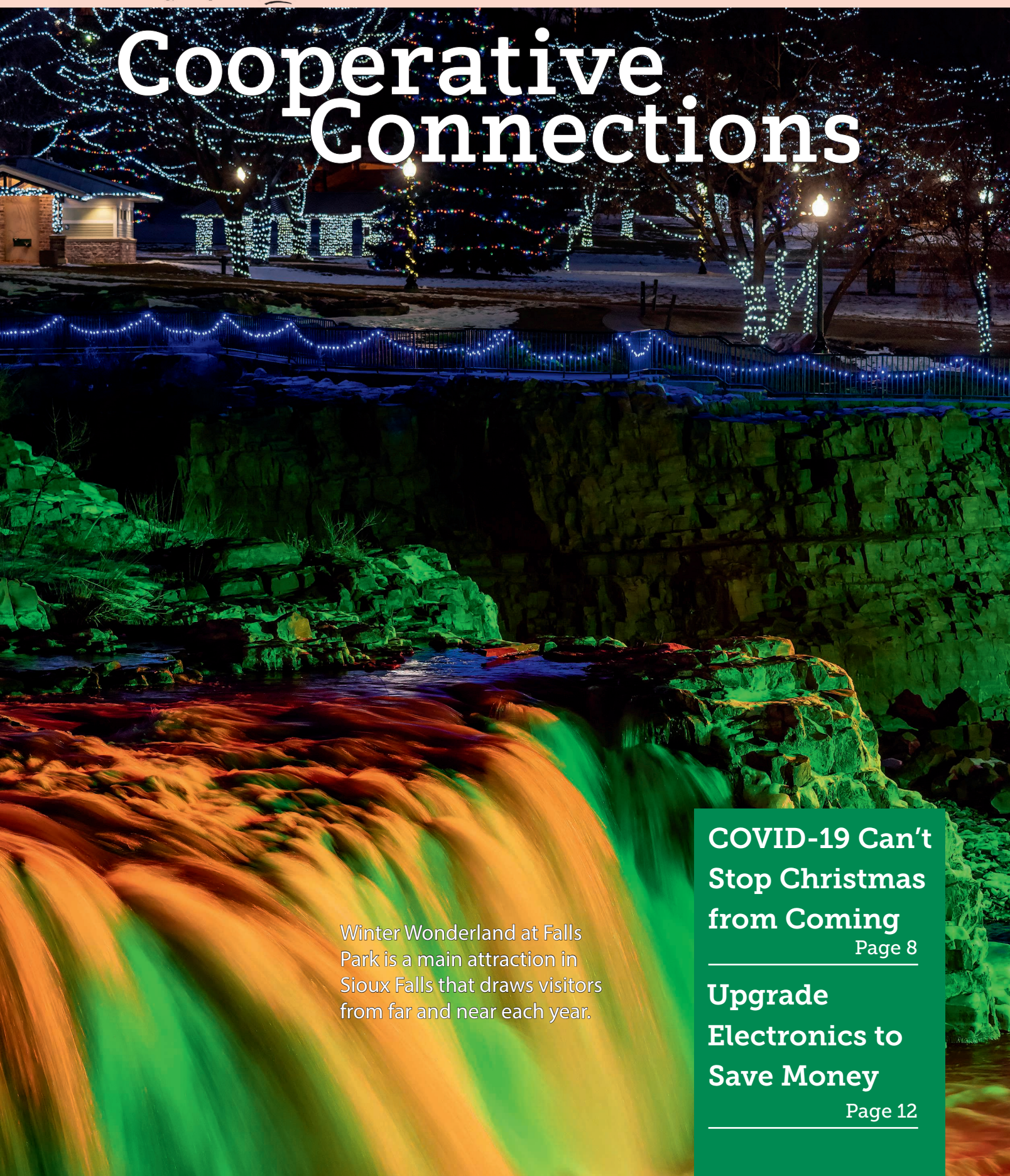


Cooperative Connections



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park is a main attraction in Sioux Falls that draws visitors from far and near each year.

**COVID-19 Can't
Stop Christmas
from Coming**

Page 8

**Upgrade
Electronics to
Save Money**

Page 12

Shop Small and Make A Big Impact This Holiday Season

Local. Local. Local.



Ben Dunsmoor

bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

This year - more than ever - it is important to keep our hard-earned dollars in our local communities.

The old three-word mantra in real estate is location – location – location. It does not matter how immaculate the house is or how many square feet the commercial building has, the one thing you can never change about a property is its location. That is the reason location is one of the most important factors in real estate transactions.

I would also urge you to choose wisely when making your holiday purchases this season. When you are purchasing your Christmas gifts and all those important ingredients for your holiday meals shop local – local – local.

