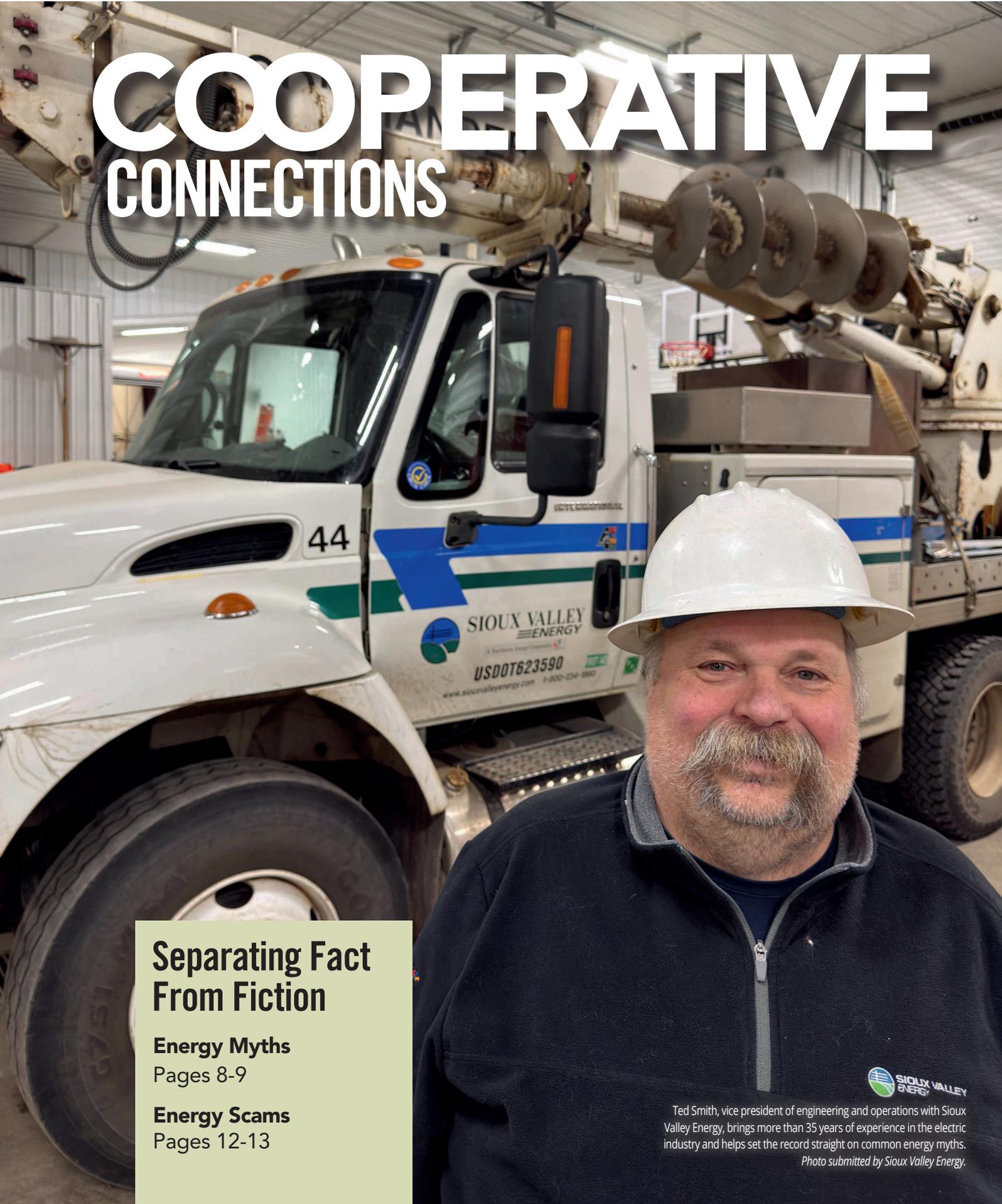




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Separating Fact From Fiction

**Energy Myths**

Pages 8-9

**Energy Scams**

Pages 12-13



Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations with Sioux Valley Energy, brings more than 35 years of experience in the electric industry and helps set the record straight on common energy myths.

*Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy.*

## Lineworkers Are Ready When It Matters Most



**DeeAnne Norris**  
CEO  
320-826-2593 or  
800-826-2593

I have the privilege of seeing firsthand what it truly takes to keep the lights on for our members. In April, electric cooperatives across the nation take time to pause and recognize the brave men and women who make that possible every single day, our lineworkers.

When storms impact our communities and outages occur, many people experience the inconvenience, but our lineworkers see a call to action. Our crews are always ready when it matters most; leaving family dinners, working

through the night, and heading into challenging conditions to restore power as safely and quickly as possible. That readiness is not accidental. It comes from regular training, experience and a shared commitment to serving others.

What makes lineworkers especially remarkable is that they aren't just restoring power to a system, they're restoring power to their own communities. They live here. They raise their families here. They understand that electricity is more than a convenience; it's essential to daily life, to local businesses, to schools, farms, and emergency services. Powering the places we call home is personal to lineworkers.

