

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Gardening Greats

**Master Gardeners
Cultivating Community
Growth**

Pages 8-9

Bridging History
Pages 12-13

Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.

Proposed Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws



Mike Traxinger
District 1 Director

At this year's upcoming annual meeting on June 16th the members will be voting on an amendment to the articles of incorporation and bylaws that was recently recommended by the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors.

Over the past year or so, the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors policy committee has continued reviewing the director districts and discussing how to create more parity amongst the director districts. You may recall that we discussed this at last year's annual member meeting, when a copy of this chart was shared with the membership.

**Comparison of Membership Change
2023-1997**

Director By District	12/31/2023 # Members	% of Total Members	12/31/1997 # Members	% of Total Members	Change # Members	% Change 1997-2023
1 Mike Traxinger	269	5.5%	351	8.5%	(82)	-23.4%
2 Todd Hettich	849	17.4%	663	16.1%	186	28.1%
3 Ron Kaaz	624	12.8%	598	14.5%	26	4.3%
4 Josh Larson	446	9.1%	442	10.7%	4	0.9%
5 Scott Sperry	1,410	28.9%	641	15.5%	769	120.0%
6 Kirk Schaunaman	375	7.7%	315	7.6%	60	19.0%
7 BJ Hansen	260	5.3%	389	9.4%	(129)	-33.2%
8 Fran Esser	300	6.2%	339	8.2%	(39)	-11.5%
9 Nolan Wipf	342	7.0%	388	9.4%	(46)	-11.9%
Total Members	4,875		4,126		749	18.2%
Average Per District	542		458		83	

**Northern Electric and Spink Electric merged in 1997.*

The policy committee and board of directors discussed several different ideas to make representation more equitable, including: 1) redistricting the current director districts; 2) changing the number of districts from nine districts (one director per district) to three districts (three directors per district); or 3) reducing the number of directors and redistricting the director districts.

Northern Electric's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws currently require nine directors and nine districts, meaning that options two and three above are not possible without an amendment to the articles of incorporation and bylaws. After several meetings, the policy committee realized that it is difficult to redistrict nine director districts in a way that created greater parity amongst the director districts. The policy committee preferred alternative options, but those options would require the members approving an amendment to the articles of incorporation and bylaws.

For these reasons, the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors has placed an amendment on the ballot at the upcoming 2025 annual member meeting that, if approved, would authorize the board to consider options two and three above, as well as other options. The proposed amendment would authorize the Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors to set the number of directors in board policy, provided that the number of directors shall not be fewer than five directors and no more than nine directors. The proposed amendment would also authorize the board to set the number of director districts.

The Northern Electric Cooperative Board of Directors encourages everyone to attend the upcoming annual meeting to learn more about the proposed amendment and vote on it. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the proposed amendment, please reach out to your director. You can read the language of the proposed amendment on page 10 of this issue.

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

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.

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 28, 2025, at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the February 21, 2025, minutes, and expenditures. The board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Kirk Schaunaman reported on actions taken by the East River board at the March 6, 2025, meeting. South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) Director Nolan Wipf reported on actions taken by the SDREA board at the March 27-28, 2025, meeting. Directors Todd Hettich and Scott Sperry reported on the 2025 NRECA PowerXchange meeting held March 7-12. Director William (B.J.) Hansen reported on the actions taken by the South Dakota Renewable Energy Association meeting on March 14, 2025. Director Todd Hettich gave an update on RESCO board activities. Hettich also reported on recent building committee activities.

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 via Teams on March 4, 2025.
- Report on the East River MAC Meeting held via Teams on March 4, 2025.
- Report on the employee meeting held on March 10, 2025.
- Report on the recipients of the 2025 Basin Electric and Northern Electric scholarships.

- Report on update from Grow Spink Executive Director Gianna Schieffer.
- Staff provided written reports for their respective departments.

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, April 25, 2025.
- Approved Work Order Inventory #25-02 for \$430,231.14 to be submitted to Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
- Approved 17 estate requests for out of order capital credit retirements totaling \$42,856.22.
- Appointed and set compensation for Election and Credentials Committee for 2025 Northern Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting.
- Approved a pledge to the Spink County Daycare Project.
- Approved changes to Tariff-Service Extensions, Section 5.
- Approved the elimination of the sub-metered electric cooling program.
- Approved changes to policies P-15E and P17-E.
- Held Executive Session.

