

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Cross country skiing is a way to keep moving and maintain physical and mental health during the winter months.

Skiing for fun and health

Nordic skiers find paradise on the snow
Pages 8-9

Car dealers adapt to EV market
Pages 12-13

CAPITAL CREDIT RETIREMENT



Walker Witt - CEO
wwitt@bhec.coop

Hello, it's Sunday afternoon on November 28th. The skies are blue, the sun is shining, it is 57 degrees in Custer and 64 in Hermosa, and I am dreaming of a white Christmas! The credit for my thoughts goes to the songwriter Irving Berlin and singer Bing Crosby. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas was probably composed in the fall/winter of 1940, and both Phoenix, Arizona and La Quinta, California lay claim for Berlin's inspiration due to their balmy weather and the amount of time that Mr. Berlin spent in those communities during the early 1940s. Bing Crosby's version is my favorite and is the world's best-selling single record with estimated sales of over 50 million copies worldwide.

You're probably thinking, what does any of this have to do with our co-op? My truthful answer is really nothing, but I was thinking of a white Christmas, and I thought it was a good way to start my column.

Your Board of Directors took action to retire two million dollars of allocated capital credits at the November board meeting. The capital credit retirement has been applied to your December electric bill. The decision regarding whether to retire capital credits and how much to retire, is based upon the financial condition of your co-op. The past several years, your board has set goals of strengthening the financial condition of the co-op, decreasing the capital credit retirement cycle to get your capital credits back to you sooner, and structuring the retirement in a manner that lessens the impact for future years. It is difficult to accomplish all three goals at the same time. Retained allocated capital credits strengthens the financial positions of our co-op by strengthening equity levels. Retiring capital credits decreases equity. Your board does a good job maintaining the correct balance between retiring capital credits

and retaining sufficient equity on the balance sheet.

This year's retirement will complete the retirement for all years through 1999. This year's retirement included a return of over 1.2 million G&T capital credits to current members, which lessens the impact of allocated capital credits that future boards would have to struggle with. In addition to the general retirement, estate capital credits paid out in 2021 year-to-date through November are over \$53,000. Since becoming a cooperative, Black Hills Electric Cooperative has paid over 14 million back to its members. In the past five years alone, your board has retired over 7.9 million.

Well, I just checked, and the outside temperature here at the office has dropped to 54 degrees, so I don't think there is any snow in the distant future. Regardless of the lack of snow so far this year, may all of your days be merry and bright!

I want to close by thanking each of you for the opportunity to serve you every day. From all of us at your co-op, we appreciate you and are thankful to have you as members.

We wish each of you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

Board President: Dennis Quivey

Board of Directors

- Jim Preston - Vice President
- Don Andersen - Secretary
- Dave Lindblom - Asst. Secretary
- Gary Kluthe - Treasurer
- Thad Wasson
- Alan Bishop

CEO & General Manager: Walker Witt
wwitt@bhec.coop

Manager of Operations: Bill Brisk
billb@bhec.coop

Chief Financial Officer: Sammi Langendorf
slang@bhec.coop

System Coordinator: Jesse Sorenson
jsorenson@bhec.coop

Director of Communications & Member Services: Michelle Fischer
michellef@bhec.coop

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.

This cooperative is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form AD-3027, found on-line at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202 690-7442) or e-mail at program.intake@usda.gov.

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; website: www.bhec.coop.

CAPITAL CREDITS

Frequently-asked questions

As a non-profit organization, BHEC gives any profits or margins back to the members in the form of capital credits. We have compiled a list of FAQs below to alleviate any confusion about capital credits and how they work.

AM I ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE CAPITAL CREDIT REFUNDS?

If you are either a former or current member, you're eligible to receive capital credits. We apply a credit to active members' December billing statement, and mail checks to inactive members sometime after the first of each year.

WHY AREN'T THE CAPITAL CREDITS PAID OUT ALL AT ONE TIME?

Members participate in the financial well-being of the cooperative through their economic participation. Members are the owners of the cooperative, and the cooperative uses any profits for system improvements and reliability. When finances permit, that money is returned to the members by the cooperative.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A MEMBER PASSES AWAY?

When a member passes away their spouse or representative has

three options. They can leave the account in the estate and let the capital credits be retired normally. Future checks may be difficult to cash with this option. The second option is to assign/transfer the capital credits to someone else with the necessary paperwork. The third and final option would be to cash out the capital credit account at a discounted present-day value.

WHAT IF I MOVE AND I AM NO LONGER A MEMBER OF THE COOPERATIVE?