Electric cooperatives know the importance of shopping local and supporting the local economy. Cooperatives were built by the community for the community. Electric co-ops were established with the hard-earned money of local farmers and property owners who pooled their resources to build power lines and substations to connect rural areas to electric service. Electric cooperatives are still owned and funded by local members today. The money used for construction and maintenance comes directly from the members at the end of the line every month. If there is any money left over at the end of the year those margins stay in the community and are returned to those members in the form of capital credits.

This year – more than ever – it is important to keep our hard-earned dollars in our local communities. The ongoing pandemic has forced local stores and shops to close their doors and modify their business practices. Let's help them out this holiday season by keeping our purchases local. When you shop at local businesses approximately 67 cents of every dollar remains in the local community according to a study commissioned by American Express in 2018. So, as you start to take a look at your Christmas lists, please, also consider this list to help our local businesses.

- Take advantage of deals at local stores during Small Business Saturday on November 28. Keep that momentum going by shopping at local businesses throughout December.
- Consider buying South Dakota-made products for unique holiday gifts. (The article on pages 6-7 of this issue will give you some ideas)
- Dine-in or carryout from locally-owned restaurants to take a break from holiday cooking.
- Tip delivery drivers or restaurant servers a little extra during the holidays to help offset the tips they may have missed when businesses were shut down in the spring.

If you make a little more effort to support local businesses during the holidays it will have a big impact on our community. So, think about that important decision to shop local – local – local over the next few weeks.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful holiday season and a Merry Christmas.



(USPS 396-040)

Board President: Donna Sharp

Board of Directors

- Nolan Wipf – Vice President
- Ron Kaaz – Secretary
- Josh Larson – Treasurer
- Fran Esser
- Todd Hettich
- Kirk Schaunaman
- Mark Sumption
- Jeff Vander Wal

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

Chief Financial Officer: Cathi Podoll

Operations Manager: Jerry Weber

Manager of Member Services: Russel Ulmer

Manager of Information Technology: Derek Gorecki

Communications Director: Ben Dunsmoor - bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Executive Secretary: Kay Albrecht

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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OCTOBER BOARD REPORT

Only Meeting, November 4, 2020, via virtual meeting.

- Reminded the board of the Mid-West Electric Consumers Assoc. 63rd Annual Meeting, December 9, 2020, via virtual meeting.
- Discussion on the 2020 Annual Northeast Rural Utilities Annual Legislative Issues Forum.

Board Report

The board considered and/or acted upon the following:

1. Approved the date and time of the next regular board meeting for 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, November 19.
2. Approved payment of legal fees for Harvey Oliver in the amount of \$1,719.98.
3. Approved Work Order Inventories #20-09 for \$374,815.32 and #20-09MC for \$101,418.02 to be submitted to the Rural Utilities Service for reimbursement from loan funds for electric plant construction already completed.
4. Authorized attendance to the NRECA Board Leadership Courses, 977.1- Equity Management and Boardroom Decision Making and 905.1-Assessing Governance: Taking a Continuous Improvement Approach to Governing Your Co-op, December 3-4, 2020.
5. Held Executive Session.

Please direct questions to your cooperative director, manager, or a co-op staff member.

Northern Electric Cooperative's regular board meeting was held October 22, 2020, via teleconference at the headquarters in Bath with all directors present. As the first order of business, the board approved the September 22, 2020, Board Reorganization and Annual Authorization, the September 24, 2020, minutes and September expenditures. The Board then reviewed and accepted monthly reports by management.

East River Director Mark Sumption reported on the East River Board meeting held October 1, 2020. General Manager Char Hager reported on the East River MAC Meeting which was held September 30, 2020. South Dakota Rural Electric Association Director Nolan Wipf reported on the SDREA board meeting held October 2, 2020. Director Ronald Kaaz reported on the South Dakota Wind Energy Association meeting, which was held September 24, 2020, via virtual format. Directors Todd Hettich, Nolan Wipf, Donna Sharp, General Manager Char Hager, Manager of Member Services Russ Ulmer and Communications Director Ben Dunsmoor reported on the NRECA Online Regional Meeting, which was held October 12-16, 2020, via virtual format.

Manager's Report

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

- Update on development projects.
- Legal and Legislative Report
- Reminded the board of the Basin Electric Annual Meeting and Member-

Financial Report	Sept. 2020	Sept. 2019
kWh Sales	18,697,672 kWh	18,468,290 kWh
Electric Revenues	\$1,974,432	\$1,938,194
Total Cost of Service	\$1,992,422	\$2,025,519
Operating Margins	\$17,990	(-\$87,325)
Year To Date Margins	\$602,449	\$344,557

Residential Average Monthly Usage and Bill

Sept. 2020	1,118 kWh	\$157.83	.1412 per kWh
Sept. 2019	1,140 kWh	\$157.05	.1378 per kWh

Wholesale power cost, taxes, interest, and depreciation accounted for 80.3% of NEC's total cost of service.

Decorate Your Home Safely

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by Christmas and holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.