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

FINANCIAL REPORT

	February-25	February-24
kWh Sales	31,496,351	26,698,449
Electric Revenues	\$2,886,416	\$2,456,839
Total Cost of Service	\$2,984,541	\$2,530,959
Operating Margins.....	(\$98,125)	(\$74,120)
Year to Date Margins	\$64,253	(\$9,444)

RESIDENTIAL AVERAGE MONTHLY USAGE AND BILL

FEBRUARY 2025	3,318 kWh.....	\$303.69	\$0.0915 per kWh
FEBRUARY 2024	2,442 kWh.....	\$233.06	\$0.0962 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation account for 84.2% of NEC's total cost of service.

Power Life Safely

May is Electrical Safety Month

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. **Be vigilant.** Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.
2. **Use Surge Protectors.** Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.
3. **Practice Safe Power Strip Use.** Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. **Water and Electricity Don't Mix.** It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.
5. **Educate Family Members.** One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.



"Don't plant trees near power lines."

Jeremiah Barlow

Jeremiah cautions readers not to plant trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Jeremiah! Jeremiah's parents are Mosiah and Cristine Barlow, members of West River Electric Association.

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 CHICKEN

CHICKEN BREAST SUPREME

Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts
(boned and halved)
8 strips bacon
2 pkgs. chipped beef
8 oz. sour cream
1 can cream of chicken soup
6 oz. evaporated milk

Method

Wrap each half of chicken breast in a piece of bacon. Place in a baking dish lined with two layers of chipped beef.

Blend sour cream, soup, and milk. Pour over chicken.

Bake uncovered at 300°F for three hours. Serve over rice.

*Makes 8 servings.

Sharon Houchin
Central Electric Member

CHICKEN ROLLUPS

Ingredients:

8 oz. tube crescent rolls
4 boneless chicken breasts
(cooked shredded and seasoned to taste)
8 oz. cheddar cheese
(finely shredded, divided)
10 1/2 oz. can cream of chicken soup
1 packet chicken gravy mix
1 cup water

Method

In a bowl, mix the shredded chicken and 1/3 of the cheese. Take a scoop of the mixture and roll it into a crescent roll then place in a greased 9" x 13" pan. Bake at 350°F until the crescent rolls look browned on top. Mix the soup, gravy mix, 1/3 of the cheese, and enough water to make the mixture pourable. Pour over the crescent rolls. Sprinkle the remaining 1/3 of the cheese on top and bake again until the cheese melts and starts to brown.

Nicole Einrem
B-Y Electric Member

SMOKY CHICKEN TACOS

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. oil
1 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into thin strips
1/4 cup Flavor Maker Taco Night Topping Seasoning
1/2 cup water
12 (6-inch) flour or corn tortillas, warmed

Method

Heat oil in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook and stir just until browned.

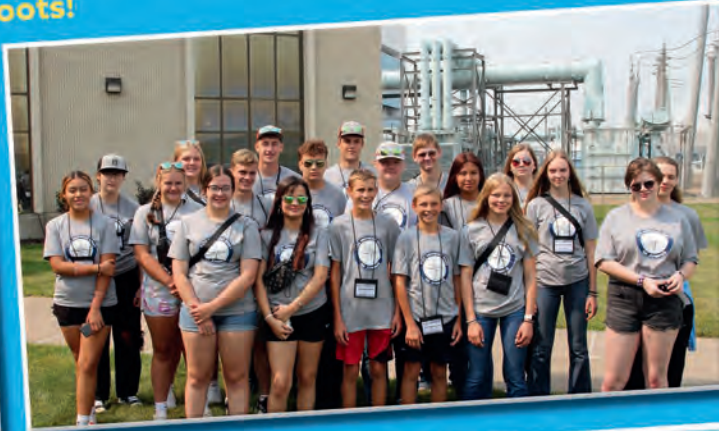
Stir in Flavor Maker Seasoning and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until sauce has thickened and chicken is cooked through, stirring occasionally.