When you disconnect services with Black Hills Electric Cooperative, your relationship with the co-op doesn't end. We will continue to send your capital credit checks to you as they're retired. It is important for members to keep their mailing address updated with us so we can deliver your capital credit checks.

If you have any questions about capital credits, please contact our office. We're happy to help!

Murphy



Crunch the numbers on New Year's savings in your home

If your New Year's resolution to spend less and save more always fizzles out by March, don't fret. With a few simple adjustments in your house, you can save money on your energy bill each month. Here's how:

- Save up to 20 percent on heating by installing a programmable thermostat and setting it to automatically lower the heat when you leave the house for more than five hours and when the family goes to bed for the night.
- Save 1–3 percent on heating costs for each degree you turn the thermostat down. For optimal savings, set the thermostat at 68 degrees while at home and 65 degrees at night and before you leave the house for an extended period.
- Save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills by sealing air leaks around doors and windows with caulk and weatherstripping. This inexpensive energy saver will pay for itself within a year.
- Save at least 25 percent on air conditioning when you replace your old, inefficient central AC with one that has a seasonal energy-efficiency ratio of 14 or higher.
- Save up to 40 percent on what you spend to run your refrigerator by replacing an old unit with a new Energy Star-certified model.
- Save more than 50 percent on energy for cooking when you use a microwave oven instead of a conventional oven to heat meals.
- Save more than 10 percent on your water heating bill by lowering the water heater temperature from 140 degrees to 120.
- Save 75 percent or more on energy for lighting by replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs. They also last about 25 times longer. Switching out CFLs for LEDs will reduce lighting costs as much as 50 percent.
- Consistently turning off lights when not in use or when natural light is sufficient can reduce lighting expenses 10–40 percent.
- Enable the power management function on computers and sleep setting on appliances.

CO-OPS IN ACTION



South Dakota's electric cooperatives deliver affordable, reliable power to our members in every corner of the state. But we do so much more!

Visit our Co-op Connections Plus YouTube channel and you'll see co-ops in action at local community events, youth leadership programs and charitable fundraising events like the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride. We've got South Dakota covered!

Simply scan the QR code to the right and be sure to subscribe!



Keep out of power boxes

Trinity Kurtenbach

Trinity knows that those green “power boxes” that are often seen near homes or along roadways contain electrical equipment that can pose a hazard. Trinity is the child of Cory Kurtenbach and Tonya Buchholz-Froehlich of Nunda and attends Sioux Valley Elementary in Volga. They are members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

SOUPS FOR THE SOUL

SMASHED POTATO SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped carrot
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped celery
- 1 pkg 14 oz refrigerated mashed potatoes
- 1 14.5 oz can chicken broth
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 garlic clove pressed
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 2 Tbsp fresh parsley

METHOD

Place mashed potatoes in medium saucepan. Gradually add broth and milk, whisking until mixture is smooth. Stir in carrot, celery, garlic and salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in sour cream and parsley. Top with desired toppings. 4 servings; 5 cups. Optional toppings: sliced green onion, shredded cheddar cheese, cooked, crumbled bacon.

Becki Hausser, Tripp

CREAMY CHICKEN GNOCCHI SOUP

Ingredients:

- 6 Tbsp butter
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 2 cups onion
- 1 cup diced celery
- 4 garlic cloves (minced)
- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups half and half
- 1 (32 oz) container chicken broth (add more for a thinner soup)
- 1 Tbsp thyme
- 2 cups carrots
- 2 cups spinach or kale
- 3 cups diced, cooked chicken
- 2 (16 oz) packages potato gnocchi
- Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Add butter and olive oil to large pot over medium heat. Sauté onions, celery, and garlic until tender. Add flour to create a roux and stir for one minute. Slowly add the half and half and chicken broth. Stir until it thickens. Add the thyme, carrots, spinach, chicken and gnocchi. Cook for 5-10 minutes until gnocchi is cooked and soup thickened. If soup gets too thick just add more chicken broth. Salt and pepper to taste.

