

## Cooperative Connections



**Electricity in  
the classroom**

Page 8-9

**People behind  
the power**

Pages 12-13

*Jennifer Gross has educated thousands of students about electricity through the Cooperatives in the Classroom program.*



# Committed to a Co-op Culture for All



**DeeAnne Newville,**  
**CEO**

dnewville@renville-sibley.coop  
Phone: 320-826-2593 or  
Toll Free 800-826-2593

Over the years, you've heard me expound on why and how Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is different—because we're a cooperative. Our business model sets us apart from other utilities because we adhere to seven guiding cooperative principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service to the greater good of the community.

Electric cooperatives, including Renville-Sibley, have a unique and storied place in our country's history. We democratized the American dream by bringing electricity to rural areas when for-profit electric companies determined the effort too costly. Back then, cities were electrified, and rural areas were not, creating the original rural-urban divide. Newly established electric lines helped power economic opportunity in rural areas. Today, that spirit of equity and inclusion is a vital part of our co-op DNA.

## Equal access for all

When our electric co-op was founded, each member contributed an equal share in order to gain access to electricity that benefited individual families as well as the larger local community. Each member had an equal vote in co-op matters. That sense of equity and inclusion is still how we operate today. Renville-Sibley was built by and belongs to the diverse communities and consumer-members we serve. Membership is open to everyone in our service territory, regardless of race, religion, age, disability, gender identity, language, political perspective or socioeconomic status.



By virtue of paying your electric bill each month, you're a member of the co-op, and every member has an equal voice and vote when it comes to co-op governance. This ties back to our guiding principles of equitable economic participation and democratic control of the co-op.

We encourage all members to vote in Renville-Sibley's director elections every year, and we invite all members to participate in cooperative meetings like our annual member informational meetings. We have moved the typical timing of both our member informational meeting and our annual meeting for 2021 in hopes of being able to meet in person. Member informational meetings will be held in April and the annual meeting will be held on June 24th. Please watch the newsletter for more details in the next couple of months.

We know members of our community have different needs and perspectives, and we welcome diverse views on all issues under consideration by the co-op. The more viewpoints we hear, the better we are able to reflect the needs of all corners of our community.

## Inclusion

While our top priority is providing safe, reliable and affordable energy, we also want to be a catalyst for good in our community. Because we are your local electric cooperative, co-op revenues stay right here in our community. In turn, we invest in our diverse community base through scholarship programs, charitable giving, educational programs and more. We strive to make long-term decisions that improve and enrich the communities we serve.

While today's world is radically different than it was when Renville-Sibley was founded, our cooperative values have stood the test of time and remain just as relevant today. We recognize that today's co-op members expect more, and my pledge to you—the members we proudly serve—is to promote a cooperative culture of inclusion, diversity and equity for all.

**Member informational meetings will be held in April and the annual meeting will be held on June 24th. Please watch the newsletter for more details in the next couple of months.**

# Renville-Sibley

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS 019-074)

### Board of Directors

Roger Manthei – Chair  
Wayland Zaske – Vice Chair  
Alan Neyers – Secretary/Treasurer  
Gary Eekhoff  
Matt Haubrich  
Whitey Hinderman  
Gary Peterson  
Kylie Rieke  
Helen Ruebel

### 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 – Systems Coordinator  
Anthony Carruth – Journeyman Lineman  
Amy Ervin – Consumer Accounts Representative  
Brayden Fischer – Journeyman Lineman  
Cindy Mertens – Administrative Services Manager  
DeeAnne Newville – CEO  
Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman  
Kathy Ridl – Office Assistant  
Lenae Wordes – Communications Manager

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Web site: [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Scholar of the Month

Congratulations to Grace Macht from MACCRAY High School for being selected as the December Scholar of the Month. She was nominated because she is an excellent student, working hard to keep her grades up and helping others. She volunteers her time at the Refuge Church and helps with preschool screening. At school she is involved in volleyball, BPA, NHS, knowledge Bowl and Math League. Renville-Sibley Co-op Power salutes Grace Macht as the December Touchstone Energy Scholar of the month. 760600

More information about the Scholar of the Month program can be found on our website [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop) under the Customer Service tab.



Grace Macht has been named December Scholar of the Month.

## Renville-Sibley offers Scholarships to High School Seniors

Renville-Sibley has scholarships available for high school seniors. Information on these scholarships has been mailed to area high schools and can be found on our website [www.renville-sibley.coop/content/scholarships](http://www.renville-sibley.coop/content/scholarships). You may also contact the office at 800-826-2593 for a scholarship application.

## Helen Ruebel Earns CCD Certificate

Congratulations to Helen Ruebel for completing all the required training courses to become a Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD). To receive this status, she completed five courses and a learning assessment of each course. These training courses provide the foundation of knowledge needed for leadership as a Renville-Sibley board member. The courses completed include:

- Strategic Planning
- Financial Decision Making
- Director Duties and Liabilities
- Understanding the Electric Business
- Board Roles and Relationships

Completing these courses demonstrates the commitment she has to the success of your cooperative. Congratulations Helen!



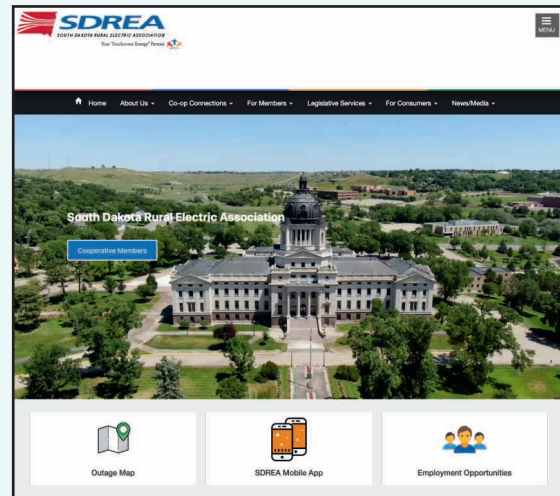
# Lighten Your Laundry Load

Laundry isn't a task that many people relish, but if the process can be tweaked to save money, conserve electricity and prolong the life of your clothes, some minor adjustments may be worth your time. Here are some suggestions from Consumer Reports.