Electric cooperatives like Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association (RSCPA) were built on the principle of neighbors helping neighbors, and our lineworkers embody that spirit every day. During storms, they are the first to respond and the last to leave, often working long hours behind the scenes. At times, serving our neighbors means going beyond our own service territory through a process known as mutual aid. During major outage events, our crews stand ready to help restore power at neighboring co-ops, sometimes close to home, and sometimes across state lines. This spirit of mutual aid strengthens all cooperatives and ultimately benefits the members we serve.

We understand any time the lights go out can be frustrating, bringing everyday life to a halt. We are incredibly grateful to our members for your patience and encouragement during these times. Linework is demanding, physical, and at times, it can be dangerous. Our crews approach each job with a focus on safety and teamwork. They take pride in their craft and in the trust our members place in them.

In April, we will celebrate Lineworker Appreciation Day, but one day is hardly enough. Every day, we thank lineworkers for their service and dedication, which are the backbone of our cooperative.





## Member Informational Meetings

Each year Renville-Sibley hosts Member Informational Meetings throughout our service territory. At these meetings information is shared about what is happening with your cooperative and in the electric industry in general. This is also a great opportunity for members to ask questions or offer comments in a smaller group setting. Beginning March 9th, Renville-Sibley members had the chance to attend one of these meetings in their area. These meetings were held in Fairfax, Redwood Falls, Sacred Heart, and Danube.

The topics covered at these meetings included:

- State and federal legislative update and priorities.
- Review of the financial condition of the Cooperative
- Overview from the Operations Department on work projects completed in 2025 and what the plans are for the 2026 construction season

Members who may have questions about any of the above topics are encouraged to call or stop into the office for more information.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### RENVILLE-SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

(USPS 019-074)

#### Board of Directors

Whitey Hinderman – Chair  
 Roger Manthei – Vice Chair  
 Vicky Firlie – Secretary/Treasurer  
 Jeff Boersma  
 Gary Eekhoff  
 Alan Neyers  
 Gary Peterson  
 Helen Ruebel  
 Wayland Zaske

#### Renville-Sibley Employees

Gene Alex – Line Superintendent  
 Brian Athmann – Journeyman Lineman  
 Shawn Beckler – Crew Chief  
 Mike Benson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Brad Braulick – Crew Chief  
 Nick Bruns – Technology Manager  
 Anthony Carruth – Journeyman Lineman  
 Amy Ervin – Executive Admin and HR  
 Brayden Fischer – Journeyman Lineman  
 Carren Frank – Cooperative Support Specialist  
 DeeAnne Norris – CEO  
 Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Marc Snyder – Cooperative Analyst  
 Jill Woods – Member Services Professional

RENVILLE-SIBLEY COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association, 515 Highway 212 W, Danube, MN, 56230 for its members. Electric cooperative members devote 75 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Periodicals Postage Paid at Danube Post Office, Danube, MN 56230 and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Renville-Sibley Cooperative Connections, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230; Telephone (320) 826-2593; Toll Free 1-800-826-2593; Fax (320) 826-2679.

Web site: [www.rscpa.coop](http://www.rscpa.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## REMINDER

# 88<sup>th</sup> RENVILLE-SIBLEY ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY | 26TH OF MARCH 2026

Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls

Renville-Sibley's 88th Annual Meeting will be held on March 26, 2026, at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls.

# STAYING FOCUSED BEHIND THE WHEEL: A SIMPLE GUIDE TO SAFER ROADS

Distractions behind the wheel aren't just inconvenient – they're deadly. Each moment you allocate to anything other than driving increases the risk for you and everyone sharing the road. According to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, distracted driving claimed 3,522 lives in the United States in 2021, underscoring how costly a split-second lapse can be. The good news is that small, deliberate habits behind the wheel can make a big difference. Here are three practical ways to stay focused.

First, minimize phone use. Store your device out of sight before starting the engine. Texting or scrolling through apps draws your eyes from the road, your hands from the wheel and your mind from the task at hand. If you must communicate, pull over safely or use hands-free features only if absolutely necessary and legal in your area. Remember, many places have laws prohibiting texting while driving, with penalties that reflect the risk. Consider enabling “do not disturb” modes that silence notifications while you drive, and set your status to indicate you're driving. This simple barrier can prevent impulsive checks and help you maintain steady attention.

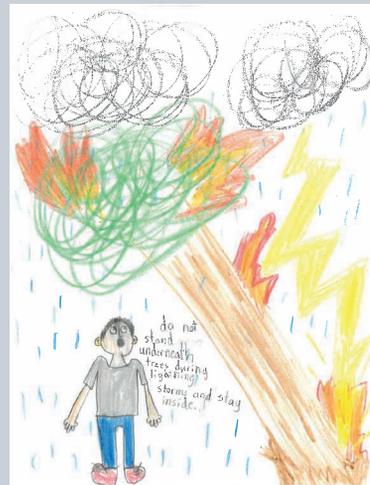
Second, plan your route before you depart. Entering a destination while driving is a dangerous distraction. Take a few minutes to review the route, check traffic conditions, and set your navigation system in advance. With your route loaded, you can keep your attention on driving rather than on-screen instructions during the journey. If possible, choose routes with fewer turns or fewer heavy-traffic segments, and be ready to adjust if conditions change. Having a mental map of the journey can also reduce the need to peek at the screen for updates.