Tracey Burkett, Olivet

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1-1.5 lbs chicken thighs bone in or boneless (skinless)
- 3 bay leaves
- 5 peppercorns, whole
- 1 small whole onion peeled, hairy end intact
- 3 large garlic cloves
- 12 cups chicken stock low sodium
- 2 large carrots diced
- 2 cups potatoes diced
- 1 1/2 cups egg noodles or any short pasta
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 3 tsp fresh dill, parsley or green onion finely chopped

METHOD

In a large Dutch oven or pot, add chicken thighs, bay leaves, peppercorns, onion, 2 garlic cloves and stock. On high heat, bring soup to a boil covered then move lid to the side a bit to keep soup clear. Cook for 20 minutes, removing foam as it rises to the top with a mesh strainer. Dice potatoes and carrots. Chop dill and grate garlic. Add potatoes and carrots, stir and reduce heat to medium. Cook with half lid open for 5 minutes. Add pasta, stir and cook for another 5 minutes. Discard onion, bay leaves and peppercorns with mesh strainer. Add salt, olive oil, grated garlic clove, dill and ground black pepper to taste. You can also shred chicken right in the pot. Let sit covered for 5 minutes.

ifoodreal.com

Please send your favorite soup 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.

Do energy-saving measures in my home make a big difference?

For the average household, it depends on your home's efficiency and your habits. Your energy use is based on your home's equipment and how you use it. You might already have an efficient home and good energy use habits, or you might have room for improvement.

Energy keeps us comfortable in our homes, and our monthly bill is the associated cost for this energy use. To make energy-saving measures work in your home, it comes down to preventing energy waste while maintaining personal comfort in your home.

Let's take it back to the basics and see if we can find opportunities to save energy in your home. Filters, LEDs and thermostat settings are great places to start.



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

REPLACE FILTERS

If your home has a forced-air system, you have a filter. The filter needs to be checked regularly and replaced when it's dirty. A dirty filter can cause heating and air-conditioning systems to use 15 percent more energy, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

Since heating and air conditioning make up almost half of your energy use, replacing your filter when it looks dirty is a habit that can reduce energy waste.

UPGRADE TO LEDS

Upgrading your lighting to LEDs is a simple, low-cost way to cut energy use. Depending on your budget, you can do it all at once or change bulbs out over time. If you are going to replace a few at a time, prioritize the lights you use the most.

There are many LED options available. One major variation is the color temperature, which is listed on the packaging in Kelvin.

I recommend 2700K because it is similar to incandescent lighting. I also suggest ENERGY STAR®-rated products because they meet strict quality and efficiency standards, use up to 90 percent less energy and last 15 times longer than standard bulbs.



ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT

It's amazing how much difference a few degrees can make. By adjusting your thermostat to your home habits, you can save year-round on heating and cooling costs.

For winter months, the DOE recommends setting your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home and dialing it back 8 to 10 degrees when you leave the house or go to sleep. For summer, the recommendation is 78 degrees when you are home and 8 to 10 degrees warmer when you are away. Using a programmable or smart thermostat will allow you to set it according to your schedule.

Making these small changes in your routine will help improve your energy efficiency while maintaining comfort in your home.



Alex Cruz, Cheryl and Richard Skorupski, and Biana Garcia are shown at the El Corral restaurant in Clark.

Flyover County: Rick Skorupski spins tales of life in small town America

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

A place where folks wave with all five fingers.

A community where people actually listen to your response after asking how you're doing.

A home no closer than 10 miles to the nearest stop light.

Those were the requirements Rick Skorupski established when he decided he'd had enough of his native New Jersey and went looking for a more tranquil place to spend his retirement years. After conducting some extensive research, he and his wife Cheryl landed south of Frankfort nearly 20 years ago and have enjoyed the slower pace of life on their hobby farm in rural South Dakota.

While the Skorupskis have developed a wide social network and even recruited other family members to settle in Spink County, the acculturation process didn't go very smoothly at first. Turns out some folks in the community were convinced the Skorupskis were operating in a shroud of secrecy.

"They thought we were in the witness protection program," Rick recalls with a hearty chuckle. "Some of the neighbors offered to help us move our furniture in, and we declined, just trying not to be a bother. And then we'd make trips

back to New Jersey, so people started wondering what we were hiding."

But the suspicions didn't last long and the Skorupskis have been heavily involved in the local scene, participating in charitable projects, supporting civic events and contributing to the community in positive ways.

The Skorupskis' fondness for the people and culture of South Dakota is on full display in the six novels the two have published together with Rick as the writer and Cheryl the cover artist.

