

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



The success of the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally requires many megawatts of power provided by member-owned electric cooperatives, including lighting the main stage at the Buffalo Chip

*Photo by Travel South Dakota*

## The Rally

**Keeping the Sturgis Rally juiced up**  
Pages 8-9

**High-flying fun at Catfish Bay**  
Pages 12-13

## TWACS Update



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Since it's been a while that we've touched base with our members on our meter conversion, we figured now is the best time to talk about it since it's complete! Well, almost. Allegiant has been changing meters since last September, and they've finished their part of the TWACS (Two Way Automatic Communication System) meter conversion. During the previous nine months, Allegiant changed out 13,105 meters, averaging about 1,100/month per technician. There are some meters that Allegiant could not change out due to access, geography, and waiting on specific meters from the factory. We will be changing these meters out as we get the equipment that we need.

We are working with our billing vendor to display daily demand on SmartHub® and once available the information can be accessed when it is convenient to the member. Currently, members can see interval kWh data from their meter(s) in SmartHub. This information can be helpful when figuring out when you are using the most energy and help you manage your use.

With this new system, we have enhanced our outage information. We are able to “ping” meters when an outage is reported. A ping is simply a command sent to the meter asking if it has power. When the meter has power, it sends back an “all good” response. This communication is done over the power lines and happens within a few seconds.

An added benefit to the ping process is once a meter doesn't respond and appears out of power, our outage system will automatically start checking meters nearby to try and find out how large the outage is. This directs our linemen to the source of the outage in an efficient and timely manner. At this time, the only way to start this process is by members reporting they're out of power.

We have a few different ways you can report an outage:

1. Call the office during business hours: M-F 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
2. Call the after-hours dispatch and either select report outage or talk to a dispatcher.
3. Report the outage via Smarthub.

Any of these options will automatically create an outage and start the process of finding out how widespread the outage is. If you send a Facebook message or email, no automatic outage is created. These platforms are not monitored 24/7, so we ask you to either call your outage in or report it via SmartHub.

The best numbers to call to report an outage or other power issues are 800-742-0085 or 605-673-4461.

This conversion continues to be a learning experience for all of us. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this process!



**COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS**

**BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC**

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

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BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of Black Hills Electric Cooperative, 25191 Cooperative Way, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792. Black Hills Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to electric cooperative members on matters pertaining to their cooperative and living better with electricity. Also available at [www.bhec.coop](http://www.bhec.coop).

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**Subscription information:** Black Hills Electric Cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Black Hills Electric Cooperative, 25191 Cooperative Way, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792, and at additional mailing offices.

**Postmaster:** Please send address changes to Black Hills Electric Cooperative, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792. Address all other correspondence to: Cooperative Connections, P.O. Box 792, Custer, S.D. 57730-0792 Telephone: (605) 673-4461; Fax: (605) 673-3147; e-mail: [bhec@bhec.coop](mailto:bhec@bhec.coop); website: [www.bhec.coop](http://www.bhec.coop).

**Urgent**

We will **no** longer be making courtesy calls before services are disconnected for **non-payment**.

This will be effective beginning:  
**AUGUST 1, 2022**

We will work with our members and have different billing options available. It is the member's responsibility to contact us prior to the disconnect date to see what the options are.

*Thank you for your understanding and cooperation regarding this matter!*



**Play it safe. That text can wait.**  
While driving, turn phone to silent mode or pull over if the text can't wait.

**Join us for dinner at the fair!**

**Fall River County Fair**  
Thursday, August 4, 5 p.m.  
Fall River County Fairgrounds

**Custer County Fair**  
Thursday, August 11, 5 - 6:30 p.m.  
Custer County Fairgrounds

**Co-sponsored by BHEC**

# Electrical safety basics for children

The back-to-school season is a time when parents and school children fall back into the familiar routine of getting up early, getting dressed, grabbing breakfast, preparing lunch and shuffling out the door each day.

It's a time when students return to a learning mindset, ready to take on new ideas, knowledge and information.

Parents should seize the opportunity to teach school-age children a valuable and potentially lifesaving lesson: Respect electricity.

Here are several electrical safety basics every child should know:

- Mixing water and electricity can be deadly. Teach children not to use electric toys or other devices near water or in the rain.
- Plugging multiple devices into a single outlet or power strip can create sparks and even cause a fire if that outlet can't handle the load. Teach kids to plug into surge-protected power strips or to use one device at a time and unplug the rest.

