

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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# Accomplishments of 2023

## Outages, Overtime, and Financial Fortitude



**Walker Witt - CEO**  
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Your board of directors has been busy so far this year! The board agendas for the first few months of the year include reports and actions on the previous years' activities.

The January board agenda included board action on the 2023 Inventory Adjustment. This past year, our crews and contractors used over 2.8 million dollars in material from inventory and placed it on our system, often during storms and in the middle of the night, to repair damaged equipment and lines. Contractors and our own crews also use the inventory for new construction and maintenance. Each January, an accounting of all our inventory is conducted. At the end of 2023, the cooperative had a book balance of \$3,237,113 and a physical inventory of \$3,237,116.97. Your directors approved an inventory adjustment of \$3.97 or .00%. Being good stewards of member assets is a core value of BHEC, and we are proud of the tight controls that your board and employees have on your assets.

During the January Board Meeting, the directors were given a report on insurance claims that have been filed in the past year with our cooperative insurance partner, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange. In 2023, the cooperative had twelve claims totaling around \$37,000, with about \$20,000 of the total caused by water damage at our headquarters due to a broken pipe. Aging buildings can face a variety of problems over time, including structural deterioration and plumbing issues. Your 70+ year-old co-op building is not immune to these issues.

At the February Board Meeting, the board reviewed the Financial and Operating Report for the 2023 calendar year. In the electric cooperative world, this is known as

the year-end RUS Form 7 and shows that Black Hills Electric Cooperative is in a solid financial position and that all regulatory financial ratios have been met.

The board also received a detailed report on all the outages that occurred in 2023. There were 416 outages, with over half of them caused by lighting or a small animal. The average co-op member was out of power for an average of 130 minutes, with 50 of those minutes being caused by a major outage. Our reliability rate for 2023 was 99.9996%. That's a percentage that your co-op is extremely proud of.

February is also the month the board reviews all the overtime reports for your cooperative employees. In 2023, about 1,400 hours of overtime were recorded. This report corresponds directly to the outage report, with about 80% of the overtime hours related to outages. The other reported overtime hours included operations and construction projects. Sometimes the decision to work overtime may be made rather than go back to complete the project the next day, depending on the job.

Your co-op's directors and employees are doing a tremendous job keeping the lights on and conducting exceptional asset management. You should be proud of them - I know I am!





## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

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# BLACK HILLS STOCK SHOW & RODEO



(L) Black Hills Electric Cooperative's Member Service Representative, Jennifer Kainz.

Below: A couple of youngsters contemplating whether to be a lineman or a cowboy when they grow up!



Black Hills Electric Cooperative was one of many South Dakota Electric Cooperatives that represented the Touchstone Energy booth at the 2024 Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo. This is the 36th year South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives have provided demonstrations at the stock show. The stars of the electrical safety demonstrations are Lightning Liz and Neon Leon, neon figures who get electrocuted hundreds of times a day to show what not to do around power lines. Several parents who watched the demonstration as children are now bringing their children to watch the safety demo.

If you didn't get a chance to visit us at the Stock Show, we will have Black Hills representatives at a booth during the Black Hills Home Show March 22nd – 24th. See you there!

**SAVE THE DATE**



**Black Hills Home Show March 22-24**  
The Monument • 444 N Mt Rushmore Rd • Rapid City, South Dakota

## Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

It may come as a surprise that the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death is falls. In 2021, 44,686 people died in falls at home and at work, according to Injury Facts®. For working adults, depending on the industry, falls can be the leading cause of death.

### Falls are 100% Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

### Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project:

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned above
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment

We tend to think we're always safe on flat ground, but the thousands of injuries each year tell us otherwise.

- Falls are the #1 cause of death for older adults; fall-proof your home
- Keep floors and surfaces clear of clutter
- Keep file cabinets and desk drawers closed
- Keep electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on stairways
- Wear sensible footwear
- Never stand on chairs, tables or any surface with wheels
- Properly arrange furniture to create open pathways
- Maintain good lighting indoors and out

More than 6.9 million people were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries in 2021. A fall can end in death or disability in a split second, but with a few simple precautions, you'll be sure stay safe at home and at work.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### Trim Your Trees

#### Brace Tapio, Age 8

Brace Tapio cautions readers to trim their trees to prevent power line damage. Brace's parents are Nate and Elsa Tapio from Armour, S.D., members of Douglas 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.