Third, ensure you are well rested. Fatigue can dull reaction times, reduce concentration, and cause your eyes or your vehicle to drift. Prioritize a good night's sleep before long trips, and consider stopping for short breaks on extended drives to refresh your focus. Even brief pauses for stretching and deep breathing can reset your alertness and help you respond more quickly to changing road situations.

Beyond these tips, practice general safe-driving habits: obey speed limits, maintain a safe following distance and stay alert for pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists. If you feel distracted or fatigued, it's wiser to pause and reassess rather than press on. Safe driving is about consistent, proactive choices that protect everyone on the road.



**"Do not stand underneath trees during lightning storms and stay inside."**



**Ramsey Faini,  
Age 8**

Ramsey warns readers about the dangers of lightning storms. Thank you for sharing your picture, Ramsey! Ramsey's mom is Katie Faini from Rapid City, S.D.

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

# MAIN DISHES

## HOMEMADE MAC & CHEESE

### Ingredients:

16 oz. box elbow macaroni noodles  
 Oil  
 1 pkg. bacon  
 3 cups whole milk  
 1/2 cup butter (melted)  
 5 oz. can (about 2/3 cup) evaporated milk  
 16 oz. block Velveeta cheese (cut into cubes)  
 1 tsp. salt  
 Guda cheese  
 Parsley (to taste)  
 1 tsp. garlic powder  
 1/2 tsp. black pepper

### Method

Cook noodles as directed. Drain noodles and pour a small amount of oil on them while in the strainer. Cook bacon and cut into small pieces. Add all of the ingredients into a Crock-Pot and mix. Cover and cook on low for 1.5 hours, stirring once or twice while cooking. Serve and enjoy.

**Cindi Foster**  
 Codington-Clark Electric

## CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped  
 3/4 cup celery, chopped  
 1/4 cup butter  
 5 cups peeled potatoes, cubed  
 3 cups water  
 3 cups milk, divided  
 4 tps. chicken bouillon granules  
 1/2 tsp. salt  
 1/2 tsp. pepper  
 1/4 cup flour  
 4 cups (16 oz.) cheddar cheese, shredded

### Method

In large Dutch oven or kettle, saute onion and celery in butter for 5 minutes. Add potatoes and water, bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 cups milk, bouillon, salt and pepper. Combine flour and remaining milk until smooth, gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil, cook and stir for 2 minutes or until thickened. Reduce heat, add cheese and stir until cheese is melted.

**Sally Florey**  
 Charles Mix Electric

## CARAMELIZED HAM & SWISS SLIDERS

### Ingredients:

12 Hawaiian dinner rolls, split  
 1/4 cup horseradish sauce (optional)  
 12 slices deli ham (or 24 if it's thinly sliced)  
 6 slices Swiss cheese, cut in fourths (so you will have 24 squares of cheese)  
**Sauce**  
 1/2 cup butter  
 1/4 tsp. onion powder  
 2 tbsps. brown sugar  
 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard  
 2 tps. poppy seeds  
 1 1/2 tps. Worcestershire sauce  
 1/4 tsp. garlic powder

### Method

Spray a 9x9 or 9x13 glass dish with non-stick cooking spray. Set aside. Preheat oven to 325°. Spread roll bottoms with horseradish sauce (if using). Fold up pieces of ham to fit the rolls and place them on the bottom halves of the roll. Next, place 2 squares of cheese. Replace tops and place in a single layer in the prepared pan.

### Sauce

In a small skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Stir in remaining ingredients. Pour over rolls. Cover with foil and bake covered for 20 minutes. Remove foil and bake 5 more minutes. These can also be made ahead of time. Just cover with foil and refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Bake as instructed.

**Jerald & Virginia Jensen**  
 Sioux Valley Energy

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Picture submitted by zoryanchik via Shutterstock

## REC PROGRAM

RENVILLE-SIBLEY  
CO-OP POWER

### Choose Renewable Energy for Your Home or Business

You can easily purchase renewable energy from your local electric cooperative, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power. Renville-Sibley has Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) available for purchase to offset your current usage with 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% renewable energy options. The price of the RECs will be added to your current electric bill.

The electricity you receive will still be the same reliable, affordable energy you have always received from Renville-Sibley Co-op Power but, by participating in this program, you will be supporting current and future renewable projects in our area.

Your home or business will be joining hundreds of other people from across the nation who are supporting renewable energy. By purchasing RECs, your business could add value to your products or services, promote future regional renewable projects and showcase your support for renewable energy sources.

### FAQS

#### What is a Renewable Energy Credit (REC)?

- 1 MWh (megawatt hour) produced by a renewable energy source equals 1 REC
- RECs are also called Green Tags
- RECs represent the valuable renewable attributes of wind energy

#### How much does it cost?

\$1 per MWh. The average Renville-Sibley member uses 1,200 kWh a month. Participating in the REC program would add the following amount to your monthly bill:

- 100% = \$1.20
- 75% = \$0.90
- 50% = \$0.60
- 25% = \$0.30

#### Do I need to purchase any special equipment?

No. Renville-Sibley will continue to fulfill all your electric needs and you can enjoy the benefits of renewable energy.