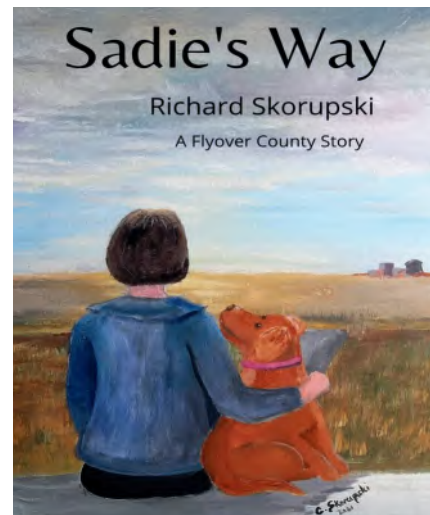
Rick, a member of Northern Electric and a U.S. Navy retiree, describes his self-published work as "nice stories about nice people." He got frustrated at all the anger, violence, sensationalism and negativity reflected in the media, so he decided to accentuate the positive aspects of life through his writing.

Inspired by those he befriended in his adopted home state, Skorupski produced a series of novels centered around an imaginary South Dakotan community called Helen (pop. 350 souls) located in fictitious Flyover County.

The plot lines involve local citizens, their shared hard-scrabble history as pioneers, settlers and sodbusters, and their interactions that take place in the tiny hamlet's schools, churches, diners, taverns and shops.

"I love my imaginary town and I feel I

know all the characters," Rick said. "I get up every morning and write what they tell me about their lives. Any time I have writer's block, it's because my imaginary friends stopped talking to me. But in the end, I hope my readers enjoy these stories as much as I enjoy writing them."



Skorupski was invited to participate in an exhibit at last year's South Dakota State Fair as part of the "Arts of the State Fair" program. During the event, he conversed with readers, discussed his characters, signed copies of his books and offered advice about his experience in self-publishing.

His books are sold through Amazon, and more information can be found by visiting www.flyovercounty.com.



FUN AND FITNESS ON THE SNOW

An estimated 5.2 million Americans participate in cross country skiing while reaping the rewards of being active during the winter months.

Nordic Ski Club promotes the benefits of cross country skiing on mind, body and soul

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Many winter sports enthusiasts are firm in their belief that snow skis are meant to travel in one direction only – downhill.

But members of the Black Hills Nordic Ski Club use their skinny skis to take them wherever the trail may lead.

The club's winter playground is located at Big Hills XC Trails seven miles southwest of Spearfish where its

members have frolicked in the snow since the 1970s. Early prospectors named the area after they encountered steep grades in their pursuit of gold and fortune, but these days people flock to Big Hill for fitness and fun.

With more than 1,200 Facebook followers, the group invites not only cross country skiers to enjoy the 13.6 miles of trails but also skate skiers, fat bikers, snow shoers and even snow man makers.

Immediate past president Josh Wangeman explains there are an

estimated 5.2 million Nordic skiing enthusiasts throughout the country who seek both physical and mental health restoration along the trails.

After spending his day teaching science to his eighth graders at Spearfish Middle School, Wangeman likes to unwind in the woods.

"I've found that it's a good way to escape the crowds and participate in the wonders of nature," he said. "It's a great sport if you're looking to find some solace, enjoy the outdoors and get a good workout at the same time."

Wangeman, who also enjoys swimming and cross country running, fell into the sport after joining the National Guard six years ago. He began training for the biathlon, a competition where skiers travel from check point to check point with a .22 caliber rifle and shoot at targets. He has represented the Guard at competitions in Minnesota, Wyoming, Vermont and Utah.

Like many outdoor activities, cross country skiing has seen a significant surge in interest in the past year. One of the top attractions of the sport is that the cost of entry is relatively small. For instance, a quality mountain bike can cost thousands of dollars and other pastimes require a substantial financial investment for equipment, gear, fees and more.

"You can find some used gear and get everything you need for around \$100, or \$300 for new equipment," he said. "Trail access is free and you'll be outdoors getting some great exercise. As far as learning the technique, it's a straightforward process that's almost as simple as walking."

Wangeman said skiing across the snowy terrain can be a cinch compared to the work that's required to keep the trails maintained. Members of the Nordic Ski Club join forces with the Grooming Alliance of



Cross country skiers receive both the mental and physical health benefits of a sport that's economical to pursue.

Spearfish and log hundreds of hours of labor and donate hundreds of dollars each season to keep the pathways well-groomed for all to share. Some trails are designated for snow shoeing and fat biking only. Volunteers have also built a warming shelter in a meadow that's situated among the five loop trails where skiers can take a break from the wind and cold.

Aside from the Big Hills XC Trails, the Black Hills National Forest area has other sites suitable for cross country skiing. The Eagle Cliff Network is located 15 miles southwest of Lead and offers 20 miles of trails that cross open meadows and meander through Ponderosa pine forests. Half the trails are rated "difficult."