- Opt for cold water. Hot water is only needed for laundering oily stains, cloth diapers and sheets and towels used by a family member who has been sick.
- Use high-efficiency detergent for front-loaders, high-efficiency top-loaders and where otherwise recommended by the machine's manufacturer. Conventional detergents create more suds, which can cause the washer to repeatedly rinse laundry, wasting water and time.
- Increase the spin speed to extract more water from your laundry, reducing dryer time. Shake clothes out before transferring them from the washer to the dryer to avoid wrinkles.
- Clean the dryer's lint screen before every load. This improves air circulation and prevents fires. Dryer sheets can leave a film on the filter, so if you use them, scrub the filter with a brush monthly.
- Clean the dryer duct regularly to increase airflow, which dries your clothes faster and prevents fires.
- Clean the dryer's moisture sensors. Dryer sheets can leave residue on the sensors that affects their ability to gauge how dry laundry is. Check the owner's manual for instructions on how to clean them.
- Dry similar items together. Don't mix heavy cottons with lightweight fabrics. Wash and dry towels and sheets separately, for example.
- Use the automatic cycle instead of timed drying. If the moisture sensors are working properly, the automatic cycle avoids over-drying, which shortens the life span of clothes and can shrink them.
- And for the least expensive, most efficient method, dry your laundry on a clothesline or use a drying rack indoors. This approach takes a bit more time but is gentler on your clothing, keeping it nicer looking for longer - a savings in itself.

## Visit the new SDREA.coop

Want to know more about South Dakota's rural electric cooperative system? Check out our newly redesigned website at [www.sdrea.coop](http://www.sdrea.coop). You'll find lots of useful information about our generation, transmission and distribution systems, energy efficiency ideas, legislative issues that impact electric rates, a statewide outage map and much more.



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



### "The Electric Fence is Unsafe!"

**Gabbie Eichmann, 11 years old**

Gabbie is a resident of rural Canistota. She is the child of Jeremy and Melanie Eichmann, members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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



# Recipes to Power Up Your Day

## Bacon and Egg Lasagna

12 uncooked lasagna noodles	or crumbled
1/3 c. bacon drippings (or oil)	1 lb. bacon/turkey bacon/sausage, cut up
1/3 flour	1 c. chopped onions
1/4 t. pepper	1/2 t. salt
2 c. Swiss cheese	4 c. milk
2 T. parsley	1/2 c. grated Parmesan cheese
12 eggs, hard cooked, sliced	

Cook lasagna noodles per directions on package. In large skillet cook bacon until crisp (or cook other meat of choice). Reserve 1/3 c. bacon drippings (or use oil) and cook the onion until tender. Add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir until smooth and bubbly. Gradually add the milk, cook until mixture boils and thickens. Stir continuously. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease 9x13 pan. Spoon a small amount of the sauce onto the bottom of the pan. Layer the noodles, sauce, cheese and bacon (or other meat). Pour the remainder of the sauce over the last layer and sprinkle with the Parmesan cheese. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Kristine Shaffer, Lennox, SD

## Apple Cranberry Muffins

1-3/4 c. brown sugar	1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 c. vegetable oil	2 eggs
2 c. flour	1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda	2 c. thinly sliced apples
1 tsp. cinnamon	1/2 lb. cranberries, halved
1 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 c. nuts, chopped

Cream oil and sugar; add eggs and vanilla and beat well. Sift flour, baking soda and salt together and add to mixture. Add spices next. Stir in apples, nuts and cranberries. For Streusel: 1/2 c. flour; 1/3 c. brown sugar; 3 tbsp. butter. Cut butter into flour and sugar until crumbly. Pour into muffin tins and sprinkle with Streusel. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Ruth E. Schilberg, Viborg, SD

## Breakfast Bread Pudding

Butter	1/2 teaspoon salt
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter, divided	4 cups cubed brioche or challah bread, cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 eggs	2/3 cup pure maple syrup
1/2 cup granulated sugar	1/3 cup crushed peanuts
2/3 cup milk	Powdered sugar, for garnish
1-1/2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract	

Heat oven to 350 F. Butter four 4-ounce ramekins. In bowl, mix 1/3 cup peanut butter, eggs, sugar, milk, vanilla and salt. Toss bread cubes in mixture until thoroughly coated. Divide evenly among prepared dishes. Bake until custard is set in middle and tops are golden, about 35-40 minutes. If tops of bread brown too quickly, cover ramekins loosely with aluminum foil. In small saucepan over low heat, combine remaining peanut butter and maple syrup until thoroughly warmed. To serve, drizzle ramekins with maple-peanut sauce and garnish with chopped peanuts and powdered sugar. Substitution: Whole wheat rolls may be used in place of brioche or challah bread.

culinary.net

## Baked Eggs

Line muffin pans with 2 wafer thin slices of chicken, beef or pork. Break an egg into each cup. Add a 3/4 tsp. half-and-half and a bit of butter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake at 400 degrees for about 15 minutes, or until eggs are cooked to desired firmness.

Elaine Rowitt, Sturgis, SD

Please send your favorite seafood 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Are You Interested in a New Adventure?

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is beginning to plan for the 83rd Annual meeting of the membership. Three (3) directors will be elected during that time, each for a 3-year term.