Correction: Pheasant bag limit unchanged

A story on pheasant hunting in last month's issue incorrectly stated that the daily bag limit was increased from three to four birds. This proposed change was considered by South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks; however, the proposal was not approved.

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



"Do Not Shoot the Power Line!"

Luke Welsh, 10 years old

Luke is a resident of Oral, S.D., and is the son of Ryan and Rachel Welsh. He warns, "Do not shoot the power line. It might start a fire! Be safe."

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 Holiday Desserts

Dorothy's Baked Carmel Corn

1 c. butter	1/2 tsp. soda
2 c. brown sugar	1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 c. dark Karo syrup	6 qts. (24 c.) popped corn
1 tsp. salt	

Add butter, brown sugar, syrup and salt to a large pan. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil 4 1/2 minutes without stirring. Remove from heat. Add soda and vanilla. Stir 1-2 minutes. Pour over popcorn and stir well. Divide into 2 cake pans. Bake 250 degrees 1 hour, mix every 15 minutes. Break up and store in tight container.

Gloria Puetz, Salem, SD

Chocolate Kissed Macaroons

1 14 oz. pkg. sweetened angel flaked coconut	1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
3/4 c. flour	2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/4 c. salt	24 chocolate kisses, unwrapped
1 egg white, beaten til frothy	

Line two baking sheets with a silicone baking mat or parchment paper. In a medium bowl, mix together coconut, flour and salt. Add sweetened milk, beaten egg white and vanilla. Mix well. Mixture will be stiff. Use a cookie scoop, ice cream scoop or tbsp. to divide the dough dropping two inches apart on the baking sheet. Bake for 16-18 minutes or until golden. Remove from oven and gently press a candy kiss into the center. Remove to wire rack to cool.

Colleen Wolfe, Hot Springs, SD.

Scoops Ah Caramel

1/2 c. butter	1 can condensed milk
1-1/2 c. brown sugar	1 tsp. vanilla
3/4 c. white syrup	3 9-oz. bags Scoops

Bring the butter, brown and white sugar and condensed milk to a boil. Boil for 1 minute. Add vanilla. Stir. Put chips on a platter. Pour caramel over Scoops. May drizzle with hot fudge. Keep well refrigerated.

Ginny Jensen, Volga, SD

Reindeer Pecan Brownies

Nonstick cooking spray	1/2 cup cocoa powder
1 stick (1/2 c.) unsalted butter, melted	1 teaspoon espresso powder (optional)
1 tablespoon pecan or canola oil	1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup, plus 2 tablespoons, granulated sugar	20 raw pecan halves, cut in half
2 large eggs	40 candy eyeballs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	20 red chocolate candies
1/2 cup all-purpose flour	1/4 cup chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray mini muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In large bowl, whisk melted butter, oil and sugar until well combined. Add eggs and vanilla extract; beat until mixture is thick and pale in color, about 1 minute. Sift in flour and cocoa powder. Add espresso powder, if desired, and salt. Using rubber spatula, fold dry ingredients into butter mixture until just combined. Batter should be thick. Using 1-tablespoon cookie scoop, transfer batter to prepared mini muffin tin. Bake 13-15 minutes until toothpick inserted in center comes out mostly clean, with some lingering crumbs. Add chocolate chips to heat-proof bowl; microwave until smooth and melted. Pour melted chocolate into sandwich bag and cut off small portion of one corner to use as tip. Use melted chocolate to "glue" on pecan antlers, candy eyeballs and red candy noses to brownies. Allow chocolate to set before transferring brownies to airtight container. Note: Brownies will stay fresh for up to three days.

AmericanPecan.com

Please send your favorite holiday 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Have an idea for a business or development story?

Submit your ideas to editor Ben Dunsmoor at bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop or call 605-225-0310.



Business & Development BULLETIN

Bountiful Baskets

Baskets Featuring South Dakota Products are Popular Holiday Gifts

Ben Dunsmoor
bdunsmoor@northernelectric.coop

Jan and Lorren Weber of Mina, South Dakota, have been spreading South Dakota holiday cheer for 25 years through their business South Dakota Baskets Unlimited. And, this year, there are no signs that business will be slowing down.

“It is amazing how many things are right here (in South Dakota),” Jan Weber said.



Northern Electric member Jan Weber of Mina has been crafting custom South Dakota-made gift baskets for 25 years. (Photo submitted by Jan Weber)

“Both of us were born and raised here in South Dakota and we just love to promote South Dakota.”

South Dakota Baskets Unlimited creates gift baskets full of South Dakota-made products and sends them to all corners of the state and country. They operate the business out of their home and receive orders primarily online or over the phone. The gift baskets featuring products like elk and buffalo sausage have been sent to

several states including California, Florida, and Alaska.

“I’ve never met a majority of them,” Weber said about many of her regular customers.