When they unplug those devices, they should grab them by the plug, not the cord. Yanking a cord out of an electrical outlet can damage the appliance, the outlet or the plug.

- Electrical cords can be strangling hazards and might cause electrical burns if they are misused. Make sure youngsters keep cords away from their mouths and necks. It's best to hide cords so they aren't a temptation.

- Electrical outlets are receptacles for electrical plugs only. Children should know from an early age that it's a no-no to put foreign objects or fingers into power plugs. Sticking any other items into an electrical socket can lead to electric shock or death. Use childproofing outlet covers.

- Flying kites and climbing trees are never safe activities near power lines. If a tree has a power line running through it - or if it's even within reach of the line - it's not a safe place to play. If a kite gets caught in a power line, the child should not tug on it to get it loose. The string could conduct electricity and seriously hurt the child.

- Electrical substations are fenced off to keep children and animals out of the area. If a toy or small pet gets inside the fence, the child should inform a parent or teacher, who can call a trained worker to come and retrieve it.

## COOPERATIVES HELP OUR MEMBERS SOLVE PROBLEMS



Electric co-op member services personnel focus their attention on making sure co-op members get the power they need when they need it. They help homeowners and businesses solve problems and find solutions to operate more efficiently. A group of co-op representatives recently took a guided tour of the Riverview Dairy near Watertown to learn how the dairy functions and how the local co-op can provide better service to the facility.

You can find out more about the many ways our electric cooperatives serve our members by visiting Cooperative Connections Plus. Simply scan the QR code at right.



## Swim safely

### Alayna Smith

Alayna, age 10, alerts both the young and old alike to refrain from swimming when any thunderstorms are around. Alayna is the daughter of Myles and Amber Smith and they are members of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

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.

# TASTY SUMMER SALADS

## SHELL MACARONI SALAD

### Ingredients:

1 7-oz. box of shell macaroni, cooked, rinsed and cooled  
2-3 fresh tomatoes, chopped  
1/3 green pepper, chopped  
3 celery ribs, sliced thinly  
1/4 c. chopped onion  
1 cucumber, seeded & chopped

Toss ingredients together; set aside.

### Dressing

1/2 c. canola oil  
3/4 c. sugar  
1/2 c. vinegar  
3/4 c. catsup  
Dash of lemon juice

### METHOD

Mix dressing ingredients well with wire whip and add to veggies and macaroni.

Joan Antonen, Arlington

## TUNA AND EGG SALAD

### Ingredients:

3 6-oz. cans tuna packed in water  
3 eggs hard boiled, peeled and chopped  
2 small dill pickles diced  
1 large celery rib diced  
1/4 cup red onion minced  
1 tbsp. lemon juice or red wine vinegar  
2 tsp. garlic powder, optional  
1/4 tsp. salt, to taste  
Ground black pepper to taste  
1/2 cup plain Greek yogurt, 2%+ fat  
2 tbsp. mayo

### METHOD

Drain cans with tuna well by pressing hard on the lid while draining. Transfer to a large bowl and separate into flakes with a fork. Add chopped and peeled hard boiled eggs, pickles, celery, red onion, lemon juice, garlic powder (if using), salt, pepper, yogurt and mayo. Stir well with a fork and refrigerate. Serve cold in a sandwich or over salad greens.

ifoodreal.com

## GARDEN VEGGIES 'N ROTINI

### Ingredients:

3/4 c. oil  
3/4 c. white vinegar  
3/4 c. white sugar  
1 tsp. garlic salt  
2 tbsp. onion flakes  
1 tbsp. mustard  
Bring the above ingredients to a boil and remove from heat.  
Cook 4 cups colored rotini noodles. Rinse and chill.  
Cut up the following in chunky pieces:  
1 tomato  
1 cucumber  
assorted peppers  
1/2 red onion

### METHOD

Stir veggies together with the rotini and dressing. Chill before serving.

Ginny Jensen, Volga

## NANCY'S MACARONI SALAD

### Ingredients:

#### Dice:

1 onion  
1 green pepper  
1-2 carrots  
1 cup celery  
2 cups Velveeta Cheese

#### Add:

1 can peas  
1 - 16 oz. pkg. macaroni cooked and drained

#### Dressing:

1 cup sugar  
1 pint mayo  
1 cup white vinegar  
1 - 14 oz. can evaporated milk

### METHOD

Mix together gently and refrigerate, best overnight. Add any type of meat, boiled eggs etc., as desired.