The First District, consisting of the townships of Cornish, Severance and Moltke in Sibley County; the townships of Ridgely and West Newton in Nicollet County; and the townships of Cairo, Wellington, Martinsburg, Camp, Bandon and Palmyra in Renville County is represented by Alan Neyers, Whitey Hinderman and Kylie Rieke. Alan Neyer's term will expire in 2021.

The Second District, consisting of the townships of Honner and Delhi in Redwood County; and the townships of Beaver Falls, Flora, Henryville, Birch Cooley, Norfolk, Melville, Bird Island and Kingman in Renville County is represented by Helen Ruebel, Wayland Zaske and Matt Haubrich. Helen Ruebel's term will expire in 2021.

The Third District, consisting of the townships of Roseland and Holland in Kandiyohi County; Rheidlerland in Chippewa County the townships of Troy, Winfield, Emmet, Crooks, Sacred Heart, Hawk Creek, Ericson and Wang in Renville County is represented by Gary Eekhoff, Gary Peterson and Roger Manthei. Gary Peterson's term will expire in 2021.

As stated in the Renville-Sibley by-laws, the following is the Qualifications and Tenure for the position of Director:

Each director shall be a member of the Cooperative and shall be elected by the members within their respective district at the annual meeting of the members for a term of three years. No member shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is not a bona fide resident in the area served by the Cooperative, or who is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or space heating/cooling appliances, fixtures, or supplies to the members. When a membership is held jointly by two or more persons, including husband and wife, only one of such joint tenants may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither one shall be eligible to become a director, unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth.

Director qualifications required for service to the cooperative shall include:

- A. Must be an individual and must be at least 18 years of age.
- B. Must be competent and able to execute a contract.
- C. Must not have been convicted of a

felony or gross misdemeanor during the preceding 5 years prior to becoming a director for the Cooperative or during the period while serving as a director.

D. Must have a high school diploma or equivalent.

E. Must make a reasonable effort to become and remain knowledgeable about special issues regarding electric cooperatives by attending training, workshops and seminars.

F. Must attend at least three-fourths (3/4) of all monthly scheduled board meetings during any twelve (12) month period.

Upon becoming a candidate for and/or to remain a Director, an individual must complete an annual conflict of interest disclosure form, approved by the Board of Directors. All Directors and/or Director candidates must comply with or meet the following conflict of interest qualifications:

A. Shall not be a close relative of an existing Director, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative other than an existing Director who will cease being a Director upon the candidate assuming office;

B. Within 5 years immediately prior to becoming a Director, shall not have been a Cooperative Officer, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative or any subsidiary or affiliated company;

C. Shall not be employed by, materially affiliated with, nor share a material financial interest with any current Director;

D. Shall not be engaged in any business, nor employed by, nor materially affiliated with, nor have a material financial interest in any individual or entity that:

1. Is regularly, directly, and substantially competing with the Cooperative or any other entity that the Cooperative controls or in which the Cooperative owns a majority interest (Cooperative Subsidiary).
2. Is regularly selling goods and services to the Cooperative or the Cooperative Subsidiary.
3. Possesses a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative or the Cooperative subsidiary.

E. A former Director is ineligible for employment by the Cooperative for 5 years following the end of the tenure as a Director.

As a Director, the member agrees to:

1. Abide by, promote and uphold the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, both of which can be found on our website, and Policies of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

2. Attend regular and special Board meetings of the Cooperative.

3. Attend, when appointed, committee meetings of the Cooperative.

If anyone should decide to seek candidacy for the board of directors, there are many rewards to be enjoyed when elected. A director has the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership quality and increase their knowledge within the cooperative business environment and the electric industry. As a director, this person could play a significant role in the future development of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

A director also has a very important responsibility which is to uphold and abide by the bylaws of the cooperative. Directors are to act as the trustees for the assets of the cooperative and are assigned the duties of formulating, approving and reviewing the policies that provide guidelines for the cooperative.

The board is responsible for sending representatives to the affiliated association meetings that often include voting requirements. They include East River Electric Power Cooperative, Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, National Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, CoBank, Cooperative Network and the National Rural Electric Association.

Directors attend seminars and meetings of several organizations to learn about the industry. Directors are asked to lobby and remain informed on legislative issues that could impact this industry and/or the cooperative way of doing business. The Board meets monthly and reviews financial reports, work plans, annual audits, planning documents and evaluates the cooperative operations while approving budgets and purchases.

Most of all, a director should be available to visit with their constituents and have a genuine spirit of helping others at all times.

Board meetings are typically held on the last Monday of every month, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in December, January and February and beginning at 8:00 a.m. the rest of the year. Board meeting will be held in person or via Zoom. The estimated time needed to be committed annually is approximately 30 days which includes monthly meetings and committee assignments. Directors are compensated per diem for their time as well as all personal expenses.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the Renville-Sibley Board of Directors, contact the Renville-Sibley office at 1-800-826-2593 before Feb. 1 for further information.





## Renville-Sibley Co-op Power

# Rebates and Incentives

### Incentives:

- 5 percent interest loans available for equipment, service upgrade and installation of qualified heat systems (up to \$15,000 for up to five years with approval)
- Minimum qualifications must be met for all marketing programs

### Non Commercial Electric Heat Rebates:

(replacement incentive offered after 10 years)

- \$800 Geothermal Heat Pump
- \$800 Air-to-Air Heat Pump
- \$200 Mini-Split/Ductless Heat Pump (must be ENERGY STAR®-certified)
- \$400 Non ENERGY STAR® Heat Pump

To qualify for the geothermal and air-to-air heat pump, equipment must be new, at least two ton and a HSPF greater than or equal to 8.5. Contact the office for commercial, industrial or agricultural rebate information:

### Special Discount Rates:

Separately metered electric heat, controlled A/C and controlled natural air grain drying is only 6.0 cents/kWh.