# SEAFOOD SPECIALS

## CAJUN SHRIMP

### Ingredients:

1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined  
2-3 tsps. cajun seasoning  
2 tbsps. butter

### Method

Coat shrimp with seasoning. Melt butter in large skillet on medium heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir three minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Serve over cooked rice, if desired.

[McCormick.com](http://McCormick.com)

## CRAB SALAD SPREAD

### Ingredients:

8-12 oz. imitation crab meat, flake style, tear into small pieces  
1 tbsp. lemon juice  
1 cup (approx.) shredded Cheddar cheese  
1 small can black olives, sliced  
Mayo (must be Mayo), to get correct texture, less is better than too much  
1/4 to 1/2 pepper, cracked

### Method

Mix by hand. Serve with Club or Ritz crackers.

Linda Hubbard  
Rapid City, S.D.

## CREAMY SHRIMP LINGUINE

### Ingredients:

8 oz. linguine  
1 tbsp. butter  
1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 package garlic butter shrimp scampi  
2 tbsps. white wine

### Method

Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well.

Melt butter in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Add cooked pasta, Seasoning Mix, cream and wine. Reduce heat to medium; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

[McCormick.com](http://McCormick.com)

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Spring Cleaning Tips to Maximize Efficiency



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services Group

**Q:** What are some energy-saving tasks I can add to my spring cleaning list?

**A:** Spring is a great time to refresh, clean and enhance energy efficiency at home. By adopting simple yet effective energy-saving strategies during our spring-cleaning routines, we can create an efficient living environment that may also lower our utility bills and extend the life of our heavily used appliances.

Be sure to include these spring cleaning tips to add some energy savings to the job.

Even though it's out of sight, don't leave it out of mind. Check the filter in your HVAC system. Your furnace worked hard during the winter. Ensuring your system has a clean filter is a low-cost and easy way to protect your equipment and maximize efficiency. A dirty furnace filter can cause your system to work harder than necessary, decreasing efficiency and shortening the system's life.

While the filter is easy to replace yourself, you should have your air conditioning serviced and professionally cleaned. Both the indoor and outdoor units should be cleaned. Dirty refrigerant coils reduce efficiency. This also applies to heat pumps and ductless heat pumps, also known as mini-split systems. The technician can check refrigerant levels and refill or repair if necessary.

HVAC contractors get busy responding to calls for repairs during the summer heat. Scheduling cleaning services for your air conditioning in the spring – before the heat of the summer – can ensure the work gets done before the rush and even save you money. Some HVAC contractors offer special discounts for cleaning services in the milder months, which helps fill their schedules and keep their technicians working.

Window AC units can get dirty, too. They can be cleaned with the proper tools, cleaning agents and know-how. Always unplug before

cleaning, and wait until completely dry to plug it back in again. Take the time to clean it properly in the spring before you need it in the summer.

Cleaning light fixtures and fixture covers can brighten your space by removing dust and grime collected during the winter. While you are at it, be sure to check your bulbs and replace any incandescent or compact fluorescent with energy-saving LEDs. Although they tend to cost a little more, LEDs last longer and use less energy.

Good-quality LED light bulbs are expected to last 30,000 to 50,000 hours, according to the Department of Energy. A typical incandescent lamp lasts about 1,000 hours, and a comparable CFL lasts 8,000 to 10,000 hours. To put this into everyday use, if you have an LED light on for 10 hours per day, it can last 13 years compared to only about three months for incandescent bulbs and about two-and-a-half years for CFLs.

Don't forget the oven. A clean oven heats more evenly and quickly, providing better results and lower energy use. A clean oven window allows you to see the food and how it's cooking without opening the oven door, which wastes energy.