Spoon chicken into warm tortillas. Serve with desired toppings, such as shredded lettuce, shredded cheese, sour cream, guac or salsa.

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.

Uncover Your Energy's Roots!



South Dakota Rural Electric – – – – – YOUTH EXCURSION – – – – – July 21-23, 2025



All area high school freshmen, sophomores and juniors whose parents or guardians are members of Northern Electric are eligible to apply.

- *Learn where South Dakota's electricity comes from!*
- *Tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant!*

Northern Electric will provide transportation, lodging, meals, entertainment and sightseeing events. Students are required to supply their own personal/shopping money.



For More Information Contact:

Amy Golden
agolden@northernelectric.coop
605-225-0310

For more information please visit: <https://northernelectric.coop/youthexcursion>

Application Deadline: June 2, 2025

Maxwell Kulesa of Ipswich and Ella Johnson of Frankfort Receive 2025 Co-op Scholarships



Maxwell Kulesa

Ipswich High School Senior Maxwell Kulesa receives the \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship.



Ella Johnson

Frankfort High School Senior Ella Johnson is the recipient of the Northern Electric Scholarship.

Maxwell Kulesa of Ipswich and Ella Johnson of Frankfort have been selected as the 2025 recipients of scholarships from Basin Electric Power Cooperative and Northern Electric Cooperative. Kulesa has been awarded a \$1,000 scholarship from Basin Electric and Johnson is the recipient of the \$500 scholarship from Northern Electric.

Kulesa has a 4.26 grade point average at Ipswich High School and has been on the A Honor Roll for every semester. He sat as the president for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and the National Honors Society (NHA) and is his class valedictorian. While being involved in FBLA he qualified in nationals. Kulesa is involved in football, basketball, and track. He was the captain of the football and basketball teams this year. In 2024, his team won the state championship in the 4x200 and 4x100 in track.

Kulesa plans to attend South Dakota State University in the fall where he will pursue a degree in mechanical engineering with a minor in finance. He is hoping to go into a career in petroleum engineering someday.

Johnson has a 4.26 grade point

average at Hitchcock-Tulare High School. She has excelled not only in her academics but also in volleyball, 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Johnson has held officer positions for 4-H and FCCLA.

Johnson plans to attend Mount Marty University in the fall and pursue a degree in nursing. She utilized the ability to take dual credits in high school and will be graduating with 36 college credits going into her freshman year. Upon graduation she plans to locate in South Dakota or Nebraska. "This scholarship will help to relieve the cost of my schooling since I am attending a private college," Johnson said.

All scholarship applicants had to submit an essay about how electricity provided by their cooperative improves the quality of life in their community. Both Kulesa and Johnson wrote about how their electric cooperative provides educational experiences, comfort to their homes, and reliability. "Without reliable electricity, my community would not be able to continue to experience economic development," Kulesa wrote in his essay.

"These cooperatives are very reliable and affordable, making it easily accessible for everyone," Johnson wrote.

Kulesa and Johnson will receive their scholarships when they enroll in classes in the fall. The applications were judged by a panel of Northern Electric employees.

More information,
visit: northernelectric.coop/scholarships

GARDENING GREATS

Missouri Valley Master Gardeners remove invasive bellflower and other non-desirable plants at the Dorothy Jenks Memorial Garden in Yankton.
Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.

How Master Gardeners are Cultivating Community Growth

Frank Turner

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After years of tending to her garden, Codington-Clark Electric member Dianne Rider of Hazel can confidently say she is an expert in horticulture. However, her extensive experience of working with the earth isn't the only reason she is considered a soil savant.

In 2016, Rider earned the prodigious title of Master Gardener through the South Dakota State University Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program. This program provides in-depth horticultural training – covering topics like plant science, soil management and sustainable gardening practices – so enthusiasts like Rider can share their extensive gardening knowledge with their communities.

Becoming an Extension Master Gardener volunteer is a commitment. Applicants must complete horticulture classes, pass the course test and contribute 40 hours of volunteer service

during the first year of involvement. Despite the challenges, Rider had aspired to this achievement for decades, but it wasn't until she retired from her teaching career that she was able to dedicate herself fully and earn her place as a Master Gardener.