Bear Mountain is situated 10 miles

southwest of Hill City and features rocky ridges, abundant wildlife and scenic overlooks along its 16-mile trail system.

Additional pathways in the area can be found at Beaver Creek, Bear Butte State Park, Custer State Park and portions of the Centennial and Mickelson Trails.

Here are a few helpful tips for those who are thinking about taking to the wintry trails:

1. Start your day right with a hot beverage.
2. Pack well, and don't forget gloves, hat and extra socks. Layer, layer, layer.
3. Choose the right place to ski with good grooming and a reasonable and amount of flat terrain.
4. Consider taking lessons to

Cross country skiing sites

These state parks offer trails for cross-country skiers to enjoy:

- Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve
- Beaver Creek Nature Area
- Big Sioux Recreation Area
- George S. Mickelson Trail
- Hartford Beach State Park
- LaFramboise Island Nature Area
- Lake Herman State Park
- Lake Poinsett Recreation Area
- Newton Hills State Park
- Oakwood Lakes State Park
- Pelican Lake Recreation Area
- Richmond Lake Recreation Area
- Sica Hollow State Park
- Walker's Point Recreation Area



Volunteers keep the trails groomed for cross country skiing at Big Hill and also constructed a warming shelter, a popular site on cold and windy winter days.

improve your form.

5. Be prepared to fall. Acquiring balance takes time.

6. Keep your energy up with a ready snack such as a granola bar or an apple.

7. Have fun. Explore a bit and lose yourself in the rhythm of the sport.

8. Don't forget to look around you, and keep an eye out for wildlife or scenic vistas.

9. Reward yourself! You worked hard and did something adventurous.

ACCEPTING SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS FOR 2022

BHEC is now accepting scholarship applications for 2022. The \$1,000 scholarship is provided to BHEC by Basin Electric Cooperative, BHEC's generation cooperative located in Bismarck, N.D. The recipient will be chosen based on a combination of SAT or ACT scores, overall grade-point average, a personal statement of career goals, a one-page essay, and an adult appraisal. All scholarship entries are confidential and will only be viewed by the selection committee appointed by BHEC. Runner-up applicants will be put in for a \$500 scholarship provided by Rushmore Electric Cooperative. We will also be drawing for two \$500 scholarships for a junior or senior at our 77th Annual Meeting in Hot Springs. Applications can be found on our website at www.bhec.coop.

Please mail all supporting documentation to BHEC c/o Michelle Fischer PO Box 792, Custer, SD 57730 prior to Friday, February 4th. For more information, contact Mrs. Fischer at BHEC at 800-742-0085 or michellef@bhec.coop.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DUE DATE: FEBRUARY 4TH

FREE TRIP TO WASHINGTON D.C.

One lucky dependent of a Black Hills Electric Cooperative member can win a FREE trip to Washington D.C. June 18-24. Participating in the NRECA Youth Tour is a great way to learn about our nation, develop leadership skills and gain a better understanding of the importance of electric cooperatives.

Applicants must submit a 500 word essay on this topic: What does the first cooperative principle (Open and Voluntary Membership) mean to you and your community? You must also submit page 2 of the Youth Tour Application that can be found on our website at www.bhec.coop. Students must be at least 16 years of age at the time of the tour.

Please submit entries to michellef@bhec.coop or mail documents to BHEC c/o Michelle Fischer PO Box 792, Custer, SD 57730 by Friday, March 11th, 2022.

YOUTH TOUR APPLICATION DUE DATE: MARCH 11TH

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Maximize your heating system's performance by inspecting, cleaning or replacing air filters once a month or as needed to reduce energy costs and prevent potential damage to your system.

Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers aren't blocked so air can flow freely.

Source: Dept. of Energy



AREA MEETINGS ARE SCHEDULED FOR 2022

We are planning on having our Area Meetings this year! This is an excellent opportunity to meet your directors & employees of the co-op and visit with neighbors and friends. We've had to cancel the Area Meetings the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The co-op teams up with local organizations to co-sponsor the free soup and chili suppers. The organizations provide the food and the cooperative makes a donation and helps serve the meal. A freewill donation is collected for the organization that is co-hosting. There is no charge for the meal, so please plan to bring your family and friends.

We are looking forward to seeing and catching up with everyone!



Johnson Siding Area Meeting 2019



Rochford Area Meeting 2019



Hermosa Area Meeting 2019



Meal will be served from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. at all meetings.