Nancy Nelson, Mission Hill

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

### Q: How do I operate my thermostat to use less energy and still be comfortable?

A: Heating and cooling account for about half the energy used in a typical home, so it's a great place to use less energy. When used wisely, your thermostat can help reduce wasted energy.

Here's some information on thermostat types, common operational misconceptions and best practices you can start today.

#### TYPES OF THERMOSTATS

Mechanical thermostats are easy to control by adjusting a dial or sliding switch. The downfall is you must make temperature adjustments manually, which is easy to forget. They are inefficient because they typically heat or cool the home beyond the set point.

If your cooling is set to 72 degrees, a mechanical thermostat may actually cool your home to 70 degrees before it turns off, wasting energy. Then it might not come on again until the home reaches 74 degrees. That four-degree temperature change is noticeable and can lead people to adjust the thermostat setting down even more, which wastes more energy.

Also, some mechanical thermostats contain mercury. You can determine that by removing the front plate and looking for small glass bulbs. If your thermostat contains mercury, replace it and find a way to properly recycle it.

Digital thermostats are more accurate, efficient and some are programmable, which is a great option for people who don't have internet or don't want their thermostat data tracked.

Smart thermostats - which require an internet connection - are Wi-Fi-enabled and can be controlled using a smartphone app. Programming is easier, and you can track and manage use and temperature data. However, that data is shared with the manufacturer.

Smart thermostats can learn your preferences and set a schedule that automatically adjusts the temperature. Some have geofencing, which

adjusts the temperature based on the distance your smartphone is from home.

#### MISCONCEPTIONS

A common misconception is the higher you turn your thermostat up or down, the faster your home's temperature will change. Turning your thermostat down to 55 degrees to cool your home faster is like repeatedly pushing the elevator button and expecting it to come faster.

It's likely you will forget you adjusted it and waste energy by over heating or cooling the home. Set your desired temperature for heating and cooling or program your thermostat so you don't make extreme adjustments.

Many people believe it takes more energy to heat or cool a house instead of leaving it the same temperature. The larger the temperature variance between inside and outside, the more energy your system uses. Setting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day can save up to 10 percent a year on your energy bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

#### BEST PRACTICES

Use these heating and cooling tips from the DOE to add efficiency and savings to your home:

- Set it to 78 degrees in the summer when you are home and awake, and warmer at night or when away. Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter when you are home and awake, and cooler at night or when you are away.
- Upgrade to a programmable or smart thermostat that automatically adjusts the temperature throughout the day and when you leave the house.
- When on vacation, set your thermostat to 85 degrees in the summer and 55 degrees in the winter.
- In the summer, fans allow you to set your thermostat about 4 degrees warmer without feeling it. Remember, fans cool people not rooms, so turn them off when you leave a room.

Use your thermostat to optimize energy efficiency and find a balance between comfort and affordability.



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group



A mayday drill was conducted near New Underwood to train co-op employees and first responders. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

## Mock drill benefits cooperative employees and responders

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

A tragic scene unfolded near New Underwood last month with several accident victims lying on the ground severely injured after making contact with an energized power line.

There was blood, bruises and burn marks. Sirens blared, engines revved and vehicles kicked up clouds of dust as more than a half-dozen agencies arrived to save lives, manage the crisis and reduce the risk of further harm. Paramedics, deputies and other first responders began CPR on the victims and hauled them into ambulances.

Fortunately, the scenario was fake news, all part of a mock mayday drill organized by West River Electric at the Brinks Training Facility east of Rapid City. The co-op staged the drill not only for the benefit of its linemen and other employees but also to educate first responders on how to work in the presence of electric utility infrastructure.

Participants were the Rapid City Fire Department, Box Elder Fire Department, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Life Flight, Wall Ambulance, State Highway Patrol and Pennington County Dispatch.

"The goal was for everyone to get something out of it, from the paramedics to the dispatchers who accepted the mayday call," said Brendan Nelson, line superintendent at West River Electric. "Thanks to everyone involved. We hope we never actually have to go through something like this. All the co-ops in our system strive to develop a culture of safety and we're all working to achieve the same objective - delivering power to our members safely and economically, and getting everybody back home."