Contact the office for details. – There is a \$2.50 per month charge for all discount meters.

### Electric Water Heater Rebates:

(replacement incentive offered after 10 years)

- \$6/gallon – Marathon® Lifetime Warranty Units
- \$100 bonus rebate for new home or fossil fuel conversion
- \$6.50 monthly credit for controlled electric water heater



Due to space constraints, Renville-Sibley will only stock 100-gallon grid enabled water heaters. Warranty replacements for 50-gallon water heaters can be handled by places such as Menards or Home Depot. Renville-Sibley will offer warranty replacements for 85-gallon water heaters.

### Nonresidential Efficient Lighting Replacement Program:

Renville-Sibley offers a rebate of \$.30/watt saved for the replacement of inefficient lighting systems in nonresidential installation. The maximum rebate amount is

\$1,000 per member per calendar year and a maximum of up to 50 percent of the total project cost. The minimum rebate is \$50.

### Energy Star® Rebates:

- \$100 – Refrigerator (requires proof of disposal of existing unit)
- \$200 – Central Air-Conditioner
- \$50 – Dishwasher
- \$50 – Clothes Washer
- \$50 – Clothes Dryer
- \$100 – Freezer
- \$25 – Dehumidifier
- \$25 – Room Air-Conditioner
- \$5 – LED Light Bulb (bulb must be a minimum of 8 watts, maximum of 20 bulbs per location)
- \$35 – Disposal rebate for refrigerator or freezer currently in service (requires proof of disposal)

(ENERGY STAR® Rebates are capped annually; contact the office to verify status of program.)



All rebate forms can be found at [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop)  
For more information, please contact us at 800-826-2593 or 320-826-2593.





Jennifer Gross teaches the fundamentals of electricity to students at Warner Elementary. Photo by Ben Dunsmoor.

# ENLIGHTENING STUDENTS

## Teachers, Co-ops Take Energy Education to the Classroom

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdea.coop)

Jennifer Gross doesn't know it for a fact, but she has a sneaking suspicion she has saved someone's life. Maybe more than once.

Gross is not a nurse, or a doctor, or a firefighter or an emergency medical technician. She serves as the education and outreach coordinator at Madison-based East River Electric and oversees the organization's Co-ops in the Classroom program. In that role over the past five years, Gross has instructed thousands of students on the importance of electric safety.

She goes into the classroom and covers a wide range of concepts in less than an hour, including how electricity is generated, how it can be conserved and how potentially dangerous it can be. She's been accused of speaking at the speed of light because there's so much for the students to grasp.

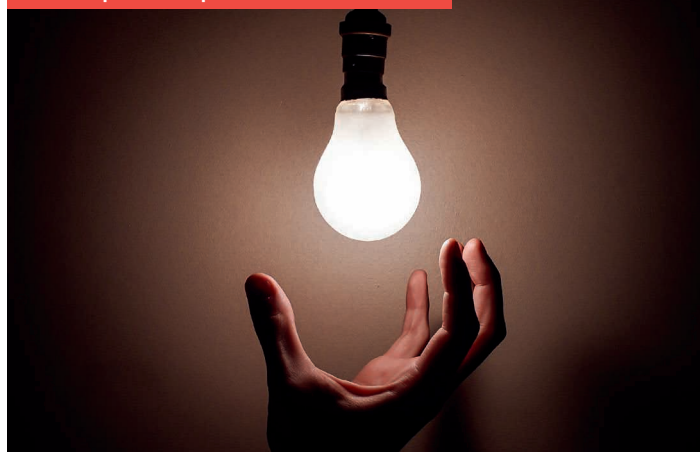
"Our follow-up evaluations sometimes show that I talk too quickly," Gross said with a chuckle. "But there's a lot to cover, so many things they need to know that could keep them safe and free from harm. These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."

Gross is one of many cooperative employees across the state who teach students the importance of understanding the benefits and potential dangers of electricity and how to use it wisely. In fact, member and community education is one of the Seven Cooperative Principles that guide South Dakota's electric cooperatives.

The classroom program that Gross delivers includes how electrical power is generated, how it's transmitted, how it's conserved and how use it safely. The program also includes information that distinguishes electric cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal electric utilities. And one of those differences is a commitment to education and youth leadership development.

"We teach them that there are all kinds of cooperative businesses out there – food co-ops, clothing co-ops, housing co-ops, marketing co-ops and others – and we're here to do more than