AREA MEETING	DATE	LOCATION	CO-SPONSOR
Oelrichs	February 9th	Oelrichs Community Hall	Oelrichs Rodeo Association
Rockerville	February 11th	Rockerville Community Hall	Rockerville Community Club
Hermosa	February 15th	Hermosa Elementary School	Battle Creek Fire District
Johnson Siding	February 17th	Rimrock Community Center	Rimrock Community Club
Whispering Pines	February 21st	Whispering Pines VFD	Whispering Pines VFD
Rochford	April 1st	Rochford Community Hall	Rochford Community Club



CAR DEALERS ADAPT TO EV MARKET

Jesse Johnson of Jan Busse Ford in Highmore keeps customers informed of the latest industry news. *Photo by Billy Gibson.*

Car dealers adapt to emerging EV industry by making new investments and keeping their customers informed

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Keeping up with the emergence of the electric vehicle market is like listening to the hushed intonations of the announcer at the end of a 1960s-style soap opera.

Will a reliable charging network be constructed?

Will EVs become more affordable?

Will drivers ever overcome their range anxiety?

Will the political winds change direction?

Tune in tomorrow. Same time. Same channel.

Scott Shepherd is no fan of soap operas, but he's happy to give you his take on the topic. Shepherd is a career educator who has taken the EV leap and last June invested in Ford's debut model: the Mustang Mach-E. Shepherd recently delivered a presentation

describing his experience and insights to a group of electric cooperative representatives.

Subtitled "The Good, the Kind of Bad, and the Ugly," the presentation was intended to be an unbiased, unvarnished and apolitical analysis of the investment he made last year. Though Shepherd admits to being somewhat of an EVangelist, audience members were eager to hear Shepherd's comments to help them convey useful, accurate information to their electric cooperative consumers back in their respective service areas.

On the positive side, Shepherd said the advanced technology and the instant torque of his Mach-E deliver an exciting driving experience, and he likes doing his part to reduce emissions. His dealer, Jesse Johnson at Jan Busse Ford (Pioneer Garage, Inc.) in Highmore, was knowledgeable and ready to answer all of his questions and concerns. He noted

that factoring in a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500, he was able to save nearly \$1,000 in his first 5,000 miles of travel in the Mach-E.

"There's no gas tank to fill at over \$3 per gallon and no oil to change," he said. "A trip to Sioux Falls cost me \$6 in electricity, compared to \$49 in gas for an ICE (internal combustion engine)."

250
Approximate number of EV charging stations throughout the Upper Midwest.

On the not-so-good side, Shepherd pointed to the high front-end purchase price, reduced range during the winter months, the lack of Level 2 chargers in homes and the fact that traditional vehicles sometimes block access to public charging stations. He said in the rush to build out a reliable system of charging stations throughout the region,

standardized practices have yet to be developed.

“There can be a lot of inconsistent pricing with public charging stations,” he said. “Some require a connection fee plus a per-minute fee as high as 50 cents per kilowatt hour. The networks and the number of phone apps that are out there can be confusing, and I’ve also run across some charging stations that were malfunctioning.”

He pointed out that electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and investor-owned utilities in South Dakota and Minnesota are working together to create a charging network for public use that will reduce range anxiety for EV drivers. Presently, there are nine Tesla supercharger stations and four non-Tesla chargers in South Dakota, as well as more than 250 throughout the region and dozens more for the use of guests at hotels, campgrounds and other private properties.

Electrify America Fast recently announced the company is planning to install a bank of supercharging stations in Wall sometime in January, and state officials are looking to continue to invest money into light-duty charging stations from the second round of the Volkswagen Electric Vehicle Charging Station Program.

Johnson, Shepherd’s sales agent, said these days he’s getting lots of questions from scores of potential buyers who are ponying up the \$100 refundable



Jesse Johnson is shown adjusting the drive mode in the Ford Mustang Mach-E.

Photo by Billy Gibson.

fee at www.ford.com to get placed on a waiting list for not only the Mach-E but also the new Ford F-150 Lightning, the company’s first electric-powered pick up. In fact, he has a personal spot on the Lightning list along with more than 160,000 others across the country. Tesla, GMC, Rivian and Chevrolet are also introducing their own pick ups.

“We’re getting calls from all kinds of people - retirees, commuting moms and dads, gear heads, collectors, technology buffs, environmentalists, farmers, you name it,” said Johnson, who has already sent two early adopting customers home with the Mustang Mach-E and has a third on his lot.