He said the exercise went smoothly and there were many lessons learned regarding managing an accident scene, coordinating communication and maneuvering around what are always assumed to be energized power lines. After the drill, a debriefing session was held at the co-op's office in Rapid City.

Mark Patterson, manager of loss control at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, also attended the exercise. He said electric cooperatives place the highest priority on safety and invest considerable time and resources toward making sure line workers are prepared to respond to emergency situations as they arise.

"All of our co-ops take safety training

very seriously," Patterson said. "Part of that commitment means participating in these kinds of drills and other training programs to make sure we're prepared to respond to accidents and emergency situations as expeditiously as possible. To make sure our response is effective, it's important that we have a good idea about our roles and responsibilities well before an accident occurs."

Patterson and his team at the association conduct on-site safety programs throughout the year, including rubber-gloving, hot-sticking, grounds testing, pole-top rescues, equipment inspections, state and federal rules and regulations, First Aid and more.

He emphasized that intra-agency coordination and awareness of the presence of power lines are paramount in successfully managing an accident scene and saving lives.

"Sometimes an emergency responder might not be fully aware of power lines and transformers and other equipment because they're focusing on other things in an intense situation," Patterson said. "So we just want to have some conversations to make sure everyone knows that we need to assume all equipment is energized and to notify us as soon as possible so we can get to the scene and do what we need to do to lower the risk of danger."

To see a video of the drill, visit <https://youtu.be/HOSOLLrLbk>.

# CO-OPS KEEP THE RALLY ROLLING



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## Electric co-ops are committed to keeping The Rally energized

**Billy Gibson**

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The frenetic atmosphere that has come to be associated with the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally can be loud, chaotic and - well let's just say - very colorful.

But behind those vivid scenes are electric cooperative employees working hard to make sure the Rally has the juice required to keep the lights glaring, the amps blaring, the air conditioners humming and the blenders blending.

The three local co-ops that serve the Black Hills and surrounding area are Butte Electric, West River Electric and Black Hills Electric. In conjunction with wholesale supplier Rushmore Electric in Rapid City and power generator Basin Electric based in Bismarck, N.D., the co-ops deliver much of the electricity used by campgrounds, restaurants, shops, concert stages, biker bars and other entertainment venues.

The power providers are diligent about keeping pace with the increasing growth of The Rally, which is rebounding from a temporary drop in attendance brought on by the coronavirus pandemic over the past two years.

Corey Trapp, chief engineering officer at Rushmore Electric, said power demand can increase significantly during The Rally. For instance, he indicated the area north of Sturgis served by Butte Electric that includes Full Throttle and other sites can jump from 1-2 MW to 8-9 MW during the event.

At the Buffalo Chip, West River Electric has nearly 40 meters located across the 600-acre spread serving scores of bars, campgrounds and cabins, as well as the main stage. Power use skyrockets from about 30 KW to more than 4.2 MW.

This year marks the 82nd installment of The Rally. Ten years ago, organizers were concerned about the potential future of the event if younger riders didn't start joining in on the fun. According to data gathered by local government agencies, Mount Rushmore National Park and other sources, attendance is back on the upswing.

An estimated 555,000 riders participated in the Rally last August, up nearly 14 percent from 2020 and an increase of 9.5 percent over the five-year average from 2016 to 2020.

Statistics show that nearly 30 percent of attendees were first-timers in 2021, which is welcomed news for promoters who work year-around to keep The Rally rolling, including





RALLY FACTS

- 🏍️ 555,000 – No. of 2021 participants
- 🏍️ 54 – avg. age in 2019
- 🏍️ 46.5 – avg. age in 2021
- 🏍️ 52% - campground attendees
- 🏍️ 18% - hotel attendees
- 🏍️ \$81,005 - avg. household income
- 🏍️ \$382 - spent per day
- 🏍️ 85% - motorcycle owners
- 🏍️ 81% - Harley owners
- 🏍️ \$1,090,398 - raised for charity

the city of Sturgis, the South Dakota Department of Tourism, the Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association and scores of business owners who depend on the seasonal revenue to sustain their operations.

The increased buzz of activity keeps the V-twin economic engines purring throughout the Black Hills area, but delivering the power has its own set of challenges that may not be apparent to partiers. Electric cooperative officials report that global shortages in materials and supplies make it difficult to meet the increase in power demand, but they're committed to doing everything possible to meet that demand.