Reflecting the adage, “once a teacher, always a teacher,” Rider continues to educate and influence those around her, even after retirement, through gardening.

“Becoming a Master Gardener has always been on my bucket list since they organized,” Rider said. “I’ve always been a teacher, so finding a way to help others through gardening is probably what’s most rewarding.”

As a Master Gardener, Rider plays a key role in organizing annual gardening events for SDSU Extension, including the Master Gardener Annual Update Conference at Joy Ranch near Watertown. This event, attended by more than 125 Master Gardeners, serves as a thriving forum for gardening clubs to exchange ideas on the latest and greatest

projects they are tackling.

“The event is a lot of fun, because when you get 125 Master Gardeners in one room – let me tell you, the conversations are riveting,” Rider laughed.

Master gardeners also help SDSU Extension achieve its broader goal: to make cutting-edge research easily accessible to the people who can benefit from the findings. Master Gardeners have regular continuing education opportunities with experts from the SDSU Horticulture team, such as Professor John Ball, a SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist and South Dakota Department of Agriculture Forest Health Specialist. Once equipped with this information, volunteers can share the most significant takeaways from research being conducted across the state through the university, providing a bridge between research and practical application.

“Dr. John Ball’s presentation on how to trim a tree after planting it is one of the best things that I’ve learned that I can now share with others,” said Rider. “He says that raising a tree is just like raising a kid: you have to shape your tree when

they are young, otherwise they turn into ugly adults.”

Master Gardener Field Specialist Prairey Walkling emphasizes that the connection between research-based information and enthusiasts is what the Master Gardener Volunteer Program thrives on. And the research goes far beyond just trees. SDSU’s horticulture research also extends into innovative mulching techniques, soil care and even studies on the growth and quality of four popular zinnia varieties.

“SDSU Extension wants to empower individuals to reach their gardening goals through providing science-based information. Each person has different pieces of land, resources and goals for their gardens and landscapes,” she said. “We strive to provide them with trusted, research-based information to help them make decisions.”

Walkling said the impact of these volunteers cannot be understated. According to Walkling, there are more than 400 Master Gardeners across the state and 14 Master Gardener clubs. In 2024, these vital volunteers hosted 153 gardening events, including farmers market booths, gardening workshops and demonstrations, reaching nearly 10,000 South Dakotans. Regardless of the event or what is being discussed, Walkling said Master Gardeners carry an infectious love of digging in the dirt.

“These volunteers help get people excited about gardening,” she said. “There are so many volunteer opportunities – teaching youth, teaching adults, maintaining demonstration gardens, answering questions, organizing events, engaging in horticultural research, writing horticulture articles – the sky is the limit.”



SDSU Extension Master Gardeners host an educational booth at the SD State Fair. From left: Lael Abelmann, Sharelle Meyer and Nancy Kadous.



Coteau Prairie Master Gardener Club (Watertown area) hosted the 2024 state conference at Joy Ranch. | Photos courtesy of SDSU Extension.

PROPOSED AMMENDMENT TO ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION OF NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE INC.

ARTICLE IV

DIRECTORS. The management of the Cooperative shall be vested in a Board of Directors consisting of no fewer than five members and no more than nine members of which there shall be one from each district. The names and addresses of the directors are as follows:

1. Randy Knecht, PO Box 28, Houghton, SD 57449
2. Dale Engelhart, PO Box 7, Barnard, SD 57426
3. Trudy Schaunaman, 38298 123rd St, Aberdeen, SD 57401
4. Charles Anderson, 40984 122nd St, Claremont, SD 57432
5. Maralyn Hoops, PO Box 51, Groton, SD 57445
6. Larry Braun, 38774 143rd St, Warner, SD 57479