Johnson said car and truck dealers will have to redouble their efforts to provide service after the sale as the EV industry continues to emerge. He keeps his customers, including the many who are on the purchaser’s waiting list, apprised of any new developments

160,000
Number of reservations made for the new Ford Lightning F-150 at www.ford.com.

in the market. For example, when manufacturers began recommending that owners refrain from exceeding an 80 percent charge - unless going on an extended trip - to extend the car’s battery life, Johnson made sure his customers got the memo.

In preparing for the transportation future, car dealers are having to make significant investments in education for their sales force, training for technicians and new service and maintenance equipment to accommodate EVs.

“EVs are fun to drive with their immediate torque and safe-driving technology,” Johnson said. “These vehicles are an excellent option for those wanting to forget about the price of gas, reduce maintenance and emissions. We understand they may not fit everyone’s lifestyle, but we see a definite place for them in the future.”



Scott Shepherd is shown above talking with students at the Lake Area Technical College Automotive Technology Program about his experience as an EV owner.

Hot Beer
Lousy Food
Bad Service
Welcome

SHARING A PASSION FOR COMMUNITY THEATRE

Bev Raske (left) and Diane Drager (right) pretend to share a cold one on set. The two have co-directed several shows together.

Performers in South Dakota and Minnesota express their passion on the community theatre stage

Emily Costar

emily.costar@sdrea.coop

When you think of theatre, what's the first image that comes to mind? Maybe it's Hamlet, dramatically pondering whether "to be or not to be" with skull in hand and a rapt audience before him. Perhaps you envision a chorus line under the bright lights of Broadway, all high kicks and jazz hands.

Or maybe you think of a packed community hall with the folks up on stage delivering heartfelt moments and big laughs. The cast and crew consists of neighbors, colleagues and family. They're up on that stage, not for widespread acclaim or fortune, but for the love of live performance. This is community theatre.

In Minnesota, the town of Renville is no stranger to the performing arts;

they have the Renville Friends of the Arts organization, founded in 2002 and currently led by self-described "theatre junkie" Bev Raske. She first graced the stage at Renville County West High School in ninth grade for a one-act play, and continues to perform over six decades later.

"We use the same stage I stepped on back then," Raske fondly recalled.

Friends of the Arts tries to do two plays a year, which are held at the high school. Their most recent production was *Clue* this past October. Raske said productions are a "cooperative venture," as they work with the school to coordinate facility use and support other events. Friends of the Arts can't always have the space to rehearse, but that isn't a deal breaker.

"We've done a lot of rehearsing in my basement," Raske said with a chuckle.

It's that can-do attitude that's helped Friends of the Arts successfully apply for grants, such as the one that enabled them to acquire their own sound system, and then new LED lighting for the stage in a joint venture with the school.

It's also the attitude which led Joel Bakker, local farmer and Renville-Sibley Cooperative member-owner, to get involved with Friends of the Arts as an actor. Bakker was quick to applaud Raske's commitment to live theatre, saying, "She's a master of doing plays – she's the one that got me started."

Most recently seen onstage in 2020's *Twisted Christmas Carol*, Bakker has been in 10 plays with Friends of the Arts. As he put it, "I guess I enjoy being goofy in front of people. For some reason I don't have a fear!"

Bakker enjoys being involved because the productions provide folks with good entertainment they can come and see right in their area without having to travel. He also appreciates how close-knit the cast members get during a show, calling them "a second family."



Friends of the Arts also does musicals! One of their most recent productions was *Polyester the Musical*, a disco-style musical comedy.



For a few nights every year, Hayes Hall gets packed to standing-room only. West Central Electric Cooperative provides the hall's electrical power and is an annual sponsor of the Hayes play.

And good news for those who are interested: Friends of the Arts is looking to expand that family.

“We don’t want to end up being a bunch of gray-haired ladies trying to keep things going,” Raske wryly noted. “We want new people with new ideas.”

And as the organization celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2022, it’s the perfect time for new folks to get involved.

Renville Friends of the Arts isn’t the only community theatre group with an impressive history, though. In South Dakota, there’s the Hayes Drama Club. Hayes itself is a small town of less than 100 people, but each year the community hall gets packed full of people from the surrounding areas, excited to see what the club has in store. And just this past November, the club put on its 68th annual Hayes play.

“We’re the longest continuously running drama club in South Dakota!” Jack Mortenson proclaimed. He recently played Brad St. Clair in this year’s Hayes play, *The One Who Got Away*.