"We're seeing delays in equipment necessary for infrastructure upgrades, but we know how important electricity is for The Rally to run successfully," said Brett Fosheim, director of operations at Butte Electric based in Newell. "A lot of visitors and business owners are

An estimated 555,000 visitors enjoyed the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally last year. As attendance climbs, electric cooperatives are committed to delivering the power needed to keep the party going. *Photos by South Dakota Travel*

depending on us, so we're prepared every year to step up to the plate with power that's affordable, reliable and there when everybody needs it."

Fosheim said just as organizers work all year long to plan and promote the 10-day event, electric cooperatives also anticipate the rise in electricity demand and coordinate with their common power generator, Basin Electric, to fill the need and handle peak loads. Butte Electric serves Full Throttle, Days Inn Campground and the Sons of Silence Campground, among other venues.

Because electric cooperatives are created by their members to serve their members, they've been delivering electricity since the early days of The Rally. The annual event traces its roots back to 1938 when a group of Indian Motorcycle enthusiasts led by local franchise owner Clarence "Pappy" Hoel got together to race one another, pull off some riding stunts and party together around a common interest in the brand.

What started as a quaint occasion called the Black Hills Classic with just

nine racers and a sparse crowd has become an international attraction.

Except for the World War II years between 1939 and 1941, The Rally has been a much-anticipated mainstay attracting visitors from across the planet. During the war, organizers suspended the event due to gas restrictions in support of the war effort.



While the current supply shortages mentioned by Fosheim have kept power providers on their toes and doubly prepared for The Rally, he said cooperatives are committed to delivering quality service not only during the event but long after the riders have peeled out of town.

# Understanding Power Surges and Blinks

Have you ever noticed your lights blink during a thunderstorm? Or perhaps you've noticed a blinking microwave clock when you arrive home. When this happens, you've likely experienced a brief disruption to your electric service, which could result from a power surge or blink. While the symptoms of surges and blinks can appear similar, what's happening behind the scenes can be quite different.

## What's a power surge?

Power surges are brief overvoltage spikes or disturbances of a power waveform that can damage, degrade or destroy electronic equipment within your home or business. Most electronics are designed to handle small variations in voltage; however, power surges can reach amplitudes of tens of thousands of volts—which can be extremely damaging to your electronic equipment.

Surges can be caused by internal sources, like HVAC systems with variable frequency drives, or external sources, like lightning and damage to power lines and transformers.

Black Hills Electric Cooperative encourages all members to install surge protective devices (such as surge protector power strips) to safeguard your sensitive electronics. If you're experiencing frequent surges in your home or



business and you believe the cause is internal, contact a qualified electrician to inspect your electrical system.

## What's a power blink?

Power blinks are also brief service interruptions, but they're typically caused by a fault (short circuit) on a power line or a protective device that's working in reaction to the fault. Faults can occur through a variety of instances, like squirrels, birds, or other small animals contacting an energized power line; tree branches touching a power line; or lightning and other similar events. In fact, squirrels reign supreme when it comes to power disruptions caused by critters.



Any of the events noted above can cause your power to blink, but you may also experience a brief interruption when protective devices that act like circuit breakers are working to detect the fault. Believe it or not, these brief power blinks caused by protective devices are actually good because that means the equipment is working as it should to prevent a prolonged outage.

Regardless of the cause, BHEC crews will be on their way to inspect the damage and make necessary repairs after a power outage. And you can help too! Any time you experience repeated disruptions to your electric service, please let us know by calling 800-742-0085 or 605-673-4461.



## STAY AWAY FROM DOWNED POWER LINES

Downed power lines can look relatively harmless, but don't be fooled. They may carry an electric current strong enough to cause serious injury or possibly death.

These tips can help you stay safe around downed lines:

- If you see a downed power line, move away from the line.
- The proper way to move away from the line is to shuffle with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will minimize the potential for a strong electric shock. Electricity wants to move from a high-voltage zone to a low-voltage one—and it could do that through your body.
- If you see someone who is in direct or indirect contact with the downed line, do not touch the person. You could become the next victim. Call 911 instead.