If cleaning windows is on the list, check the seals and sash locks to ensure they close tightly. Check for any areas that need caulking or sealing to reduce drafts. Sealing around windows contributes to year-round comfort in your home. Clean windows also allow more light into the home, reducing the need to turn on lamps and overhead fixtures.

Spring is the ideal time to declutter, deep clean and implement practices that not only tidy our homes but also reduce energy consumption, contributing positively to our homes' energy efficiency and saving money on energy use.





# Käsemeister Creamery

Shannon Marvel

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Spink Colony's Käsemeister Creamery continues to perfect the art of cheese making while continuously looking for more ways to increase its economic footprint.

The creamery is located at a Hutterite colony about nine miles south of Frankfort, which produces over 150 types of cheese, which are sold in stores throughout the state and into North Dakota and Minnesota.

The creamery's manager, Jeremy Wipf, said the business also gets online orders regularly that go throughout the United States.

"We're always trying to get into more stores," Wipf said, which isn't easy in the competitive word of cheese and dairy products.

"The bigger creameries are our biggest competition," Wipf said. "But we're coming along. We're still growing slowly. We're only using half of our milk right now, so we will have the other half to use up. We've got room for expansion if



we could get in with a new distributor that isn't in South Dakota. There's plenty of cheese around. There's always competition."

The idea for the creamery came about in 2016. After securing a business loan, the Spink Colony bought the equipment necessary to start the business in 2018.

In fall of 2018, the creamery officially opened for business.

Käsemeister Creamery employs five full-time and 12 part-time employees from Spink Colony. "When we need more help, like when we make the cheese, we have extra help. It gets a little more difficult at times, such as harvest. During those times, we just have to do what we can and work harder and longer," Wipf said.

The creamery source 100% of the milk used to make the cheese from the colony's dairy operation, which milks around 100 cows. The cows are a three-way cross of Montbeliarde, Swedish Red, and Holstein.

"The idea behind it is a smaller cow that takes less feed but has more body fat, more protein – which at the end of the day is what pays the bills," Wipf explained.

The creamery is hoping to break into the whey industry, which would allow them to sell a byproduct from making the cheese.

"We basically have to throw away the whey right now," Wipf said.

For every 10 pounds of milk, you get one pound of cheese and nine pounds of whey, according to Wipf.

A separate facility would be needed to process the whey byproduct into whey protein, a product currently in high demand.

"But we're too small to invest in equipment for a facility. You've got to have a separate facility for processing whey. There's a lot of demand for it, but you have to have a lot for it to be feasible," Wipf said.

Creamery's current processing facility is comprised of all stainless steel machinery, which was put together by workers from the colony. A 14,700 square foot facility hosts both the processing area and retail store front.

Check out the cheeses and other products offered by Käsemeister Creamery online at [www.kasemeister.com](http://www.kasemeister.com).







Rural Artist Michelle Weber has illustrated 11 children books in addition to showcasing her art nationwide and internationally.

## Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

**Frank Turner**

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During her upbringing in Windom, Minn., Michelle Weber discovered her passion for art at a young age. She was the kid who was always doodling, often paying more attention to her drawings than to the class. Holding on to her passion, Weber took her first art class in high school with her art

teacher, Mark Nass. Although the class had a rocky start, Nass recognized her potential and helped fuel a passion that would ultimately lead Weber to becoming a prominent rural artist.

“I was a junior in high school when I enrolled in my first real art class, and to be honest, I kind of hated it,” said Weber. “That first week, I was mortified that I wasn’t any good.”

Initially contemplating dropping the class, Weber sought a signature from her art teacher to change her art class to a study hall instead. Despite her request, Nass refused to let her drop the class and encouraged her to try give the class another chance.

“After a few weeks, everything just clicked,” said Weber. “I fell in love with painting and began living in the school’s art room.”

In less than a year, Weber made substantial progress in her artistic abilities. Enough so, that her teacher encouraged her to apply for the Congressional Art Competition. She applied,



and her painting not only won in her district but also earned a spot in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C., where it was showcased for an entire year.