#### Where do the RECs come from?

The RECs come from several wind farms in the region that supply renewable energy to Renville-Sibley Co-op Power. These include, but are not limited to:

- North Dakota: PrairieWinds 1, Wilton 1 & 2, Baldwin Wind Project and Minot Wind Project
- South Dakota: Crow Lake Wind, the Chamberlain turbines, Day County Wind Farm and South Dakota Wind Project

## February Scholars of the Month

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association (RSCPA), your Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is proud to recognize seniors Jacob Savig from Renville County West and Lauren Miller from Redwood Valley as our February Scholars of the Month. Both students exemplify the values and qualities that strengthen our school community, standing out not only for their achievements but also for their character, work ethic, and leadership.

Jacob Savig is known for his unwavering integrity, strong sense of responsibility, and genuine commitment to learning. A high-achieving student and dedicated three-sport athlete, Jacob approaches every challenge with curiosity and accountability. His thoughtful questions, creative mindset, and quiet leadership help cultivate a positive classroom environment, while his support for peers and teammates reflects his deep dedication to community.

Lauren Miller has built a remarkable record of excellence through her academic drive, leadership, and broad involvement across school and community activities. Balancing rigorous coursework with roles in theatre, athletics, music, service organizations, and leadership positions, Lauren consistently demonstrates initiative, optimism, and reliability. Her dedication as a performer



Jacob Savig



Lauren Miller

and her passion for contributing wherever she can make a difference set her apart as a role model among her peers.

We congratulate Jacob and Lauren on earning this well-deserved recognition. Their hard work, humility, and commitment to others embody what it means to be a Scholars of the Month at RSCPA. We celebrate their accomplishments and look forward to the positive impact they will continue to make in the months ahead.

## Scholar of the Month Thank You

Feb.9,2026

Dear Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Assn (Elizabeth Johnson),

On behalf of our entire school community, I want to extend my sincere thanks for your generous donation. Your support plays a vital role in helping us provide meaningful experiences and essential resources for our students and staff.

Whether it's enhancing our educational programs, supporting student activities, or simply creating a more welcoming environment, contributions like yours truly make a difference. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and commitment to education.

It is through the generosity of individuals and organizations like you that we can continue to grow, innovate, and serve our students with excellence. Your kindness reflects a shared belief in the power of education and community support.

Thank you once again for your generosity and for being such a valued part of our school family.

Donation: to MACCRAY FFA

Donation Value: \$100

Warm regards,  
Superintendent Holm



From left, in the Sioux Valley Energy shop: Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations; Chad Williams, manager of operations; journey lineworker Jager Rus; and journey lineworker Paul Schamber. Photo submitted by Sioux Valley Energy

# BUSTING ENERGY MYTHS

## with Ted Smith of Sioux Valley Energy

**Frank Turner**  
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Electricity powers nearly every part of daily life, yet most people only think about it when the lights flicker or a bill arrives. Because the system works quietly in the background, assumptions about how it operates tend to fill the gaps.

To sort through several common misconceptions, Cooperative Connections spoke with Ted Smith, vice president of engineering and operations at Sioux Valley Energy, the cooperative serving South Dakota counties of Brookings, Lake, Moody, Kingsbury, and Minnehaha and Minnesota counties of Rock and Pipestone. Smith has worked in the electric industry for 35 years, including 20 years at Sioux Valley, where he

oversees engineering, line crews and dispatch.

Here are several claims he regularly hears from members and how he responds.

**Myth: If the lights go out, it must be a local problem.**  
**Smith: That's definitely a myth.**

An outage can begin anywhere from inside your home all the way back to a generating station two states away. The electric grid is highly interconnected. A disruption in one area can ripple outward across transmission lines that serve multiple utilities.

There have been large historical outages, especially in the eastern United States, where a single event such as a tree contacting a transmission line triggered a cascading failure across multiple states. Entire cities lost power

because one initiating fault spread across the network.

Closer to home, severe weather in one region can affect transmission lines feeding a much broader footprint. If a major transmission line trips offline, and another line is already out for maintenance, service interruptions can extend far beyond the original storm area.

“Just because your lights go out doesn't mean the problem started down the road, close to home” Smith said. “It could be much farther upstream.”

**Myth: The grid can be powered entirely by renewable energy.**  
**Smith: At times, yes. Around the clock, no.**

Smith pointed to hydroelectric dams along the Missouri River as renewable generation that run continuously, but other renewable resources, such as wind and solar, simply aren't reliable sources of energy and only contribute

significantly when conditions allow.

“Although sometimes it seems like it, the wind doesn’t always blow in South Dakota,” Smith said. “And solar only produces during daylight hours.”

Although battery storage has improved in recent years, Smith says storing enough energy to power the grid around the clock is prohibitively expensive at this point in time.

For now, maintaining reliability requires a mix of generation resources so supply remains available regardless of weather or time of day.

**Myth: If my neighbor has power and I do not after a storm, the cooperative skipped me.**

**Smith: That’s not how it works.**

In some cases, the cooperative may not yet know a member is without service. Reporting outages remains important.

Another possibility is that the issue is on the member side of the meter. Crews may restore cooperative equipment and determine that the damage is within the member’s own service.