- Do not attempt to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object. Even normally non-conductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity and electrocute you.
- Be careful not to put your feet near water where a downed power line is located.
- Do not drive over downed lines.
- If you are in a vehicle that is in contact with a downed line, stay in the vehicle. Honk your horn for help and tell others to stay away from your vehicle.
- If you must leave your vehicle because it's on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid making contact with the energized vehicle and the ground at the same time.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

An easy way to save energy is to seal air leaks and holes where plumbing pipes run through walls in your home. You can also check wall-mounted cabinets for plumbing holes or air gaps in the back.

Fill any holes or gaps with spray foam. Wear protective gloves and use a damp rag for cleanup.

*Source: Dept. of  
Energy*





# FAMILY FUN AT CATFISH BAY

Summer fun for the entire family awaits at Catfish Bay Water Ski Park in Sioux Falls. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Pigs fly and family fun abounds at Catfish Bay Water Ski Park

**Billy Gibson**

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If you stop by Catfish Bay, you probably won't see a single catfish during your stay. But you will definitely see a pig flying, a chicken hurtling through the air and water skis sprouting up from a pocketful of magic seeds.

Catfish Bay Water Ski Park, located just off I-90 in Sioux Falls, is a family entertainment venue where a squad of highly skilled skiers leap and spin and build four-tier human pyramids as they skim across the water's surface.

Billed as "The Greatest Show on H<sub>2</sub>O," the event attracts spectators from miles around who show up each Friday evening during the summer months to see the high-flying theatrics reminiscent of Florida's famed Cypress Gardens. The show features ski jumpers dressed as chickens, Hee Haw-inspired corn pone humor and a daredevil in a pig costume elevating 30 feet into the air astride a water-propelled fly board.

The show is the brainchild of Jim

Bruns, an idea that spawned from his mind as "a God thing." While he was a college student in the early '90s, Bruns joined the Sioux Falls Water Ski Club and honed his skills enough to turn pro.

It was during college that he hatched a plan to establish a show similar to those being staged at SeaWorld and other similar sites. First thing he needed was a lake. He found the perfect spot when a contractor dug out a 25-acre borrow pit adjacent to the interstate. He bought the pit and – voila! – one man-made lake...just add water.

Second thing he needed was a performing cast. Bruns gathered some of his fellow skiers of all ages and sizes, pulled together a program and then plowed forward for a few years determined to make the show a success. Just when he began wondering if he was going to be able to keep the labor-intensive venture alive, he experienced another epiphany. He needed to rededicate the program to building youth, strengthening families and developing leaders. He formed a

mission statement: "MV2 – Mission, Vision and Values."

"It was a simple plan from the start," Bruns said just before the start of the season-opening show on Memorial Day. "But in 2007 I hit a wall. I sat down and prayed about it and came up with MV2. Now I have so many stories of kids who have come out here and learned a skill and learned about teamwork and goal-setting. They learn how to overcome obstacles."

One of those youngsters is Beth Bruggeman, who serves as assistant show director. A recent college graduate, she has been involved in the program for 10 years. She was a 13-year-old gymnast and cheerleader when she decided to try out for the ski team and now she's a star in the show with boundless energy, a beaming smile and a scar on her eyebrow as her personal badge of courage and grit.

"One of the things I like about it is there are people who participate of all skill levels who are anywhere from 6 to 60 years old. You don't find groups with that kind of diversity. You get to form different kinds of connections and friendships," she said.

Brun's own children, James and Amara, are two other stars of the show. Amara, 13, professes to be the more gushingly dramatic. A student at O'Gorman Junior High, Amara has been part of the act since she was 2, riding on her dad's shoulders. Today she barefoots, swivels, climbs the pyramid and charms the crowd with her effervescent smile.

"I like entertaining people and making them feel like they've come to a special place," she said.

Beside Brun's, Jeremiah Newman is another example of the motto: the family that skis together stays together. He and his children, 14-year-old Marissa and 12-year-old Tyler, are involved in all aspects of the show. He's a member of the military and a former international professional skier who still competes around the region and specializes in performing flips and twists on an air chair hydrofoil.

"This is such a family-friendly environment. It's priceless. It keeps me active and it keeps our family close. Instead of sitting on the sidelines watching my kids, I get to be out there with them," he said. "We talk about the importance of making a life-long commitment to fitness and good nutrition and things that will serve them well along the way."