7. Wayne Wright, HCR 2, Box 94, Turton, SD 57477-9367
8. Ted Pazour, RR1, Box 36, Frankfort, SD 57440-9760
9. Dale Smith, HC 75, Box 75, Hitchcock, SD 57348-9615
1. Michael E. Traxinger, 11409 411th Ave, Claremont, SD 57432
2. Todd Hettich, 418 Nesbitt Dr, Mina, SD 57451
3. Bruce Schumacher, Jr, 12884 384th Ave, Aberdeen, SD 57401
4. Josh Larson, 39756 124th St, Columbia, SD 57433
5. Scott Sperry, 13186 396th Ave, Bath, SD 57427
6. Kirk Schaunaman, 13627 383rd Ave, Aberdeen, SD 57401
7. William Hansen, 39594 163rd St, Turton, SD 57477
8. Thomas Lambert, 17088 393rd Ave, Redfield, SD 57469
9. Nolan Wipf, 18622 404th Ave, Hitchcock, SD 57348

PROPOSED AMMENDMENT TO BYLAWS OF NORTHERN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

ARTICLE IV

BOARD MEMBERS

Section 1. General Powers. The business and affairs of the Cooperative shall be managed by the Board consisting of no fewer than five members and no greater than nine members, the total number of which shall be determined by the Board of Directors. Each director shall be nine members elected by the membership from districts as provided in this article.; A director each of whom shall be a member of the Cooperative; and if the member is an entity other than a natural person, is the Designated Representative of the entity member; which Board shall exercise all of the powers of the Cooperative, except those set forth by law, the Articles of Incorporation, these Bylaws, or as conferred upon or referred to the members. It shall be the duty of each Director to participate in such activities as are deemed necessary to enhance the prestige of the Cooperative, broaden its operation and fulfill its public obligation as a member of the various communities in which it does

business and in furtherance, thereof, to devote reasonable time and attendance at meetings of affiliate organizations and at training sessions to assist and improve Directors and Officers in carrying out their duties.

Section 5. Director Districts. The territory served or to be served by the Cooperative shall be divided into director districts, the number of districts to be determined by the Board of Directors, nine (9) director districts; tThe boundaries of each district shall be being established by the Board based upon number of members, types of services, density, area served and such other equitable factors as the Board reasonably determines. The Board of Directors shall determine the number of directors to be elected from each district. One (1) director shall be elected from each district. The Board shall from time to time review the districts and may reconstitute the districts to ensure that the districts equitably represent the members.

Are you Power Line Ready?

Always be aware of your surroundings when moving farm equipment and know what to do in case your equipment contacts a power line. Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative has tips and resources available to keep you safe this season.



to learn more about
power line safety visit
YourCoopPower.com



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Electric**
Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Local, state and federal officials celebrate the ribbon-cutting of the new Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge, March 25, 2025. Photo by Marcy Anderson, Courtesy of the Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce.

BRIDGING HISTORY

The Demolition of the Waldron Memorial Bridge

Frank Turner

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Tons of concrete and steel came crashing down in a planned demolition of the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge that connected Pierre and Fort Pierre over a half mile stretch of river. The planned explosion marked a significant historic moment for not only Pierre and Fort Pierre, but also eastern and western South Dakota.

The demolition of the bridge unfolded in seconds. A plume of black smoke erupted from the detonating cord placed at key points in the bridge, quickly followed by a bone-rattling shock wave. Paul Nelson, a recently retired employee of the South Dakota Department of Transportation, witnessed the end of the bridge's 63-year lifespan. Nelson, a member of Oahe Elec-

tric, spent over 40 years with the SDDOT, serving most of that time as the regional bridge engineer. In this role, he was responsible for the maintenance, inspection and upkeep of the very bridge that he saw demolished.

As legacy bridge engineer, this was not Nelson's first experience with such a demolition. "I had actually witnessed the 1986 demolition of the old truss bridge that was just downstream of the current railroad bridge – so I have been around something of this magnitude before," he explained.

Even still, Nelson laughed that the modern demolition had a "pretty good report when it went off."

Although the bridge has been decommissioned, its history endures. In 2002, the bridge was dedicated to Lt. Cmdr. John C.

Waldron, a naval aviator from Fort Pierre who led a torpedo squadron during the Battle of Midway in World War II. His actions proved pivotal in the battle, but led to death of himself and most of his squadron. Of the 30 men who served under his command, only one survived the Battle of Midway.

Waldron's legacy is still commemorated through the new Pierre-Fort Pierre Bridge, which had its ribbon-cutting ceremony last month.

Construction of the new bridge began in 2020, just yards from the old bridge's location. In total, the bridge cost nearly \$50 million and is designed to last a century.