“When crews see it’s a problem on the member side of the meter, they will call dispatch and have them contact the member,” Smith said.

He also emphasized the importance of keeping current phone numbers on file. Fewer households rely on landlines today, which makes updated cell phone numbers critical during storm response.

**Myth: Burying all power lines would eliminate outages.**

**Smith: No.**

Underground lines are not exposed to wind and ice, but they are not immune to failure. Over time, underground conductors deteriorate. Rodents such as gophers can damage them. Excavation damage is also common when individuals dig without confirming where utilities are buried.

Before digging, members should always contact 811, the national call-before-you-dig number. That service

notifies utility providers so buried lines can be located and marked before excavation begins. Failing to call 811 can be dangerous and increase the risk of damaging underground infrastructure, causing outages.

And even when damage occurs naturally, locating the fault underground can take time.

“With overhead lines, crews can usually see the damage,” Smith said. “Underground, it takes troubleshooting to figure out exactly where the fault is, sometimes leading to longer outage durations.”

He recalled one outage that proved especially difficult to diagnose.

“One time we had an outage that we just could not narrow down,” he said. “When we finally found the damage, we saw that a gopher had chewed the bottom of the wire. You could not see it from the top. We had to dig up about 20 feet of cable and turn it over before we could see the damage.”

Underground systems can reduce certain types of outages, but they do not eliminate them, and repairs often require more time and labor.

**Myth: Wind and solar power are free once installed.**

**Smith: The fuel is free, but that’s the only thing that’s free.**

Wind turbines require ongoing maintenance, including mechanical components that need to be regularly serviced. Solar power relies on inverters and other equipment that must be maintained and eventually replaced.

There are construction costs, financing costs and transmission costs involved in delivering electricity from generation sites to homes and businesses. Those transmission and maintenance assets are accounted for over time and included in the overall cost of electricity.

Free fuel lowers one portion of cost. It does not remove the need to build, maintain and replace infrastructure.

**Myth: Electric cooperatives raise rates to increase profits.**

**Smith: No. Cooperatives are not-for-profit.**

Electric cooperatives are member owned, not investor owned. That means there are no outside shareholders expecting earnings. Instead, cooperatives operate on margins, collecting enough revenue to pay expenses, maintain infrastructure and meet financial obligations.

“The only place we get money is from the people at the end of the line,” Smith said. “We don’t have a printing press in the basement.”

In fact, if revenue exceeds expenses in a given year, a portion of those margins are allocated back to members as capital credits when the board determines it’s financially appropriate. Capital credits represent a member’s share of the cooperative’s financial performance during the years they received service.

However, in recent years, equipment costs have risen significantly. Smith cited bucket trucks that once cost around \$220,000 have since more than doubled in price, and major system components have seen similar increases. Usually, the cost of wholesale power from the cooperative’s power suppliers makes up the largest share of the budget and those costs have been increasing as well.

Rate adjustments reflect those rising operational costs and the need to maintain reliable service, not profit distribution.

Electricity may seem simple at the flip of a switch, but as Smith makes clear, the system behind it involves infrastructure, coordination and constant evaluation. Understanding how it works helps members separate assumption from reality and better appreciate the network that serves them every day.

# Renville-Sibley Electric Co-op Director Achieves Board Leadership Certificate



**Amy Ervin**  
Member and  
Board Services  
Representative

Gary Eekhoff, Director from Renville-Sibley's District 3, recently received his Board Leadership Certificate (BLC) from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). This certification is the second part of the Director Education Program and consists of a series of courses focusing in greater depth on key industry and governance issues. These include issues such as risk management, power supply, parliamentary procedure, technology, and policy development.

Directors earn their BLC by first completing the Cooperative Credentialed Director (CCD) program and then earning 10 credits from a selection of more than 20 BLC courses. While Directors may attend BLC courses at any time, the certificate is awarded only after all CCD requirements have been completed.

Today's ever-changing business environment brings new challenges for electric cooperative directors. Board members work to stay up to date on what's happening in the utility industry, strengthen their leadership and governance skills, and keep a strong understanding of the cooperative business model and principles.

That's why our cooperative — along with others across the country — participates in the NRECA Board Leadership Certificate Program.

Directors can complete these courses at a variety of times throughout the year, including during pre-annual meeting education sessions, regional meetings, the Directors Conference, Summer or



Winter School for Directors, and through virtual learning opportunities.

NRECA represents nearly 900 private, member-owned electric cooperatives that provide electricity to more than 42 million people in 48 states. Together, those cooperatives are led by more than 7,200 directors — all committed to learning, growing, and serving their member-owners well.

Congratulations to Gary on earning the Board Leadership Certificate! We appreciate his dedication to ongoing learning and his commitment to serving our cooperative and its members.

## National Lineworker Appreciation Day

America's electric cooperatives have designated **April 13th** as National Lineworker Appreciation Day. On **April 13, 2026**, Renville-Sibley Co-op Power will honor the dedicated men and women who often work in challenging conditions to keep the lights on.

We proudly recognize all electric lineworkers for the services they perform around the clock to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety.