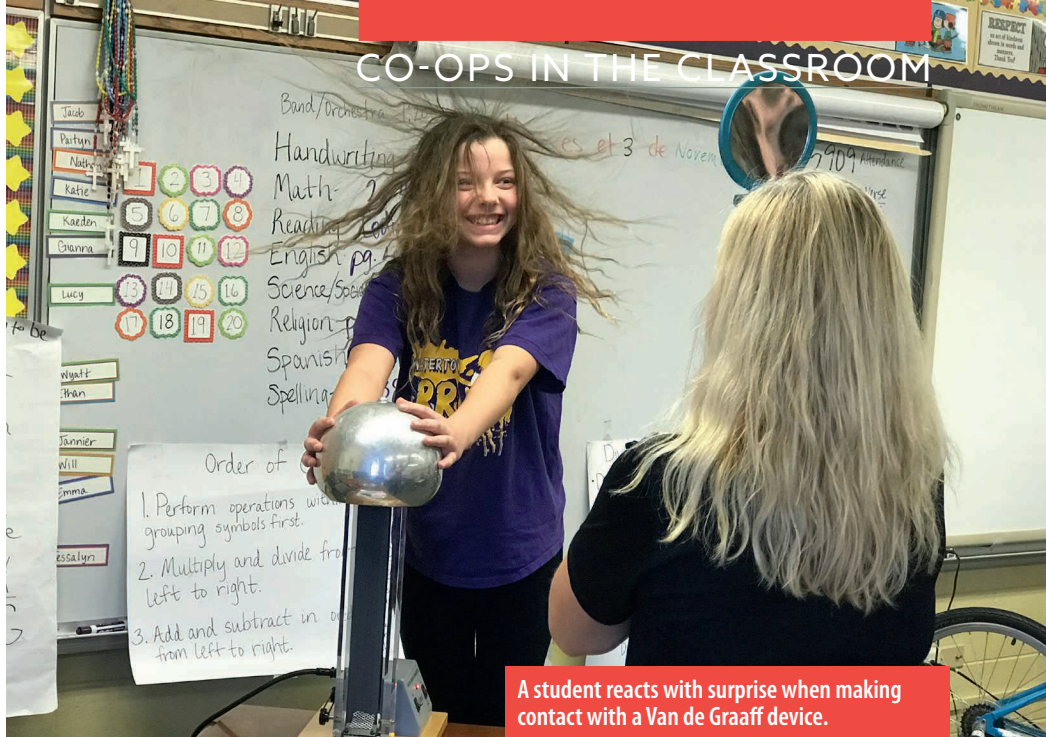
Students learn incandescent light bulbs cost more to operate compared to LEDs.





**"These are things they're going to learn and use for the rest of their lives. It's a lot to pack into an hour, but it's important information."**

**- Jennifer Gross**



**A student reacts with surprise when making contact with a Van de Graaff device.**

just provide electrical power. We're here to deliver this information because we care about the welfare and well-being of our members, and we're always here for them if they have questions about electricity."

Gross was a social worker before she joined East River as support staff in the engineering department more than 10 years ago. Since taking over the Co-ops in the Schools program, she has interacted with many primary and secondary educators who also see the need to teach the fundamentals of electricity.

One of those is Jami Heinrich, a fifth-grade teacher at Warner Elementary School where Gross recently delivered her presentation. She has seen how students respond to discussions about electricity and see the direct application to their everyday lives.

"It's something that's always around them and they deal with all the time," Heinrich

said. "It's good to get them the information they need to make better choices. When Jennifer was talking about insulators, one of my students brought up that his grandparents' cell phone chargers were worn out and you could see the wires. He said, 'So, this is a bad idea.' It brought up a good discussion in the classroom. Safety around electricity is definitely a priority, and teaching children about it will lead them to make safer choices."

South Dakota's electric cooperatives extend their education outreach well beyond elementary school classrooms. The cooperatives have invested in an electrical safety demonstration trailer that makes its way around the state not only to instruct linemen but also to attend public events and show the various components of a grid-based power delivery system. During the demonstration, facilitators send an electrical current through a hotdog, grapefruit and tree branch to show how much destruction unharmed and mishandled electricity can do.

To view a video of the safety demonstration trailer, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=FBzB1b-BYsH0&t=55s).

Cooperatives have also supported programs such as the Washington D.C. Youth Tour and the Youth Excursion

that teach high school students not only about electricity but also some of the political considerations surrounding the electric utility industry and the history of the country's rural electric cooperative movement.

Many elementary and secondary school educators throughout the state – including Gross – have attended the annual teacher education seminar sponsored by the Lignite Energy Council, which attracts 130 participants from Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and North Dakota. The four-day program takes place at Bismarck State College and offers professional development credits for attendees.

The seminar focuses on how lignite is mined and used to produce electricity for homes, farms and businesses. In addition, the seminar covers lignite's economic impact on the region, as well as important environmental issues affecting the lignite industry. Since 1986, more than 3,400 teachers have attended the seminar.

Roger Lawien, director of member services at Moreau-Grand Electric in Timber Lake, underscores the importance of electric education: "Member education is a vital part of what we do as co-ops. We have a program we call 'Neon Leon,' and one day after a safety demonstration a woman came up with her two boys and said, 'I just wanted to thank you for what you do here. Because of what you taught my boys at last year's demonstration, my husband is alive.' That really shows how important it is."



**Science is at the center of learning about how electricity is generated and used.**

## Attention Members Impacted by COVID-19?

Renville-Sibley encourages members to contact the office to make arrangements if they are not able to pay their electric bill in full due to the impact of COVID-19. Renville-Sibley employees will work with members to enter into reasonable payment arrangements based on their individual circumstances.



### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use wool or rubber dryer balls in the clothes dryer to reduce drying time and static.

Wool dryer balls can also absorb extra moisture. These are an efficient alternative to dryer sheets, which can create buildup on the dryer's filter and reduce air circulation. If you prefer dryer sheets, scrub the filter once a month to remove buildup.

Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



## Where's the Number?

Last month Joel Hennager found his member number in the newsletter. Congratulations! The credit will start over at a value of \$15. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 1st of February, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

## Outage Report

Affecting 10 members or more:  
None.

## Energy Audits Available

Renville-Sibley offers energy audits to all members. The audit includes a walk-through of your home, taking pictures with an infrared camera of any areas where cold air might be entering your home, along with a review of the energy consumption in your home. The cost of this audit is \$150. If the member makes improvements recommended in the follow-up report and submits invoices showing that \$150 or more was spent on these improvements, the charge will be refunded. Please contact the office at 800-826-2593 for more information or if you are interested in having an energy audit of your home.