But, Jan feels like she personally knows most of the customers who usually call more around Christmas time than any other time of year. Weber said they do 65 percent of their business during the holidays.

“Now, it’s gotten to the point where it’s fun. It is this time of year they



The ‘South Dakota Gourmet’ gift basket features a whole smoked pheasant. (Photo Courtesy: South Dakota Baskets Unlimited)



The 'Midwest Meat and Cheese' basket features buffalo or elk sausage, South Dakota gourmet cheese, and Rushmore Saltwater Taffy. (Photo Courtesy: South Dakota Baskets Unlimited)

call up and I recognize their voices," Jan Weber said.

Jan and Lorren took over the business in 1995 from a local Aberdeen real estate appraiser who was putting together the baskets on the side. The Webers operated South Dakota Baskets Unlimited out of a downtown Aberdeen storefront for 14 years before moving the business to their Mina home. They started the internet portion of the business before they even had a computer or a high-speed connection.

"It was slower than molasses in January," Weber said about their first internet connection.

"Now it has gotten to the point where it is fun. It is this time of year they call up and I recognize their voices."

Jan and Lorren's son put together the first website for the business as part of a school project and the internet sales for South Dakota Baskets Unlimited have grown from there.

"The business has been building up and the internet has been the better part," Weber said.

The Webers source their products from across South Dakota. This year, they are adding Circus Wings Sauce from Aberdeen to their product list along with lotion from the Brookings area that is made from goat's milk. Their most popular baskets are the 'Midwest Meat and Cheese' basket which features elk or buffalo sausage, and the 'Dakota Gourmet' basket that includes a whole 2.5-pound smoked pheasant.

"That's always a hit because there is no other place to get them," Weber said about the smoked pheasants they source from a business in Pierre. "It is something exclusive to South Dakota."

Weber believes the ongoing coronavirus pandemic will only boost business as the holidays get closer. Many companies are canceling traditional holiday parties and searching for alternative ideas to show their appreciation for employees and clients.

"I've already gained two new corporates who have called me because of the virus," Weber said.

And, when the phone rings, or the internet sale is made, Weber is ready to craft a custom basket full of products that will be a special holiday gift that is unique to South Dakota.

"Both of us were born and raised here in South Dakota and we just love to promote South Dakota," Weber said.

RECIPES NEEDED FOR THE COUNTRY COOKIN' COOKBOOK

Your recipe could be featured in the 37th volume of East River Electric's Country Cookin' cookbook!

Help us create another great cookbook by submitting your favorite recipes.

Submit recipes via email to ahall@eastriver.coop, fax to 605-256-8057, or contact your local cooperative for more information.

Submission deadline is January 12, 2021.





Storybook Island captures the imagination of the young and old alike both during the summer and the holiday season.

CHRISTMAS IN SD

COVID-19 Hasn't Stopped Christmas from Coming

Billy Gibson

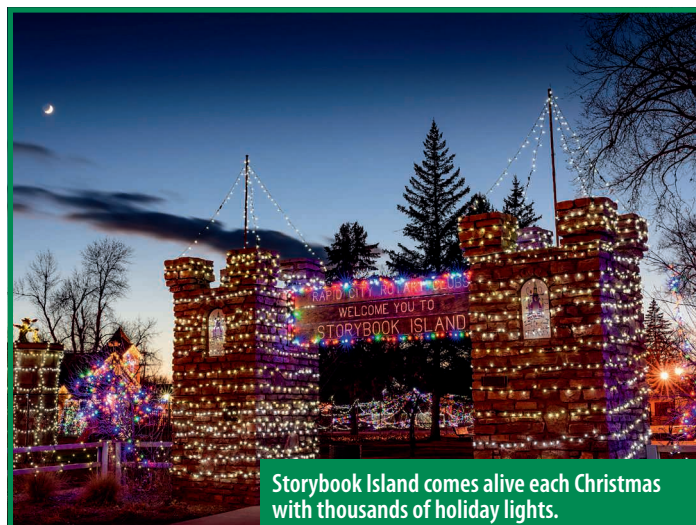
billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The coronavirus pandemic has certainly had a substantial “bah humbug” effect since it began sweeping across the globe last spring. And as the virus continues to pose a health risk going into the new year ahead, many familiar holiday festivals and events across the state have been canceled, curtailed or postponed until 2021.

But there are still a number of events across the state that are planning to proceed as scheduled, many of which have become annual holiday traditions for individuals and families looking to get into the Christmas spirit.

That’s the case for those who look forward every year to taking in the sights and sounds of the Winter Wonderland event held at Falls Park in Sioux Falls. For residents of the Sioux Falls area and thousands of out-of-town visitors each holiday season, the brilliant light display is a spectacle that not only sparks the Christmas spirit but also brings back memories of childhood wonder from previous seasons.

The Winter Wonderland exhibit includes 270 decorated trees and light poles and more than 25 miles of string lights throughout the complex that runs along the Big Sioux River. A five-story observation tower also gives park visitors a 360-degree bird’s eye view of the many eye-popping displays.