While the skiers are preparing for their next set, attention turns toward the stage area and a charming recurring character named Norman, who always comes up with some crackpot scheme that never fails to fail. Brun's explains that the Norman character stands as a metaphor for anyone who has had a dream and felt the frustration of failure.

"The thing about Norman that makes him different is that he never loses his enthusiasm and keeps on trying," Brun's said. "His motto is to dream big and never give up."

Brun's is living out the dream he had as a younger man. To this point, Norman has never revealed his last name. But it could very well be Brun's.

Below, Catfish Bay performers pull off a "four-stack" configuration. At right, the character known as "Norman" rides a flying pig.





# TOUCHSTONE SUPPORTS H.S. RODEO

The Touchstone Energy flag has flown proudly at the last 20 State High School Rodeo Finals. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Electric co-ops support high school rodeo through popular Short Go Shirt program

**Billy Gibson**

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Folks who attended the State High School Rodeo Finals in Fort Pierre this summer could see Tobi Hintz coming from halfway across the arena.

Hintz is a student at Timber Lake High School and serves as the association's 2022 Rodeo Queen. She cut a dashing figure at the event with her decorative sash, bright red lipstick, fringed shoulder bag, buckle-shaped sterling silver earrings and baby blue cowgirl hat with a sparkling tiara wrapped above the brim.

Oh, and she can also ride pretty well, too. Over the past two years, she's earned Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirts at the state finals in recognition of her rodeo skills in barrel racing and pole bending.

This year marked the 20th celebration of the Touchstone Energy Short Go

Shirt program. Since 2002, Touchstone Energy cooperatives have donated more than \$140,000 towards the program that honors contestants who make it to the Short Go round of the state finals competition in their respective events.

This year in Fort Pierre, 145 student-athletes visited the Touchstone Energy booth to sign up for their shirts, which will be embroidered with the TSE logo and delivered to contestants this fall.

While Hintz has a bubbly personality and a flair for fashion, she takes pride in wearing her two Short Go Shirts that identify her as an accomplished competitor.

"It's so cool and it's such an honor to win a Short Go Shirt," she said. "It's so unique for us competitors because I don't know how many states actually get the opportunity to receive something like this. Every contestant appreciates it. The more shirts the merrier!"

Tobi, a national finalist in the rodeo

queen competition two years ago, has been involved in rodeo from a young age and said she likes the friendships that are forged with her peers.

"You meet so many people and make so many friends. Sometimes you wonder why you're doing it, but then you learn that there's a rhyme and reason for all the chaos and madness," she said.

Ann Sundermann has served as executive secretary for the High School Rodeo Association for the past 17 years. She describes the level of enthusiasm surrounding the TSE Short Go program that she's experienced over the years.

"Winning one of these shirts is the thing the kids anticipate the most," Sundermann said during a brief pause in the rodeo action. "We'll have 40 kids coming into the office asking where do they sign up for their Short Go Shirts. Then once they've been ordered they want to know when is their Short Go Shirt coming in. All the kids know about Touchstone because they've seen these shirts for the past 20 years."



Over the past 20 years, electric cooperatives have distributed more than 3,200 Short Go Shirts.

Sundermann said she's seen a lot of value from the program that demonstrates the electric cooperative system's ongoing involvement in youth development, education, sports activities and overall community support.

"It's been a privilege to work with the local electric cooperatives. They take pictures of the kids with their shirts and run them in their magazines and the kids send the pictures to us. They give the kids a lot of recognition for all their hard work and all they've achieved. With the commitment cooperatives have to their communities and their support for this outstanding program, I think it's a great long-term partnership and we look forward to continuing for many years to come," she said.

Marty Philips is public relations coordinator for the association. He noted that Short Go Shirts don't spend much time stashed away and gathering dust in the closet.

"The shirts get worn out because the kids wear them constantly. They're right at the front of their closets. It's such a great honor for them. They wear them to work, they wear them to school, they wear them to college and even when they're adults. I see them all over the state," Philips said. "They wear them

with pride because they know they earned it and they know they did the work to make it to the Short Go round. A lot of kids think it's better than a buckle. We appreciate what TSE has done for the kids because that's what this is all about, it's all about the kids. Everything we do is for the kids."

Todd Eliason, a recent retiree from Rushmore Electric in Rapid City who administered the program for Touchstone Energy since it began in 2002, said he looked forward to working with rodeo organizers and the student-athletes each year.