## 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 to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, P.O. 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



# December Board Meeting Highlights

The December board meeting was held on Monday, Dec. 21 at 8 a.m. via Zoom. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Newville, Gene Alex, Cindy Mertens and Lenae Wordes. McKade Kleinknecht from Star Energy was also in attendance.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the November 30 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of November
- Long Range Work Plan
- Construction Work Plan
- Purchase of 2021 construction work plan cable
- Purchase of a new Truck
- Safety report for December
- June – August 2021 board meeting dates
- Revised Policy 516 – Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Policy
- Policy 543 – Alcohol and Controlled Substance Testing Policy
- Write off of accounts receivable

- NRECA Annual Meeting Voting Delegates and Alternates

The board reviewed:

- Total new members
- Capital credits transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
  - High level Statement of Operations review – YTD through November (unaudited)
  - Organization activities
  - Facilities update
  - East River update
  - Basin Electric update
  - NRECA update
  - MREA update
  - Linecrew work in progress, equipment update and outage update
  - Accounts receivable

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

## Notice:

**The January board meeting will be held on Monday, January 25 at 9 a.m. The February board meeting will be held on February 22 at 9 a.m. Both meetings will begin at 8 a.m. if held via Zoom.**

## Comparative Report

	Current YTD through November 30, 2020	One Year Ago YTD through November 30, 2019	10 Years Ago YTD through November 30, 2010
average # of Consumers	1,882	1,882	1,930
kWhs purchased	161,823,257	145,590,316	160,498,954
Cost of purchased power	\$10,218,525.80	\$8,655,233.16	\$6,599,605.65

## Mission Statement

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

## Operation Round Up Donates to OATRT

The Operation Round Up Board of Trustees met on Dec. 10 to review applications for donations. A \$1,200 donation was awarded to the Olivia Area Technical Rescue Team (OATRT). The donation will be used to add lights and sirens to the truck used to haul equipment for performing a confined space or grain bin rescue. The OATRT is comprised of a team of firefighters from different departments throughout the county. This team specializes in handling complex and high-risk rescues from above and below grade.

The next meeting of the Operation Round Up Board will be Thursday, March 11. Applications for donations can be found at <http://www.renville-sibley.coop/content/operation-round-up>. Applications must be submitted by March 1 to be considered at this meeting.



Antelope Valley Station control room operator J.D. Wolf sits at the control center where he monitors the facility operations.

# The People Behind the Power

## Power Providers Take Pragmatic Approach to Fuel Use

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

With every change in presidential administrations, there comes a predictable shift in policy positions surrounding coal and the fossil fuels used to generate the electricity that drives the country's economic engine and allows for the conveniences of modern life.

The Obama Administration, for instance, waged what many described as a “war on coal.” It pursued an agenda that focused on imposing stringent regulations designed to push the power generation market toward renewable resources and eliminate fossil fuels. It was an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate an emerging renewable industry.

The next administration followed with President Donald Trump declaring an end to the “war on coal” during his first State of the Union address. President Trump signed executive orders revoking various rules regarding carbon emissions enacted by his predecessor. He vowed to revive the coal mining industry and “put those miners back to work.”

And with yet another change in political

power, President Joe Biden has started the pendulum swinging back in the other direction. His energy approach, which he dubs the “Clean Energy Revolution and Environmental Justice Plan” involves reinstating many of the Obama-era policies including restrictions on oil and gas leases and investing \$400 billion in clean energy technology and innovation over the next 10 years. It also includes pushing the ag sector toward net-zero emissions.

While these policies play out in the political arena, those who bear the responsibility of actually generating the power the country needs have their own perspective. Working diligently and silently in the background of the high-profile political battles pitting climate change activists against climate change deniers are thousands who see these issues as a lot less political and much more practical. Pundits and ideologues suit up each day to argue over policy. Power generators suit up every day to keep the lights on 24/7 at rates people can afford.

For South Dakota's electric cooperative members, that responsibility falls on the staff, management and board members of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). Owned by the members it serves, Basin Electric generates electricity

for 140 transmission and distribution co-ops in nine states. The massive power co-op has professionals in place to deal with the political considerations of power production, but most are concerned with keeping the ions flowing toward three million homes, businesses, farms and ranches across the region.

For those individuals, policy decisions have real consequences in terms of how they carry out their work. For example, while some lawmakers roll out plans intended to push the industry in the direction of net-zero emissions, engineers, rate designers, operators, financial experts and others are dealing with the realities of making that happen.

According to Andrew Buntrock, Basin Electric's director of strategic planning, so often it comes down to a delicate balance – a three-legged stool – between on-demand accessibility, zero emissions and low rates. It's practically impossible to achieve all three at optimal levels simultaneously.

“Someone explained it like this: Let's say a rancher wants a vehicle that's affordable, cheap to operate and has zero carbon emissions,” said Buntrock. “But he's not going to be able to pull his loaded cattle trailer with a Prius. He needs the power



of an F-350 to do what he needs to do, to make a living, to bring his product to market and contribute to the economy. Sometimes we want to have it all, but that's not always possible."

He explained that power generators experience constant pressure to curb greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate fossil fuels in favor of renewable power while staying in compliance with governmental and regulatory agencies. To many vocal environmentalists, no realistic timeline to make the country completely energy independent is fast enough.

Basin Electric, Buntrock explained, has long been working to reduce emissions. For instance, in 2000 roughly 85 percent of the cooperative's power was generated with coal as the primary fuel source. Today that percentage is around 44 percent, with nearly \$2 billion spent on environmental emissions control technology. The co-op also has renewable power projects underway including the Wild Springs,



Tom White serves as a mechanic technician at Basin Electric's Deer Creek Station.

from a podium or street protest is often difficult to carry out in the trenches.

"We've been working on this for 20 years and we've been making strides. We're proud of our efforts to accomplish the thing that we all want: a clean environment. But we also want affordable, accessible power and for now and the foreseeable future, that's going to include

noted that price is even more of a priority since the pandemic struck a blow to the economy.