Weber's success in the Congressional Art Competition foreshadowed what was to come. Drawing inspiration from her upbringing on a farm and involvement in 4-H, Weber began primarily painting livestock. In 2011, Weber's friend from Mitchell, S.D., Amanda Radke, approached her with a request to illustrate a children's book featuring livestock and rural agriculture, a perfect fit for Weber's artwork. This opportunity led to the creation of "A World With Cows," marking Weber's first foray into a full-time career as an artist.

"The book was a huge stepping stone for both of us," said Weber.

The children's book marked not only the beginning of a career but also established Weber's niche – capturing the focal point of rural life on canvas: livestock, horses, buffalo, and more. Weber has since illustrated 10 additional children's books and successfully sold her artwork both nationwide and internationally.

Traditionally, her oil paintings have been rooted in a realism, capturing every detail of the depicted animals. More recently, Weber has expanded her art to include a more whimsical and abstract representation of the rural lifestyle.

"My niche market is the producer, so it's important that my art reflects an authentic rural lifestyle," said Weber. "I want these paintings to have a touch of who I am, but also have the integrity of this lifestyle retained on canvas too."

Today, Weber resides just outside Lake Benton, Minn., a town just outside the South Dakota border. From her small town, Michelle Weber also maintains a website, [michelleweberstudio.com](http://michelleweberstudio.com), where she showcases a wide range of products

featuring her artwork, including prints, notecards, children's books, and even cake pans. In addition to her website, Weber recently opened a studio named, "The Studio by Michelle Weber" in the center Lake Benton.

"The Studio is a space located right in the heart of Lake Benton," said Weber. "Some people look at Lake Benton with a population of less than 700 or less and ask, 'Why would you open your studio there?' But I stand behind supporting these small. They are the heartbeat of this country, so it only seemed fitting to bring it home."



A Weber painting, titled "Side Eye."



Weber is widely known for her oil paintings that capture the essence of an authentic rural lifestyle on canvas.



# THE HABERDASHERY

## Hidden Gem at Johnson Siding

**Michelle Fischer**  
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The Haberdashery stands as a bastion of craftsmanship and tradition in the heart of Johnson Siding, where modern-day trends meet timeless elegance. This quaint Haberdashery exudes a charm that transcends eras, telling a story of heritage and style.

As one steps through the door of The Haberdashery, they are immediately enveloped in an atmosphere of uniqueness and craftsmanship.

The partnership between Rene Ivers and Kathy Tietz started years ago through craft shows, and when COVID-19 ended large gatherings, they knew they needed to come up with a solution. They devised a way to support fellow vendors while filling a void in the community.

Rene visited with the new owner at the Johnson Siding General Store, Austin Dahl, about renting the empty storage units next door. With the help of several talented people, they were able to transform it into their store. When it was time

to name the store, Rene shared a memory of the 2015 Western thriller, “The Hateful Eight.” The store in the movie was called The Haberdashery, and they all loved it. They opened their doors for business in July of 2020.



Owners of The Haberdashery:  
Rene Ivers (L) and Kathy Tietz (R)



# THE HABERDASHERY AT JOHNSON SIDING

Over 60 individuals contribute their unique creations to the store, including pottery, artwork, and refurbished furniture. Customers can choose from carefully curated notions and accessories to create a truly unique ensemble. Co-owner Kathy Tietz said, “I don’t like to use the term vendor. Everyone that sells items at our store is an artist”. Kathy supplies a variety of homemade jams, jellies, and other canned goods available at The Haberdashery. Rene is an accomplished artist who can bring her artistic style to a variety of different surfaces.