Storybook Island comes alive each Christmas with thousands of holiday lights.

The 29th Annual Parade of Lights will officially kick off the downtown Sioux Falls holiday season with festive music and a dazzling float parade along historic Phillips Avenue from 13th Street to 5th Street. But due to the pandemic this year, officials have announced there will be a twist: instead of the floats moving past the spectators, the spectators will walk along in front of the floats. The floats will remain stationary for the duration of the event and the public is invited to casually walk along the route and view the parked floats up close.

The “stationary parade” begins at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 27.



Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer shares the holiday spirit by decorating a bucket truck each year.

Everyone is encouraged to stay for an after-party and awards ceremony where there will be live musical entertainment and other activities. Admission is free.

Storybook Island, a popular attraction in the Rapid City area during the summer months, will hold its annual Christmas Nights of Lights display this season. The park boasts 16 miles of colorful lights, including dioramas, popular children’s fictional characters and a variety of additional holiday-related themes. The event takes place Dec. 4-6, 11-23 and 26-31, from 5:30 to 8:30 each night at 1301 Sheridan Lake Rd. Admission is \$3 per person.

In Custer, the Annual Parade of Lights will take place downtown on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning at 5:30 p.m. The annual event signals the kick-off of the holiday season in the Southern Hills area. After the parade, Santa and Mrs. Claus will make an appearance at Way Park for the Memorial Tree Lighting Ceremony. The parade begins at 8th and Mt. Rushmore Road and will end at Way Park on 4th and Mt. Rushmore Road.

The residents of Spearfish will celebrate the start of the season with the annual Holidazzle Light Parade and Christmas Stroll sponsored by the Downtown Business Association. The event will take place along Main Street on Saturday, Dec. 5, beginning in the morning and lasting all day.

The Christmas Stroll will take place immediately after the parade and will feature special sales and discounts at downtown merchants and business establishments. To add to the holiday mood, carolers will perform from 2 to 4 p.m., and there will be a



The Pumpkin Carriage is a popular attraction at Storybook Island.



Winter Wonderland at Falls Park offers a unique light display along the Big Sioux River.

Community Chili Feed at Common Grounds at 5 p.m.

In Pierre, revelers will ring in the holiday season with the 20th Annual Parade of Lights on Monday, Nov. 23, from 5 to 7 p.m. Prizes will be awarded for first, second and third place entries and there will also be a Mayor’s Choice Award as well as a Griswold Award for gaudiest float.

Also in Pierre, the highly anticipated “Christmas at the Capitol” event will take place once again this year from Nov. 25 through Dec. 26. The rotunda and the hallways of the Capitol Building will be filled with the sounds of carolers and musicians as well as the scent of mountain pine and the soft glow emanating from nearly 100 lighted Christmas trees. The trees are decorated by cities, businesses, non-profit groups and other civic organizations.

Popular displays inside the Capitol include a set of hand-painted porcelain ornaments and a wooden nativity scene believed to be nearly 125 years old located on the second floor.

Before scheduling a visit, check for the most recent updates at www.facebook.com/ChristmasattheCapitol.

Hitchcock-Tulare Senior Named Scholar of the Week

Hard work and time management have been the recipe for success for Hitchcock-Tulare senior Cullen McNeil. McNeil was selected as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week on October 19. McNeil maintains a 4.1-grade point average and is a leader in his school.

“Keeping my GPA at a 4.1 has definitely not been easy with the other activities I am involved in,” McNeil said. “There have been many late nights staying up until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. studying and working on my homework. It is definitely a mental strain as well as a physical strain but my grades and the other activities that I am involved in have always been important to me, so the late nights and early mornings always pay off in the end.”

**The late nights
and the early
mornings always
pay off in the end.**

McNeil is the Hitchcock-Tulare student body president, captain of the football team, and is a South Dakota Boys State delegate for the school. McNeil has also been a national qualifier for Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and a state qualifier in wrestling.

“The biggest advice I could give is to use your time wisely,” McNeil said. “When you have a study hall in school or aren’t doing anything when you get home from practice, utilize that time and get your work done.”



Hitchcock-Tulare senior Cullen McNeil was recognized as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week on October 19. (Photo submitted by Cullen McNeil)

McNeil is still deciding on which school to attend after he graduates from Hitchcock-Tulare in the spring. He believes he will attend either South Dakota State University or Black Hills State University to pursue a degree in agriculture or outdoor education.

McNeil received \$250 from Northern Electric Cooperative for being named the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week

on October 19. He was also featured on Dakota News Now for his accomplishments.

“It is an honor to be chosen for this,” McNeil said about his recognition. “I would like to thank my teachers and coaches for all that they have done to help me get to where I am and my family for always supporting me in everything that I have done.”