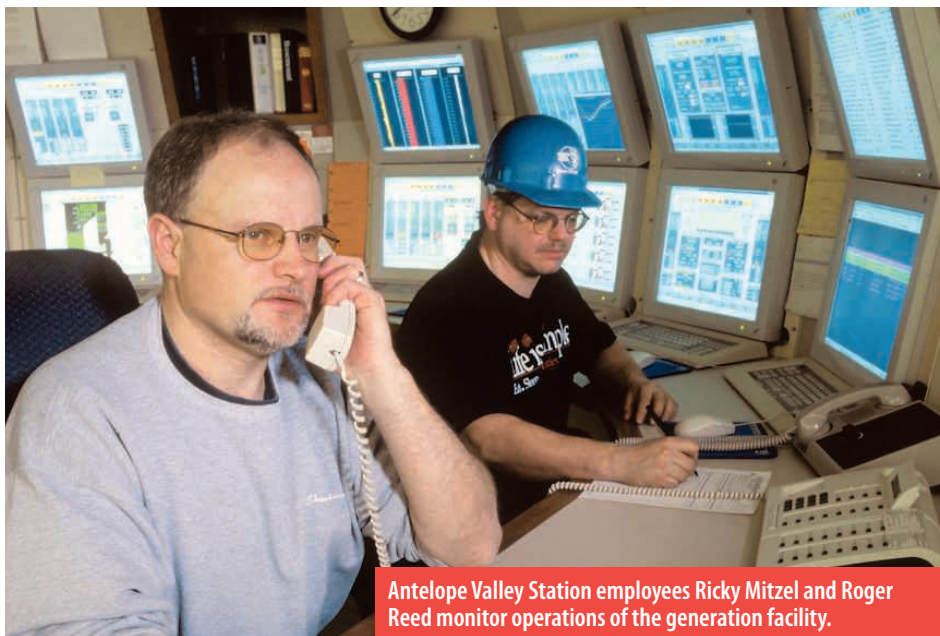
"Our approach and our strategy is 'all of the above.' We can't put all of our eggs in one basket," Buntrock said. "We're mindful of the concerns expressed by environmentalists because we share those concerns. But we think we're moving in the right direction. We just want our members and the public to understand that a plan or a goal may be easy to formulate, but actually making it happen often entails complex challenges that most people aren't aware of. The story behind the switch isn't one that people hear very often."

Even if fossil fuels could be eliminated altogether and baseload demand could be met entirely with renewable sources, the transition would still leave power producers – and consumers – in a financial lurch.

"It's like having two cars. You have one that you're still paying for. But then you want another model and you can't just dump the first one. You end up having two car notes, but you can only drive one to work," Buntrock said.

As the rest of the country watches the Biden Administration and congress negotiate on policy, Buntrock said Basin Electric will continue to produce on-demand power for its members.

"We know we're moving in the right direction and we know our members are confident that we're doing our best to look out for their interests, deliver the power they need and strive to be a good and trusted partner."



Antelope Valley Station employees Ricky Mitzel and Roger Reed monitor operations of the generation facility.

West River and Cabin Creek solar farms and Northern Divide Wind Project. There is also a division dedicated to conducting research on renewable energy sources and applying the most cost-effective implementation.

Buntrock said most power providers welcome and embrace efforts to reduce emissions, but the timetables should be realistic and take into account the fact that formulating a plan that sounds attractive

fossil fuels because it's the best source for being able to control the power production process. You can't always depend on the wind blowing and the sun shining."

Basin recently conducted an extensive survey of its members in an effort to identify their top priorities. The list of responses was led by price, followed by reliability, the two factors necessary for providing power that people can afford and they can access on demand. Buntrock





Jaclyn Arens of Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor practices yoga during her vacation breaks.

# DE-STRESSING

## Shed the Stress of a Busy Life: Take it Easy on Yourself

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Take it easy on yourself.

That bit of advice was dispensed by Country Music Hall of Famer Don Williams back in the late 1990s, and it's the same wisdom imparted by Kristie Ching, a certified health and life coach.

Ching, an employee at Basin Electric Power Cooperative's Deer Creek station near Elkton, works with clients who find themselves being overwhelmed by the breakneck speed of modern life and feeling lost and ridden with angst.

What can you do to stay centered while the flurry of activity and information all around you is leaving you exhausted and reducing your quality of life? Ching believes she has the answer. After earning her master's degree in human science in 2014, Ching has helped many clients find the balance they need to regain control of their lives and thrive. But if she had to boil it all down to one pearl of wisdom, she'd say the most important consideration is to make your own success a priority and take it easy on yourself during those times you don't always hit the bullseye.

"You have to give yourself some grace and understand that you don't have to be perfect and it's okay to make a mistake," Ching said.

Maintaining a close mind/body connection is also paramount in being able to cope with the stress and pressures that come to

bear on any given day filled with family and work responsibilities, Ching said. Over the past seven years, she has led classes in PiYo, a blend of pilates and yoga training.

Classes usually include meditation techniques, deep and controlled breathing exercises and vigorous physical movements. The idea is to slow down your mind while moving your body. Some prefer to call it "yoga on crack."

In her work, Ching has discovered that the most helpful directive for many clients is to intentionally take an extended hiatus from the news and generally spend less time in front of a phone, computer or television screen. The results can be transformative, she said.

"The biggest 'aha' moments I get with my clients is when they unclutter their lives and just quiet their minds. We take in so much information from hour to hour. In order to absorb it all, you have to push all of that chaos out with the old stuff cluttering your mind," she said. "One client said what brought her the most peace is when she stopped watching the nightly news. It would literally bring her down. Take some time away from the world and feed your soul. Spend some time laughing with friends or reading a book before you go to bed, not watching TV or scrolling through Facebook."