## OUTAGE REPORT:

Affecting 10 members or more

**Date:** 1-7-2026

Time off: 9:00 AM

Time on: 11:44 AM

Substation: Henryville

Cause: Prearranged

Please contact Renville-Sibley's office for more details about these power outages.

## HOLIDAY CLOSINGS:

The Renville-Sibley office will be closed on the following holiday:

Memorial Day, Monday,  
May 25th, 2026

## CALL BEFORE YOU DIG!

Call 811 or go online to [www.gopherstateonecall.org](http://www.gopherstateonecall.org) and file a locate request before you dig!  
Toll Free: 1-800-252-1166

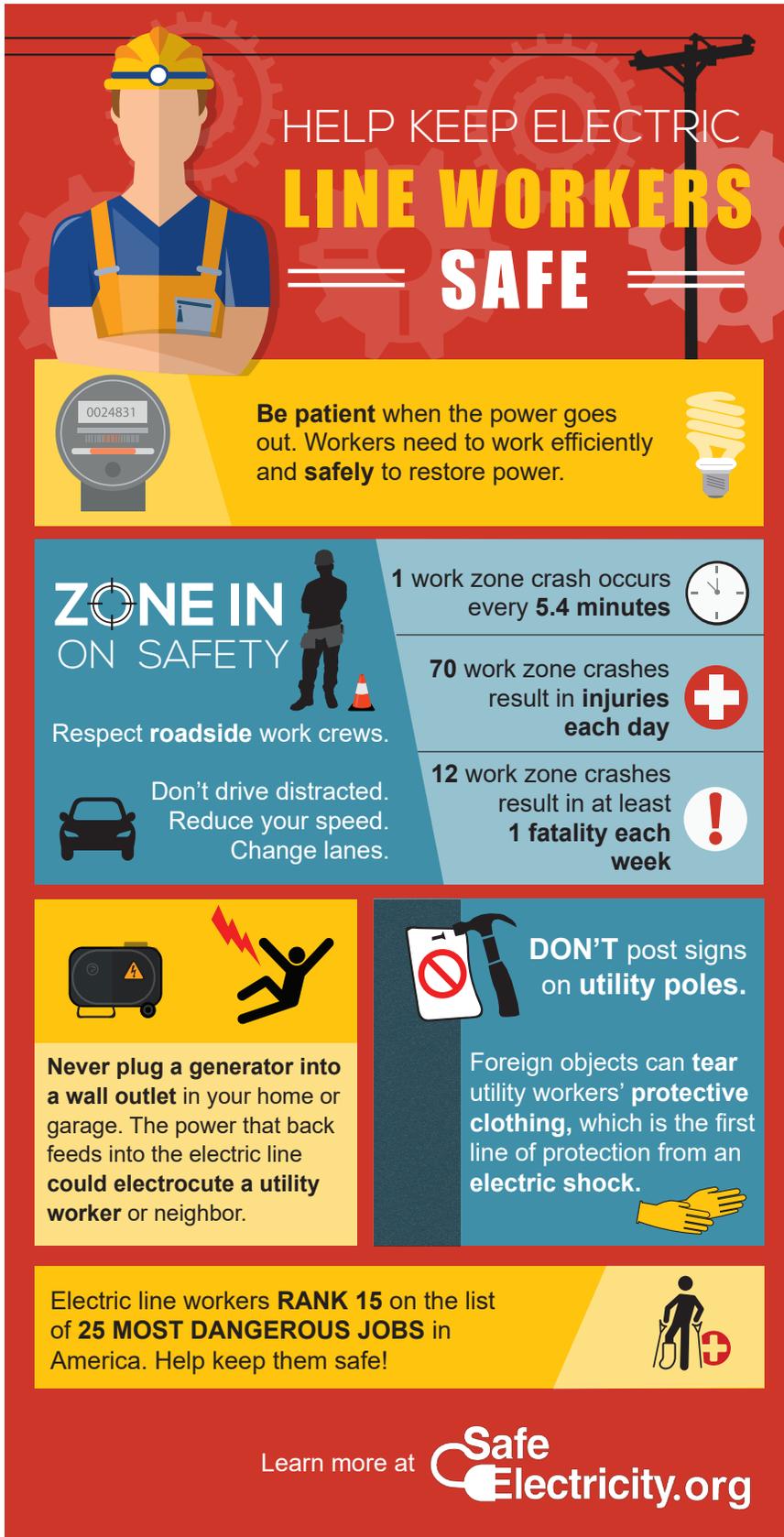
## FOR SALE:

Farm Fresh Eggs,  
Free Range  
\$4.00 a dozen

Pete & JoJo Schmoll  
Bird Island, MN 55310  
320-579-0098

Older Franklin Catfish Pins.  
Call for year you are looking for and price.

Becki Radermacher  
320-905-0433



**HELP KEEP ELECTRIC LINE WORKERS SAFE**

**Be patient** when the power goes out. Workers need to work efficiently and **safely** to restore power.

**ZONE IN ON SAFETY**  
Respect **roadside** work crews.  
Don't drive distracted. Reduce your speed. Change lanes.

- 1 work zone crash occurs every **5.4 minutes**
- 70 work zone crashes result in **injuries each day**
- 12 work zone crashes result in at least **1 fatality each week**

**Never plug a generator into a wall outlet** in your home or garage. The power that back feeds into the electric line **could electrocute a utility worker** or neighbor.