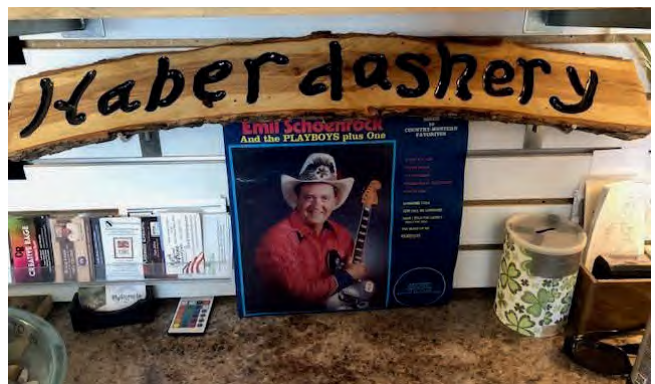
The Haberdashery is more than just a source of finely crafted items; it is a community hub where stories are shared and friendships are forged. The Haberdashery teams up with Austin to conduct several annual events. These events include a Car, Truck, and Motorcycle show in May, a Haber Anniversary Party in July, and a Fall Festival in September.

In an era dominated by mass production and automation, The Haberdashery is a testament to the enduring allure of slow, thoughtful craftsmanship. Both Rene and Kathy advise you to seize the opportunity if you spot something you love in the store. There is no guarantee that it will be there the next time you stop by.

The Haberdashery continues to weave its narrative into the local community. Be sure to make your way to Johnson Siding to see what they have to offer. You will not be disappointed!



**WINTER STORE HOURS:**  
**SATURDAY & SUNDAY**  
**11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.**





Sacred Hoops Coach Tuffy Morrison is just one of many volunteer coaches who make Sacred Hoops Basketball a reality for rural athletes.

# SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

## Sacred Hoops Basketball Scores Big with Rural Youth

### Frank Turner

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Sacred Hoops Basketball, a nonprofit organization unique to South Dakota, has been changing the game for youth basketball across the state for more than six years. Using basketball as a tool for youth development, the program organizes teams, trains coaches, and hosts tournaments and workshops for young individuals in all communities – both big and small.

Since the program's conception, the emphasis has centered on rural engagement. Allan Bertram, the owner and operator of Sacred Hoops, co-founded the program alongside Jordan Long and a few other movers and shakers as a way to bring quality basketball instruction to students who would otherwise need to travel hundreds of miles to participate. Their goal was to make basketball accessible to all athletes across the state, not only improving their basketball skills but

also their life skills.

"We wanted to bridge the gap for kids in rural areas, particularly our athletes in low socio-economic areas who may not have been able to play basketball otherwise," said Bertram. "We want to ensure that every kid who wants to play can."

Beyond hosting tournaments and teams, Bertram and the organization's other volunteers have found other ways to make changes on and off the basketball court. In addition to hosting more than 120 high school instruction programs across the state, Sacred Hoops Basketball annually distributes more than \$70,000 in scholarships that aid athletes from low-income families to play ball. The organization was also the driving force behind a recent initiative that placed 2,000 new pairs of shoes in the hands of children from select, rural





Sacred Hoops Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier draws up a play for the the Sacred Hoops West River Youth Team.

elementary schools in South Dakota.

“We’ve seen so many kids grow and fulfill their passion,” said Bertram. “In today’s world, our youth sometimes don’t understand what their purpose or passion is, and that’s why so many of our youth are struggling. It doesn’t matter what a kid is passionate about – it could be music, sports, gaming, or whatever – but it’s our job to help feed that passion because that is what gives those kids a purpose.”

Today, the program has expanded to encompass more than 50 dedicated volunteers and 600 athletes across 60 teams in their summer season, with athletes spanning from third grade to high school. These numbers, said Bertram, have added up to a real impact for athletes across the state. Within Sacred Hoops Basketball, more than 75 athletes have gone on to play college-level basketball.

“It gives us a great sense of pride because those kids are not only getting a post-secondary degree but also get to continue their passion by playing at the next level,” said Bertram. “Many of these kids come from rural areas or

locations.”

Sacred Hoops Basketball Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier also emphasized the impact that the nonprofit has had on West River athletes. Standing Soldier regularly works with athletes from several rural

West River communities, including Pine Ridge, Belle Fourche, Kadoka, and more.

“We have athletes from all over come to play on one team, and it’s changing the game for these kids. We have seen several of our athletes start making junior varsity and varsity teams as middle schoolers,” said Standing Soldier. “These are kids we want to help reach their full potential, both on and off the court.”