How to Apply

Students Can Apply Now For \$1,000 and \$500 Co-op Scholarships

2021 Scholarship Applications Being Accepted

Students of Northern Electric Cooperative members who are currently enrolled in a post-secondary school - or plan to enroll in the fall of 2021 - can now apply for two co-op-sponsored scholarships.

Bismarck-based Basin Electric Power Cooperative, which generates electricity for Northern Electric Cooperative, is awarding a \$1,000 scholarship to a student within the Northern Electric service territory. Northern Electric is also awarding a \$500 scholarship to a student of a co-op consumer. Students can apply for both scholarships by filling out one Basin Electric 2021 scholarship application which can be found on the Northern Electric website at www.northernelectric.coop/scholarships. Applications can also be picked up at a Northern Electric office.

In 2020, Christine Stoltenberg of Stratford was awarded the \$1,000 Basin Electric scholarship and Matthew Sperry of Bath was the recipient of the \$500 Northern

Electric scholarship. Stoletenberg enrolled at Northern State University and Sperry is enrolled at South Dakota State University.

The scholarship application includes information about the student's academic record, ACT/SAT test scores, work experience, an applicant appraisal from an advisor or supervisor, and a one-page essay on the topic: 'Describe how cooperatives can be economic engines for their local communities.' The entire application must be completed and turned into one of the Northern Electric Cooperative offices in Bath or Redfield by the **February 12, 2021** deadline.

A committee of cooperative employees will critically evaluate the applications and award both the \$1,000 and \$500 scholarship from the pool of applicants. Scholarships will be directly paid to the institution where the recipient is enrolled in the fall of 2021.

• Scholarship Eligibility

Applicants must be U.S. citizens, under the age of 25, and natural or adopted children of Northern Electric Cooperative consumers/members. Any applicant must be a student who is enrolled, or planning to enroll, in a full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school.

• How the Selection Process Works

All applications are critically evaluated using a combination of several criteria including: SAT/ACT scores, grade-point average, work experience, participation in school and community activities, a statement by the student explaining his/her educational and career goals, financial need, and a written recommendation by a third party.

A committee of cooperative employees will evaluate the applications and submit the entry to Basin Electric for scholarship distribution and select the winning entry for the Northern Electric scholarship.


• Application

Applications are available from local high school guidance counselors, on the Northern Electric Cooperative website at www.northernelectric.coop/scholarships, or directly from the Northern Electric offices in Bath or Redfield.

Completed applications **MUST BE RETURNED BY FEBRUARY 12, 2021** to:

Northern Electric Cooperative
ATTN: Kay Albrecht
PO Box 457
Bath, SD 57427

For more information contact Kay Albrecht at: **605-225-0310**



There are several popular electronics on the market that can help you use energy more efficiently.

Cut Energy Consumption

Upgrade Electronics for Energy Savings

Are you looking for easy ways to save more money on your monthly energy bills as the year comes to a close?

Beyond some of the more traditional energy efficiency measures, such as sealing air leaks or adding additional insulation, there are several popular electronics that can help you use energy more efficiently.

These devices are relatively easy to incorporate into your home, making them a simple way to help manage your energy use.

Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy at home. With smart thermostats, there's no longer a need to constantly adjust the temperature. They can be programmed to follow a pattern of heating and cooling throughout the day and year to maximize your comfort and energy use at the same time.

Some advanced smart thermostats out on the market today can even learn your habits and adjust the temperature in your home accordingly. Another great benefit is the ability to control a smart thermostat remotely from an app on your phone, allowing you to set the temperature to your liking before you even arrive home.

Lastly, some smart thermostats can be integrated with a more complete smart home hub, like Amazon Alexa or Google Home,

which are both hot sellers in the market. Smart thermostats can be pretty pricey upfront, but if it's time to upgrade your home's thermostat, you'll soon discover that smart options offer more convenience and savings that make them worth the initial investment.

If you're looking for ways to save energy while you and your family are on a budget, consider smart plugs. Smart plugs can be inserted into any standard electrical outlet and can help you manage the energy of the devices that are plugged in. With con-



Smart thermostats are becoming an increasingly popular option to help save energy. Photo provided by Ecobee.

If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal.

trol of the smart plug, you can stop power-hungry devices from being on longer than necessary.

Some smart plug models have a scheduling option, allowing you to turn on lights or turn off the TV at certain times of the day, such as when you leave in the morning and when you anticipate returning home. Others offer a dimming function, allowing you to change the brightness of lights that are plugged into the smart plug. These features can be controlled through an app on your phone, and some models also have voice-controlled options when connected to a smart home hub.

Another useful gadget is the home energy monitor, which helps you monitor home energy use and set energy budgets. If your goal is to reduce your energy use at home, energy monitors can give you the information you need to achieve this goal. They are connected to your electric meter and provide a big picture on your home's energy use.