The club’s success shows a distinct passion for community theatre in the area, with many of its actors and volunteers traveling from surrounding areas to be a part of it. Mortenson himself regularly drove over 30 miles to and from Hayes to be in this year’s show. Beyond the dedication of its participants,

there’s a lot of community history in the club as well.

“Three generations of my family have been in the Hayes Drama Club. It’s tradition at this point,” said Mortenson, who has been in three Hayes plays already and is looking forward to future involvement as well.

Auditions for the annual play are usually held a couple months ahead of time at the Hayes Hall. And the audition details, such as time and date, are generally spread through word of mouth. So, if you find yourself wanting to join in on the theatrical fun, it wouldn’t hurt to join the Hayes Community group on Facebook to help stay in the know.

Renville Friends of the Arts and the Hayes Drama Club are just two out of hundreds of community theatre groups scattered across Minnesota and South Dakota. Live theatre is more than just national

tours in big, urban cities. It’s also the folks in your town coming together to deliver a heartfelt production at the local school or community hall just down the road.

So the next time you find yourself in the mood to sit back and have a few laughs, maybe shed a few tears and be immersed in another world for a couple hours – consider checking in on your local theatre group to see what they’ve been up to. You just might be surprised by what your community has in store.



Joel Bakker (center) in a cast photo from his most recent production with Friends of the Arts, *Twisted Christmas Carol*.

Want to get involved and stay up-to-date with Renville Friends of the Arts? Go give their Facebook page a like and follow at: www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-360087927337206

To keep up with the latest happenings in Hayes (including the Hayes Drama Club), go join the public Hayes Community group at: www.facebook.com/groups/144509355581709

**61st Annual Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo
January 28-February 5, 2022**



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.

**DECEMBER 21-25
Fort Sisseton Drive Thru
Christmas Light Display**
11907 434th Avenue, Lake
City, SD, 605-448-5474

**DECEMBER 23-24
1880 Train Holiday Express**
222 Railroad Avenue, Hill City,
SD, 605-574-2222

**DECEMBER 26-31
Christmas Nights of Lights**
Storybook Island, Rapid City,
SD, 1-605-342-6357

**DECEMBER 26-31
Garden Glow**
McCrary Gardens, Brookings,
SD, 605-688-6707

**DECEMBER 31
New Year's Eve With The
Davis Sisters**
Performing Arts Center of
Rapid City, Rapid City, SD,
605-348-4676

**JANUARY 1
Winter Wonderland Nature
Hike**
Big Sioux Recreation Area,
Brandon, SD, 605-594-3824

**JANUARY 4-6
Dakota Farm Show**
USD DakotaDome, Vermillion,
SD, more info available at
dakotafarmshow.com

**JANUARY 7
Neal McCoy**
The Dakota Event Center,
Aberdeen, SD, 605-725-2641

**JANUARY 8
Eric Church**
Denny Sanford Premier Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 8, 22
Live On Stage**
High Country Guest Ranch, Hill
City, SD, 605-574-2810

**JANUARY 15
Burning Beetle**
10th Street, Custer, SD, find
out more at www.facebook.com/barkbeetleblues

**JANUARY 15-16
Dakota Territory Gun
Collectors Association
Gun Show**
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD,
605-793-2347

**JANUARY 16
Sioux Falls Izaak Walton
League January Trap Shoot**
5000 N Oakview Place, Sioux
Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

**JANUARY 16
WWE Supershow**
Denny Sanford Premier Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 21-23
That Golden Girls Show**
Orpheum Theater Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**JANUARY 22
Reba McEntire**
Denny Sanford Premier Center,
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 28-29
Deadwood Pro Snocross
Races**
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds,
Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

**JANUARY 28-29
27th Annual Dinner Theater**
Reliance Legion Hall, Reliance,
SD, call 605-730-0553 for
more info and tickets

**JANUARY 28-31
Lead Winterfest**
Various Locations, Lead, SD,
call 605-584-1100

**JANUARY 28-
FEBRUARY 6
Black Hills Stock Show &
Rodeo**
Central States Fairgrounds &
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center,
Rapid City, SD, 605-355-3861

**JANUARY 29-30
Dakota Territory Gun
Collectors Association
Gun Show**
National Field Archery Building,
Yankton, SD, 605-731-9154

**FEBRUARY 5
Lakota Games on Ice**
3200 Indian Village Road,
Mitchell, SD, 605-996-5473

**FEBRUARY 12, 26
Live On Stage**
High Country Guest Ranch, Hill
City, SD, 605-574-2810

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