
Women Playing Hamlet
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.
 Mighty Corson Art Players
 Corson, SD
www.mightycorson.com

APRIL 5-6
Youth & Family Kids Fair
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-4p.m.
 The Monument
 Rapid City, SD
 605-342-4195

APRIL 11-12
Junkin' Market Days Spring
Market
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD
www.junkinmarketdays.com

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