Additionally, some home energy monitors can show which appliances are using the most energy, giving you the knowledge on which devices to cut down on. There are also a few additional features among home energy monitors that provide several different benefits. Some models can show you real-time electricity use and costs, while some can help create a personalized plan for energy efficiency. Most home energy monitors can be connected through a smart phone app, which can send notifications, warn about abnormal energy use and provide tips for further energy savings.

These simple devices can help you save a little more energy each month. Considering what your needs are will help you choose a device with the appropriate features. As with any new product, do some homework first to determine which device suits your home best.

Plug into Presents that Pay Off with Safety

During the holidays, many of us turn our attention to gift giving, and while the shiny, trendy and pricey may make a big splash when the unwrapping's done, practical gifts can leave lasting impressions. What's more, they can really make a difference by enhancing safety and improving security.

Here are a few practical gift ideas that can make a real difference in helping to reduce safety risks year-round.

Smoke Detectors: Most of us have at least one in our homes, but experts say that's not enough. The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a working smoke detector be installed in every bedroom, on every level of a home, and in hallways outside of sleeping areas. And, if smoke detectors are more than 10 years old, they should be replaced.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms: Carbon monoxide, or CO, is a colorless, odorless gas

created by incomplete consumption of fuels like gasoline, wood, natural gas, propane, oil, coal or methane. The gas is highly toxic, so having CO detectors outside of sleeping areas and on every level of a home improves safety. Local fire departments respond to about 80,000 non-fire CO incidents each year. Fuel-burning heating equipment and cooking appliances should be professionally inspected once a year to reduce the risks of malfunction and detect structural problems early.

Extension Cords: They are not all created equal; subject to wear; have specific use guidelines; and are never recommended for permanent use. Brittle and cracked plastic can indicate heat damage, and exposed wires or frayed connections increase risk of shock, shorts or fires. An extension cord that's warm or hot to the touch is a good indication it's not designed to safely do the job. Consider giving an assortment of extension cords designed for indoor or outdoor use. Before you buy, look for the label of a nationally recognized testing lab like Underwriters Laboratories (UL), CSA-International (CSA) or Intertek (ETL).

Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters: Arcing and sparking are indications that a home's electrical wiring needs service. Arc Fault Circuit Interrupters (AFCIs) can help address fire hazards before they occur. Properly installed by a licensed electrician, AFCIs can often replace circuit breakers in the electrical panel box. This should be completed by a qualified electrician because the installation involves working inside the panel box, which carries current even when main circuit breakers are turned off.



Smoke detectors should be installed in every bedroom on every level of a home.

Home Heating Help Available For Winter

South Dakotans who need help paying their heating bills this winter can request energy assistance from the Department of Social Services (DSS). Energy Assistance can help low-income families pay for heating costs; however, the assistance does not cover all costs associated with heating. Funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) are distributed on a first-come basis for meter readings from October 1 – May 15.

To be eligible for the South Dakota DSS Low Income Energy Assistance Program households must:

- Complete the DSS Low Income Energy Assistance Application
- The total gross income of the household must not exceed maximum income guidelines. (chart to right)
- The applicant must be responsible for paying the home heating costs.

DSS also has an Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) that is available from October 1 – March 31. This program offers income-eligible households emergency assistance if they have a disconnection

2020-2021 Heating Season LIEAP Income Limits	
Household Size	Maximum 3-Month Income
1 Person	\$6,380
2 Person	\$8,620
3 Person	\$10,860
4 Person	\$12,969
5 Person	\$15,044
6 Person	\$17,119
7 Person	\$17,508
8 Person	\$17,898
9 Person	\$18,287
10 Person	\$19,905

Source: South Dakota Department of Social Services

notice for their heat source or an eviction notice if the heat bill is included with rent.

For more information – or to obtain an application for LIEAP – contact DSS:

Website: dss.sd.gov/economicassistance/energyassistance/lowincome.aspx

Phone: 1-800-233-8503

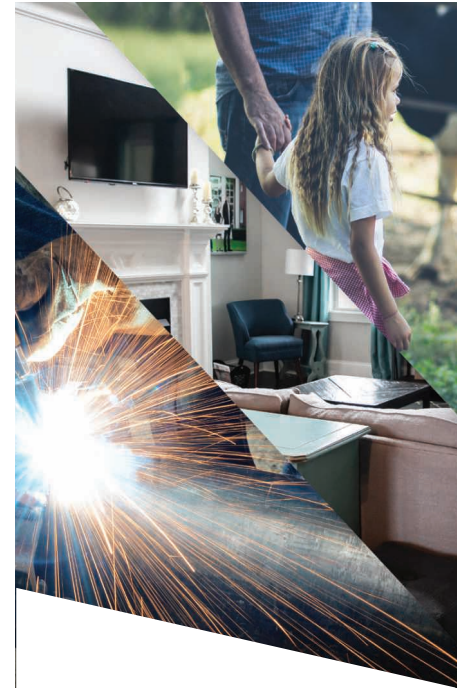
LIEAP applications can also be picked up at one of the Northern Electric Cooperative offices in Bath or Redfield.