**DON'T** post signs on **utility poles**. Foreign objects can **tear** utility workers' **protective clothing**, which is the first line of protection from an **electric shock**.

Electric line workers **RANK 15** on the list of **25 MOST DANGEROUS JOBS** in America. Help keep them safe!

Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

# ON THE LOOKOUT FOR ENERGY SCAMS

Photo by Frank Turner

### Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

It's no April Fools' joke. Consumers with an electricity connection have long been targets for scams. In today's digital world, those schemes have evolved. As more daily business is conducted online, scammers have shifted their tactics to match. They now use phone calls, texts and emails to create urgency, confusion and fear, hoping consumers will act before taking time to verify the claim.

For victims, these scams can lead to financial loss and identity theft, but understanding how the most common schemes work and what they typically look like is one of the best defenses to staying safe.

### The "Past Due" Disconnection Threat

One of the most common tactics that scammers use is the disconnection threat. They use a fake message claiming a bill is past due and that service will be disconnected immediately unless payment is made on the spot.

The call may sound official. The message may include account numbers

or appear to come from your local cooperative's phone number due to caller ID spoofing. The scammer's goal is simple: create panic so you pay first and question later.

In reality, cooperatives follow clear procedures and provide advance notice before any disconnection. A demand for instant payment, especially with threats attached, is a major red flag.

### The "You Overpaid" Refund Scam

Who would not want a refund? Scammers take advantage of that instinct.

In this scheme, a text, call or email claims a member overpaid an electric bill and is owed money. The message often includes instructions to click a link or provide banking information so the refund can be "processed."

The message can sound especially convincing to cooperative members because electric cooperatives do return margins to members in the form of capital credits. Capital credits represent a member's share of the cooperative's annual margins and are returned over time.

However, capital credits are distributed through established,

official processes. They are not issued through unsolicited texts, surprise phone calls or links requesting personal banking information. When your local cooperative retires capital credits, members are notified through official channels such as billing statements, newsletters, verified mailings or even through Cooperative Connections.

An unexpected refund message that asks for sensitive information is a red flag. When in doubt, pause and contact your local cooperative directly using trusted contact information.

### Gift Card and Cryptocurrency Demands

Scammers often insist on unusual payment methods such as gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency. They may provide detailed instructions on how to purchase gift cards and read the numbers over the phone.

This is a clear warning sign. Legitimate cooperatives do not request payment in gift cards or cryptocurrency. These forms of payment are nearly impossible to trace or recover, which makes them attractive to criminals.

## Spotting a Scam

Regardless of the method, every scam has similar warning signs that members can watch for:

- High-pressure tactics that demand immediate payment
- Requests for payment through gift cards, prepaid debit cards or cryptocurrency
- Emails or text messages with poor grammar, spelling errors or unfamiliar web addresses

Scammers rely on urgency. Taking a few extra minutes to verify a message can prevent lasting financial consequences.

## What Your Local Cooperative Will and Will Not Do

Your local cooperative will not demand immediate payment without prior notice. Cooperatives follow

established procedures and provide advance communication before any service interruption.

Your local cooperative will not ask for Social Security numbers, banking details or other sensitive information through unsolicited phone calls, emails or text messages.

Members have secure payment options available through official cooperative channels, including the cooperative's verified website and approved payment systems. When in doubt, independently locate the cooperative's official contact information rather than using links or phone numbers included in a message.

Text alerts are only sent to members who have enrolled in official notification programs, such as outage updates.

## Avoiding Energy Scams

If you receive a suspicious call, text or email claiming to be from your local cooperative, do not use the contact information provided in that message. Instead, use the phone number printed on your billing statement or listed on the cooperative's verified website.

Also, reporting suspected scams helps protect fellow members. By alerting your local cooperative to fraudulent activity, members help strengthen the community's defense against energy scams and ensure the cooperative network remains secure for everyone.

Have a question about whether something is real or not? Reach out to your local cooperative. Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve and powered by the communities around them.

## SIGNS OF AN

# ENERGY SCAM

### High-Pressure Tactics

Scammers will pressure you, creating a sense of urgency. Claims that your power will be disconnected without immediate payment are common with utility scams.

### Sketchy Payment Methods

Scammers may ask for unusual payment methods like gift cards or cryptocurrency. In these cases, it's likely a scam.

### Dodgy Communication

Whether an email, text message or letter, utility scams typically include poor grammar, spelling errors or unusual email addresses. These are common warning signs of a scam.



# February Board Meeting Highlights

The February board meeting was held on Wednesday, February 25th, 2026, at 9 a.m. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Nick Bruns, Gene Alex, Amy Ervin, and Carren Frank.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the December 18th, 2025 board meeting
- 2025 Financial Audit Report
- Director Expenses
- Safety Report for February
- Operating and disbursement reports for the months of December and January
- Capital Credits to Estates
- Depreciation Resolution
- Close Membership List for Annual Meeting
- Director Candidates for 2026

The board reviewed the following items:

- Total new members
- Capital Credit Transfers

- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
  - o High-level Statement of Operations review – YTD through January (unaudited)
  - o Organization activities
  - o New Members
  - o CoBank Director Candidates
  - o Basin Electric update
  - o East River update
  - o Director meeting reports
  - o Linecrew work in progress, equipment update, and outage update
  - o Accounts Receivable
- Operation Round Up District 1 Board Member
- Member Informational Meeting Schedule
- 88th Annual Meeting Schedule

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

## WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month RSCPA member did not find their member number in the newsletter. The value of the energy credit will be increased to \$45. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 1st of April, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck with your search!