Reflecting on his upbringing, Standing Soldier said that basketball played a significant role in his early life, ultimately leading to college scholarships that allowed him to play basketball for Platte Community College in Nebraska and later the University of Mary in North Dakota. Those opportunities, he said, are ones that he wants to share with other youth in South Dakota.

“Basketball has been a part of my entire life,” he said. “I developed a love for the game. God has used it to impact my entire life, and now I’m using it to impact others.”



The Sacred Hoops Basketball AAU West Coast National Championship Team.



Ali Van Sambeek's one-year-old smiles while feeding the chickens.

## Keeping Chickens

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

During summertime mornings, Ali Van Sambeek will send her five-year-old out into the backyard to retrieve what's needed to cook that morning's breakfast.

"He's learned how to fry an egg on the stove, so in the summer he'll go out to the coop, bring back an egg and cook himself breakfast. Or I'll tell kids we need some tomatoes and eggs for breakfast, and they'll go out to get them in the backyard," Van Sambeek said.

Nestled in the Black Hills between Hermosa and Keystone, Ali and her husband raise four children, all under the age of seven, and a couple dozen chickens.

The chickens were added to the Van Sambeek family about a year ago.

"We wanted our kids to have more chores. We both grew up ranching and farming. We don't personally do that

anymore and we wanted our kids to have a taste of that life," Van Sambeek said.

"We haven't had to buy a store-bought egg since we started," she gleamed.

To begin, Van Sambeek started asking friends who raised their own chickens in their backyards a lot of questions.

Around that time and by chance, Van Sambeek learned of a friend that was looking to get rid of a couple hens and a coop for free.

So Van Sambeek took advantage of the opportunity and gave the hens a home in her backyard.

"We started with four, and were up to 20 at one point. And now we're down a little bit after an unfortunate situation with a hawk. That was our kids' first experience with losing animals. But this spring we'll get chicks again," Van Sambeek said.

The Van Sambeeks started off with Dominique brown layer chickens, but expanded the number of breeds in their

coop to get a more colorful plethora of eggs.

"I really wanted the green, dark brown and blue eggs. We pretty much have all the colors now. They've stopped laying throughout the winter, in the summer we'll get about eight or nine eggs a day," Van Sambeek said.

With her children being at the ages of 7, 5, 3 and 1, raising chickens has been



Ali Van Sambeek's son refills the water jug for the family's chickens.



a great way to teach them that their food doesn't just come from the store.

"Somebody has to put work into it – it's kind of cool when it's your own work. That's been one of the biggest things. We also have a pretty big garden. We feed the scraps from the garden back to the chickens. It's so much fun for the kids to see that process," Van Sambeek said.

Over in the eastern part of the state near Brandon, Stephanie Peterson has taken her love of raising backyard chickens and her expertise in doing so to new levels.

Peterson grew up in Lemmon and Rapid City before moving to Washington, D.C., to work on Capitol Hill for U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle.

During her time in Washington, D.C., Peterson raised four backyard chickens. Nine years ago, Peterson and her family moved back to South Dakota and bought a small acreage just outside of Brandon.

She purchased 15 hens and one rooster in the process and immensely enjoyed caring for the chickens and was entertained by their antics.

That developed into a full-fledged business for Peterson, named Fruit of the Coop.

"I heard that the backyard chicken keeping classes instructor for Sioux Falls Community Education was no longer available to teach, and I stepped right into the opening. I've been teaching classes since 2015. I also help small communities draft and pass backyard chicken ordinances for their towns, in addition to offering private consultations for folks who want personalized help getting started with backyard chickens," Peterson said.

She even offers advanced classes on veterinary care for flocks and is a distributor of non-GMO, organic chicken feed grown and milled by a local family farm.

"I started my egg business in 2016, working directly with chefs and restaurant owners to provide pasture-raised eggs to Sioux Falls restaurants. I also offer farm tours and field trips, and operate a farm stay AirBnb here at Fruit of the Coop," Peterson said.

What drives Peterson's passion for chicken and eggs is how interesting of an animal she's found chickens to be, with what she described as "unique biological makeups and also fun personalities."