Congratulations to Prize Winners

Northern Electric Cooperative did not give away prizes at its 2020 annual meeting since the scaled-back event did not have a large attendance due to COVID-19. Northern Electric randomly selected members from the entire membership recently to continue to show its appreciation for members of the co-op. A total of 29 gift cards from local businesses were given away. Here are the winners:

- **James Rieck** - \$100 American Express
- **Delbert Paulson** - \$100 American Express
- **John Bormes** - \$100 American Express
- **Ron Schur** - \$50 American Express
- **Travis Thompson** - \$50 American Express
- **Andrew Hendrickson** - \$50 American Express
- **Randall Hjermstad** - \$50 American Express
- **Chase Steadman** - \$50 American Express
- **Scott Green** - \$50 American Express
- **Ryan Jett** - \$50 Alleevity Entertainment
- **Tony Mulder** - \$50 Buffalo Wild Wings
- **Shawn Schultz** - \$50 Dunham's Sports
- **Thomas Kline** - \$50 Harbor Freight
- **Eric Johannsen** - \$50 Karl's
- **Delbert Gunther** - \$50 Ken's SuperFair Foods
- **Shay Karlen** - \$50 Kessler's
- **Russell Howe** - \$50 Kohls
- **Darlene Schumacher** - \$50 Menards
- **Charlotte Liebelt** - \$50 Aberdeen Chamber Gift Card
- **Charlie Tveit** - \$50 Aberdeen Chamber Gift Card
- **Cameron Lux** - \$50 Anchors Away Lodge & Resort (Richmond Lake)
- **Kelan Lechner** - \$50 Wakeside Bar & Grill (Mina)
- **Andrew Mickelson** - \$50 LaCabana Restaurant (Redfield)
- **William Hixon** - \$50 Leo's Good Food (Redfield)
- **LeRoy Braun** - \$50 Roosters Bar & Grill (Redfield)
- **Krysti Mikkonen** - \$50 Simply Charming (Redfield)
- **Eugene Williams** - \$50 Aunt Mimi's (Redfield)
- **Myron Jeschke** - \$50 Redfield Chamber Bucks
- **Jack May** - \$50 Redfield Chamber Bucks



RE-ENERGIZING EFFICIENCY

EASY ENERGY WINS START HERE

Join your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative's Load Management Program to save at home, on the farm and on the job.

Total load management savings in our region = \$231,000,000 and growing

Holiday Closures

THANKSGIVING: CLOSED NOVEMBER 26 & 27

CHRISTMAS: CLOSED FRIDAY, DECEMBER 25

NEW YEARS DAY: CLOSED FRIDAY, JANUARY 1



To participate in the load management program, contact your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative today.

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

November 20-21

Holiday Arts Christmas Show, 112 E. 5th St. Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

November 21-22

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S. Washington St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

November 24-December 26

Christmas at the Capitol, Free Admission, Pierre, SD

November 27

Hill City Olde Tyme Christmas Parade and Celebration Kick-Off, 5 p.m., Downtown Hill City, SD, 605-574-2368

November 27

Black Friday Trap Shoot, Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League, 10:30 a.m., Lunch Available, 5000 North Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

November 27

Annual Sioux Falls Parade of Lights, 7:30 to 9 p.m., Phillips Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 605-338-4009

November 28

Holiday Celebration and Winter Market, 2 to 6 p.m., Free Admission, Main Street Square in Downtown Rapid City, SD

November 27-December 27

Trees and Trains at the South Dakota Railroad Museum, Weekends, Contact the Museum for Days and Times. Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



December 1-16

Aberdeen Online Virtual Make-a-Wish Auction; Register at betterunite.com/wishdmt

December 4-5

Creekside Crafters 13th Annual Bazaar, Snappers Club Building in City Campground, Friday 1 to 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., Spearfish, SD

December 4-6 and 10-12

Same Time, Next Year, Dramatic Comedy by Bernard Slade, Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, www.pierreplayers.com

December 5

Manager Medlodies Concert Christmas in the Hills, 7 to 9 p.m., Mueller Center, Hot Springs, SD, 605-745-4140

December 5

Rapid City Garden Club's 59th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lions' and Bridger Buildings, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

December 5

Custer Christmas Parade, 5:30 p.m., Downtown Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

December 5

Festival of Trees, Newell City Hall, Newell, SD, Admission: Two Cans of Non-Perishable Food Items Per Person, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

December 6, 20

VFW Bingo, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD, 605-279-2663

December 12

Christmas for Kids, Ages 0-10 visit with Santa and Mrs. Claus, Custer High School, Preregistration is Required, Register via email custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com, Custer, SD

December 12

Frontier Christmas, 11907 434th Ave., Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

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.