"This bridge is going to be a beautiful and wonderful enhancement to the communities and something that will last more than a hundred years," South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden said at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new bridge that now connects the two halves of the state.

BRIDGE DEMOLITION



The Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge comes crashing down at 9:03 a.m., on March 13.
Photos by Frank Turner.





Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.

PROTECT AND SERVE

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Police Officers Memorial Day and the week as National Police Week.

As we pay special recognition to our law enforcement officers, we want to spotlight some of the selfless work police officers do to better serve communities and make positive impacts in people's lives.

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

In Belle Fourche, it's fun to hang out with the cops.

That's the consensus among fifth graders in the Kids-n-Cops programs when officers from the Belle Fourche Police Department arrive at kids' homes early in the morning to pick them up for an unforgettable Christmas shopping spree.

"We pick up the kids from their houses, drive them around for about a half hour and let them activate the lights and sirens, then we bring them to Runnings and go on a shopping spree for their family," explained Police Chief Ryan Cherveny. "They can buy shopping cart loads of gifts for everyone in their house, and then still buy some gifts for themselves."

The outing continues with games, gift wrapping and a pizza party. At the end of the day, officers drop the kids off at their

homes, leaving behind not only presents but a lasting friendship.

The police department works with the school to target children who may be going through something at home or could otherwise benefit from a friendly acquaintance with some of Belle Fourche's finest.

The program is supported by donations from community – last year, the community sponsored \$500 shopping limits for 16 kids.

Cherveny, who's headed the program for more than a decade, says it's as big of a hit with his officers as it is with the fifth graders.

"It's one of the things every year the officers look forward to," Cherveny explained. "We never have to ask for volunteers because just about everybody volunteers. Even the guys working the overnights come in, do the event, and then

go home and try to get the last two hours of sleep before they come back to work."

Knowing the community members they serve and making a difference in the life of a kid boosts officers' mental health "tremendously," he added.

"It helps keep the officers grounded – they know the people that they're serving and that they're there to protect. [Knowing community members] can help alleviate a really stressful situation into a much more manageable one where we're able to work with people to resolve things."

He continued, "Our main focus is just being out there in the community, helping kids recognize that when we show up to their houses during negative events, we're there because we have a job – it's less scary for the children and they see we're people they can always come to when they need somebody"

The success of the program and the outpouring of community support has led the department to expand their community involvement beyond Christmas shopping, according to Police Administrative Technician Mardi Reeves. The police force also distributed grocery

cards, gift bags, food and blankets to families in need. Reeves estimates a community-wide impact of nearly 200 people in 2024.

Police officers and other first responders also coach little league sports, with plans to soon offer registration fee and equipment “scholarships” so any kid can get involved.

“There are a lot of under-privileged children who can’t be in sports that end up wandering around town with nothing to do and trouble tends to find them,” Reeves said. “Having them participate in a sport really helps with that.”

Cherveney says he is grateful for the continued community support that not only makes the Kids-n-Cops program possible, but also creates lasting friendships and memories for kids and their families.

“We had a kid that went shopping with us, and he ended up buying a popcorn popper, oil, butter, cheese, and the different popcorn toppings along with gifts for his other siblings,” Cherveney remembered. “The family had never been able to go to a movie – the parents worked rough schedules – so this was the opportunity. The kid bought some movies and a Blu-ray player and the whole purpose was so that they could sit down and watch movies as a family.”

Gregory Police Chief Ryan Cook also believes in the merits of community

involvement. In Gregory, he spearheads multiple community initiatives including the popular bike rodeo.

A partnership between the police department, Avera Health and Gregory’s volunteer ambulance and fire services, the bike rodeo teaches kids – and anyone else interested – the rules of the road for kids on bicycles as well as other safety tips.

“We have volunteers at different stations and the kids go around to each station and participate in whatever event that is,” Cook explained. “One of the stations is helmet sizing and we hand out free helmets, other stations make sure the bicycle chain is lubed up and tight and the different parts are working correctly, and so on.”

The department is involved in other ways, too. For example, the officers work with the post office to ensure children’s letters to Santa Claus are delivered to the North Pole and receive a response.