## REMINDER

Renville-Sibley encourages any member planning on making changes to their service in 2026 to please contact the office as soon as possible. In order to complete these projects on time, material may need to be ordered well in advance as often there is extended lead time to get the appropriate material. In addition, crew time will be scheduled in the order projects and materials are received.

## OPERATION ROUND UP

If your non-profit organization has a project or event that would benefit the community, Operation Round Up funds may be available to help your group reach its goal. The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held on April 14, 2026. The deadline for applications is April 1.

Applications for donations can be found at [rscpa.coop/operation-round](http://rscpa.coop/operation-round). Contact the office at 320-826-2593 for more information.

## SAFETY NOTE:

If your machinery or vehicle comes in contact with a power line, do not get out of the cab. Call 9-1-1 and the dispatched utility will de-energize the power so that you can safely exit your tractor or vehicle.

# FREE Want Ad Service

Members can submit ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent, and Wanted. Ads should be or are limited to no more than 15 words and must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Renville-Sibley reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Ads will be run one time only unless resubmitted. Please complete the following information and mail it to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Ad to be placed (limit of 15 words per ad)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Type of ad:  Giveaway  For Sale  For Rent  Wanted

## Annual Meeting Notice

The 88th Annual Meeting of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association will be held on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls. The meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is being called in accordance with the Bylaws of the Association to transact the following business:

1. Report of officers, directors and committees
2. Election of three (3) directors, one (1) from District 1, one (1) from District 2 and one (1) from District 3
3. Any other business which may properly come before the meeting

Voting ballots for director election, including candidate information, will be mailed to all members the week of March 2nd.

If you cannot attend and you wish to mail your ballot, you may do so. However, if mailed, it must be received through the mail by March 26th, 2026.

Drawings for the early bird prizes will begin at 5:45 p.m. Drawings will also be held at the close of the annual meeting. Children in attendance will be eligible for prize drawings.

A \$15 energy credit attendance prize will be given to members (one credit per member) who attend the annual meeting. All members are encouraged to attend the 88th annual meeting of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association. 561500

Vicky Firlle, Secretary

## Notice

The March board meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

Renville-Sibley's 88th Annual Meeting will be held on March 26, 2026, at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls.

The April board meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

## Mission Statement

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide safe, efficient, reliable electric energy and services to enhance the quality of rural living.

## Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Festival of  
 Tasting  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
 www.schmeckfest.com

*Travel South Dakota Photo*

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.

**MARCH 27-APRIL 4**  
**The Passion and the Cross**  
 Orpheum Theatre  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-367-6000  
 www.ThePassionMusical.com

**APRIL 3**  
**Bachelors of Broadway:  
 Gentlemen of the Theatre**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**APRIL 5**  
**Easter Sunrise Service**  
 7 a.m.  
 Mount Rushmore

**APRIL 9**  
**McCrossan Wildest Banquet  
 Auction in the Midwest**  
 Jimmy Buffett Tribute  
 Polynesian Paradise Dancers  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 www.mccrossan.org

**APRIL 9-11**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237  
 www.schmeckfest.com

**APRIL 11**  
**Women VetsConnect Retreat**  
 A Wellness Retreat for  
 Women Veterans and Military  
 Spouses  
 9 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
 909 W. 33rd St.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**APRIL 11**  
**Minnehaha County Pheasants  
 Forever Annual Banquet**  
 5:30 p.m.-10 p.m.  
 Blue Haven Atrium  
 46594 268th St.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-214-1415

**APRIL 11-12**  
**The Black Market**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Bldg.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-332-6004

**APRIL 18**  
**Brookings Quilt Show XII**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Admission: \$10  
 Dakota Bank Center  
 Brookings, SD  
 605-690-3246

**APRIL 18**  
**Tri-Valley Chorus  
 75th Annual Show**  
 4 p.m.  
 Centerville, SD  
 605-201-9398

**APRIL 20**  
**The Bronx Wanderers**  
 7 p.m.  
 Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD

**APRIL 25**  
**Screams by Night  
 Halfway to Halloween Con**  
 11 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 The Social  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**APRIL 28**  
**American Legion Bingo**  
 5-6 p.m. Social  
 6-6:30 p.m. Meal  
 6:45 p.m. Bingo  
 American Legion Post 15  
 1600 W. Russell  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-682-1222

**MAY 2-10**  
**Rustic Designs & More Spring  
 Show, Flea Market**  
 41450 264th St.  
 Ethan, SD  
 605-770-2411

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

**JUNE 13**  
**Journey Into Historic Pickstown**  
 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Ft. Randall Town & Museum  
 Pickstown, SD  
 605-487-7299

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

**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.**