Over the years, Peterson has seen the number of people raising their own chickens increase.

According to the American Pet Product Association's survey, ownership of backyard chickens increased from 8% in 2018 to 13% in 2020.

"And since COVID-19, the numbers have skyrocketed. The pandemic allowed for folks to have the time to pursue their backyard chicken hobby. But more importantly, many people began to focus on where their food was coming from and how to eat more locally," Peterson said.

"Raising your own chickens for eggs is an easy way to take control of a small part of the food system we all participate in. It

is now estimated that 12 million people in the U.S. own backyard chickens."

## Things you need to know when considering backyard chickens:

- Hatching a Plan (local laws, cost, choosing a breed, where to buy)
- Chicken Little (setting up a brooder, food and water, heat, socializing)
- Feather Your Nest (coops and runs, predator proofing, cleaning, nest boxes, ventilation, space needed, seasonal care)
- Chicken Scratch (feeders and waterers, nutrient-dense feed, oyster shell, grit, treats)
- Ruling the Roost (free range, dust baths, molting, pecking order, injuries and diseases)
- Eggs/The Fruit of Your Coop (laying age, the "bloom," winter laying)



The Van Sambeek kids inspect the chicks that will be added to their coop.



**MARCH 1-3, 2024**  
**National Pheasant  
 Fest & Quail Classic**  
 1201 N West Ave.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**MARCH 2**  
**Live on Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 7**  
**Elevate Rapid City Economic  
 Summit**  
 8 a.m.  
 The Monument  
 Rapid City, SD

**MARCH 9**  
**French Toast/Pancake Feed  
 & Health Fair**  
 8:30 a.m.  
 Tea Community Building  
 Tea, SD

**MARCH 9**  
**SunCatcher Therapeutic  
 Riding Academy & 3rd  
 Annual Shamrock Gala**  
 5 p.m.  
 Alex Johnson Ballroom  
 Rapid City, SD

**MARCH 11-15**  
**Black Hills Institute's 50th  
 Anniversary Celebration**  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 14-16**  
**Spring Rummage Fundraiser**  
 Spearfish Senior Center  
 Spearfish, SD

**MARCH 15**  
**East Dakota Chapter NWF  
 31st Annual Banquet**  
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**MARCH 15-16**  
**Badlands Quilter Weekend  
 Getaway**  
 5:30 p.m. Friday, all day  
 Saturday  
 Wall Community Center  
 Wall, SD

**MARCH 16**  
**Live On Stage**  
 High Country Guest Ranch  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 16**  
**South Dakota Poetry  
 Society Poetry on the Road  
 & Open Mic**  
 1 p.m.  
 Tri-State Museum  
 Belle Fourche, SD

**MARCH 16-17**  
**Hill City Antiques, Railroad  
 & Collectibles Show & Sale**  
 Hill City Center  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 17**  
**St. Patrick's Day Green  
 Pancakes and Sausage**  
 8:30 a.m.  
 RVUMC  
 Rapid City, SD

**MARCH 20-23**  
**Hill City Restaurant Week**  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 23**  
**Tyndall VFW Vegas Night**  
 7:30 p.m.  
 Tyndall Community Center  
 Tyndall, SD

**MARCH 23**  
**Hill City Children's Easter  
 Egg Hunt**  
 Visitor Info Center  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 24**  
**Ham Dinner & Silent  
 Auction**  
 11:45 a.m.  
 RVUMC  
 Rapid City, SD

**APRIL 2**  
**Clay-Union Electric  
 Ribbon Cutting & Open  
 House**  
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.  
 31321 SD Hwy. 19  
 Vermillion, SD

**APRIL 5-7**  
**71st Annual Hayes Play:  
 Under a Cowboy Moon**  
 7 p.m.  
 Hayes Community Hall  
 Hayes, SD

**APRIL 12-14**  
**The Farmer's Daughter 19th  
 Anniversary Celebration**  
 Hill City, SD

**APRIL 14**  
**Hill City Senior Sunday  
 Breakfast**  
 8 a.m.  
 Hill City Center  
 Hill City, SD

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.

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