"These kids are our future, and to see how goal-oriented and determined they are and to see how hard they work, it really makes you feel positive about the future," he said.

Eliason cited Layni Stevens as a prime example. Not only did Layni earn a Short Go Shirt but she also punched her ticket to the national event in Gillette, W.Y., by finishing first in the girl's cutting competition.

**"It's such an honor to receive a Short Go Shirt. The more shirts, the merrier!"**

*- Rodeo Queen Tobi Hintz*

"I'm just grateful to be at the finals and it's an even greater blessing to get to wear a Short Go Shirt," Layni said. "It's one of your goals to get to the Short Go round. Sometimes it doesn't always go your way, but to know you get the reward of getting a shirt is just really cool. You can wear it all year long, to all kinds of events and to college."

To see a video of the event, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT-oZ1Oxn7o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iT-oZ1Oxn7o)



## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**AUGUST 16-18**  
**Dakotafest**

*Photo Credit: AFBF photo/Philip Gerlach*



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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

**JULY 25-30**  
**Days of '76 Rodeo and Parades**

18 Seventy Six Dr., Deadwood, SD, [daysof76.com](http://daysof76.com)

**JULY 29-31**  
**Badlands Astronomy Festival**  
Ben Reifel Visitor Center, Interior, SD, 605-433-5243

**JULY 29-31**  
**Bruce Honey Days**  
Various Locations, Bruce, SD, 605-627-5671

**JULY 29-31**  
**Paha Sapa Cowboys and Indians Art Festival**  
Outlaw Square, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

**JULY 30**  
**South Dakota Chislic Festival**  
Prairie Arboretum, Freeman, SD, [sdchislicfestival.com](http://sdchislicfestival.com)

**AUGUST 5-6**  
**Foothills Days and Rockin' Ribfest**  
Citywide, Wessington Springs, SD, 605-539-1929

**AUGUST 5-7**  
**Sioux River Folk Festival**  
Newton Hills State Park, Canton, SD, [facebook.com/SDFOTM/](https://facebook.com/SDFOTM/)

**AUGUST 5-13**  
**Sioux Empire Fair**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, [siouxempirefair.com](http://siouxempirefair.com)

**AUGUST 5-14**  
**Sturgis Motorcycle Rally**  
Main St., Sturgis, SD, [sturgismotorcyclerrally.com](http://sturgismotorcyclerrally.com)

**AUGUST 8**  
**Legends Ride**  
Main Street, Deadwood, SD, [legendsride.com](http://legendsride.com)

**AUGUST 11-14**  
**Custer County Fair**  
Hermosa, SD, [custercountyfair.com](http://custercountyfair.com)

**AUGUST 12-14**  
**Fort Pierre Trader Days**  
Various Locations, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-412-8549

**AUGUST 19-21**  
**Black Hills Threshing Bee**  
13380 Alkali Road, Sturgis, SD, 605-490-2024

**AUGUST 19-27**  
**Central States Fair and Rodeo**  
800 San Francisco St., Rapid City, SD, [centralstatesfair.com](http://centralstatesfair.com)

**AUGUST 24-28**  
**Corn Palace Festival**  
604 N Main St., Mitchell, SD, 605-995-8430

**AUGUST 24-28**  
**Kool Deadwood Nites**  
Citywide, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

**AUGUST 26-27**  
**Hill City Wine, Brew and BBQ**  
Elm St., Hill City, SD, [hillcitywinebrewandbbq.com](http://hillcitywinebrewandbbq.com)

**AUGUST 26-27**  
**Sizzlin' Summer Nights**  
Main St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-3441

**AUGUST 26-28**  
**Fall River Hot Air Balloon Festival**  
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, [fallriverballoonfest.com](http://fallriverballoonfest.com)

**AUG. 30-SEPT. 4**  
**Sturgis Mustang Rally**  
Thunderdome, Sturgis, SD, [sturgismustangrally.com](http://sturgismustangrally.com)

**SEPTEMBER 1-5**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
890 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD, [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com)

**SEPTEMBER 10-11**  
**Hill City Quilt Show**  
Hill City, SD, 605-574-2810 or [hillcityarts.org](http://hillcityarts.org)

**SEPTEMBER 22-24**  
**Black Hills Plein Air Paint Out**  
Hill City, SD, 605-574-2810 or [hillcityarts.org](http://hillcityarts.org)

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