## Tips for Dealing with Stress

By Kristie Ching

- Be thankful. Showing gratitude for all you DO have in your life brings more good into your life.
- Move your body. Do the things you enjoy, attend a class at the local gym, go for a walk or run, dance in the kitchen, play with your kids or grandkids, play a game of basketball with friends. The main thing is to find a physical activity you enjoy.
- Unplug. Put down the phone, iPad, computer.
- Meditation or deep breathing. There are a ton of meditation resources on YouTube, or I teach my clients to utilize a 5-5-7 breathing technique that can be done in just 2 minutes. Set your intention of what you want and just breathe. Breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 5, exhale for 7.
- Get enough sleep. When you are tired you tend to make more poor choices.
- Write it down. When stress is high it's often a good practice to write it down and get all the frustration down on paper. Then throw it away and release it.
- Slow down and eat with all your senses. We often add stress to our bodies just by scarfing down our food. Slow down. Enjoy the smells and tastes.
- Spend time with people who lift you up and make you laugh. Laughter is the best medicine!
- Make time to do the things you enjoy. Reading, blogging, going for a walk, watching your favorite TV show, draw, color, anything to let your inner child come out.
- Unclutter. I encourage clients to first look at areas they need to unclutter. In order to bring in the new you need to take out the old, just like when you buy a new couch, you get rid of the old one.



One thing that Ching is sure to bring up with her clients is the connection of food, eating, the body and the mind.

She said one highly effective way of losing weight is to unclutter the mind before approaching the dinner table. While many succumb to overeating due to worry and stress, managing the spirit and the mind typically results in fewer bad dietary habits and prolonged body weight control. Less stress leads to fewer calories, and fewer calories leads to weight loss. She calls it food freedom.

"When you achieve food freedom, you don't have to diet all the time and deal with the stress that comes with always being on a diet," Ching said. "Stress can

lead to overeating. If you're under stress, don't reach for those potato chips or candy bar. Go find a quiet place and relax for a moment and meditate. If you can meditate for a few minutes before you sit down to eat, that can help you relax, and it will also aid in your digestion."

Jaclyn Arens sometimes experiences stress in her role as marketing and member services coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Association in Tabor. She was a fixture at the Soul Story Yoga Studio before the local business shut down its facility due to concerns over the pandemic. Arens said the concepts and techniques she has learned can be practiced anywhere. She sometimes pauses during vacation trips to center herself and

prepare herself for a day of outdoors fun.

"Yoga is adaptable for any fitness level and can be practiced pretty much anywhere," she said. "I do yoga to increase my strength, balance, and flexibility, and to take time to think and breathe. One thing I appreciate about yoga is the supportive community, and I look forward to returning to the studio when the pandemic is under control and feeling that sense of community again!"

Soul Story Studio owner Rebecca Johnson said she has no timetable to re-open the studio but has begun offering classes online at [www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes](http://www.soulstoryyoga.com/online-classes).

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

Take a moment to visit our new online companion to *Cooperative Connections*. Co-op Connections Plus is a YouTube channel that features a more in-depth treatment of stories appearing in this publication as well as other subjects of interest to rural South Dakotans.

Search for "Co-op Connections Plus" and you'll find videos on human trafficking, support programs for veterans, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to "like" and "subscribe."



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

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**January 18-25**

Chinook Days, Spearfish, SD  
605-717-9294

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**January 21-24**

Elf The Musical, Area  
Community Theatre,  
Mitchell, SD  
605-996-9137

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**January 23**

Treasured Lives Presents:  
Bazzel Baz, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD  
1-800-468-6463

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**January 29-30**

Pro Snocross Races, Days  
of '76 Rodeo Grounds,  
Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**January 29-February 6**

Black Hills Stock Show &  
Rodeo, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center, Rapid City, SD  
605-335-3861

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**January 29-31**

Winterfest, Lead, SD  
605-335-3861

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**February 5-6**

Mardi Gras Weekend,  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**February 10-13**

Watertown Winter Farm  
Show, Codington County  
Extension Complex,  
Watertown, SD  
605-886-5814

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**February 12-13**

SD High School State  
Gymnastics Meet, Watertown  
Civic Arena, Watertown, SD



Pro Snocross Races, Jan. 29-30, 2021

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**February 18**

The Q's High Line to  
Deadwood – A 130-year  
Retrospective, Homestake  
Adams Research and Cultural  
Center, Deadwood, SD  
605-722-4800

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**February 18-25**

Twelfth Annual Black Hills  
Film Festival, Virtual  
605-574-9454

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**February 20-27**

SD State High School  
Wrestling Tournament,  
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center  
Barnett Arena, Rapid City, SD

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**February 25**

Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood  
Live: Neighbor Day,  
Washington Pavilion, Sioux  
Falls, SD  
605-367-6000

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**March 5-6**

SD High School State Debate  
& IE Tournament, Central  
High School, Aberdeen, SD

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**March 12-13**

St. Patrick's Day Weekend,  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1976

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**March 13**

28 Below Fatbike Race, Ride  
and Tour, Spearfish Canyon  
Lodge, Lead, SD  
605-641-4963

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**March 13**

St. Patrick's Day Celebration,  
Knights of Columbus Hall,  
Watertown, SD  
605-886-5814

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**March 13-14**

Philip Area Annual 2021 Gun  
Show, American Legion Hall,  
Philip, SD  
605-859-2280

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**March 19-20**

Annual Schmeckfest,  
Freeman Academy,  
Freeman, SD  
605-925-4237

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**March 23-24**

Shen Yun, Rushmore Plaza  
Civic Center Fine Arts  
Theatre, Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4115

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**March 25**

A Lakota View of the Dead  
Hills, Homestake Adams  
Research and Cultural Center,  
Deadwood, SD  
605-722-4800

**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.**