The involvement is a necessity, explained Cook, because police can’t do their jobs and serve their communities without building relationships first.

“You need to be someone the community trusts,” he said. “You want folks to be comfortable approaching you, knowing there’s an open door, knowing they’re welcome to make the phone call or stop in. And obviously, when our officers are active and out doing stuff, it’s that much easier.”



Officer Allan Guinard helps local children with their Christmas shopping.
Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.



The Annual Bike Rodeo. Photo courtesy of the Gregory Police Dept.

Women in Law Enforcement



Metzger

Public service knows no gender, and neither does a career in law enforcement. That’s the message South Dakota Highway Patrol

deputy Emily Metzger wants to send to young girls with a passion for public service.

Originally from Kansas, Metzger attended the University of South Dakota in Vermillion to study criminal justice and public administration.

“I wanted to be in law enforcement since I was very young,” Metzger explained. My grandfather was in law enforcement, and in college I worked for the fire department and ambulance and really decided being a first responder was something I wanted to do.”

After college, she attended the police academy training in Pierre, where for 13 weeks she studied everything ranging from traffic stops to defensive tactics to interrogation. Then, another 10 weeks of highway patrol academy and another 10 weeks of field training.

“In South Dakota, the Highway Patrol offers a lot of different things,” Metzger said. “All of our education and training is 100% paid for and they pay your salary while you’re there.”

While the Highway Patrol isn’t exactly brimming with female troopers, Metzger said she’s on the scene to help just like anyone else.

“I have the same expectations as any trooper highway patrol – there’s no special treatment,” she said.

Metzger encourages young women interested in applying to reach out to a local law enforcement officer for more information.



MAY 31, JUNE 28, JULY 26
Fort Sisseton Lantern Tour
 Lake City, SD
 605-910-4465

*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.

MAY 2-3
Spring Square Dance Festival
 Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.
 Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.
 Faith Lutheran Church
 Sioux Falls, SD
 Call for events & times
 605-360-2524

MAY 3
Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale
 8 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Groton, SD

MAY 3-4
Prairie Village Events
 Sat. Consignment Auction
 Sun. Season Opening
 Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

MAY 3
West River Pheasants Forever Banquet
 5 p.m. Central Time
 Draper Auditorium
 Draper, SD
 605-516-0143

MAY 6-7
7th Annual Energize! Exploring Innovative Rural Communities Conference
 Hosted by SDSU Extension
 Community Vitality
 Platte, SD
 605-626-2870

MAY 7, 14, 21
HuntSAFE Class
 6 p.m.
 Brown County Sportsman Club
 Terry O'Keefe Hunter Education Building
 Aberdeen, SD
<https://gfp.sd.gov/hunter-education/>

MAY 17
Prairie Partners Master Gardeners Plant Sale
 9 a.m.
 Brown County Fairgrounds
 Aberdeen, SD

MAY 17
Norwegian Independence Day
 Vivian, SD
 605-222-3296

MAY 17
Annual Plant Sale
 9 a.m.-11 a.m.
 Codington Co. Extension Complex
 Watertown, SD
 830-534-5359

MAY 23-25
Brandon's Big Car Show
 Carnival & Car Show
 Fri. 6-11 p.m.
 Sat. 1-11 p.m., Car Show 1-4 p.m.
 Sun. 12-5 p.m.
 815 McHardy Rd
 Brandon, SD

MAY 26
Memorial Day Services
 12 p.m. Lunch at Legion Post #39
 Groton Union Cemetery
 Groton, SD

MAY 31
Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show
 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Brown County Fairgrounds
 Aberdeen, SD

MAY 31
Miss Prairie Village Pageant
 6:30 p.m.
 Lawrence Welk Opera House
 Madison, SD
www.prairievillage.org

JUNE 5
Danish Constitution Day Celebration
 6:15 p.m.-9 p.m.
 Danish Folk Dancing & Music
 Daneville Heritage Museum
 Viborg, SD
 605-766-1312
danevilleheritage.com

JUNE 7
Day of Play
 Groton Baseball/Softball Foundation
 Groton, SD

JUNE 13
Jesse James Days
 Garretson, SD
visitgarretsonsd.com

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.