



# Cooperative Connections



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# Putting Money in Our Members' Hands



Jeff Birkeland, CEO

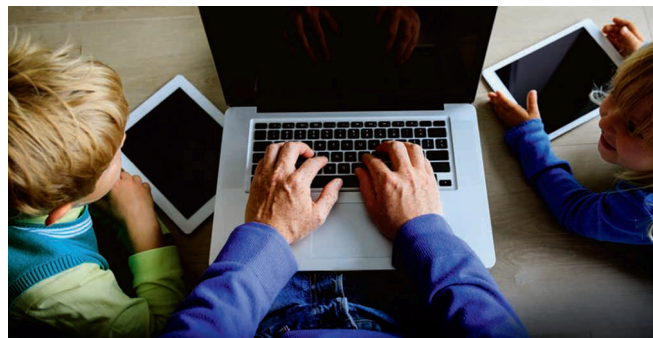
jeff.birkeland@wce.coop

Last month I wrote about how the coronavirus, COVID-19, has impacted our operations and how we were dealing with the issues. I also had a crazy thought that by this time, we might have a better understanding of how this was going to play out and the time frame it would require. A month later, I still have the same questions along with many more. I do believe that until they come up with a vaccine, or a drug that will keep a person from dying, that this is our way of life. There will also be kids in history class some day learning about what we are going through right now. We can only hope it is a short lesson!

The financial impact this has had on the economy is mind-blowing. The latest data on retail sales is alarming; sales fell 8.7 percent for the month. That doesn't sound too bad until a person realizes that during the Great Recession, sales fell 3.9 percent for the month and during January of 1987, sales fell 6.5 percent for the month. Put those numbers into perspective and it causes great concern as we look forward. It's one thing to have a bad month or two, but an extended period of time will be devastating to our members. This is the very discussion your West Central directors had during the last board meeting.

The other part of their discussion was, "What can we do to help the members?" Realizing everyone's income has been affected one way or another, it was decided to retire capital credits early. This year capital credit checks will be mailed the first week in July as opposed to the normal retirement date of December. I can't give a dollar amount as we still have information to compile for the board so they can make a decision. The board will make their decision during the May board meeting and we will inform the membership thereafter. The goal of retiring capital credits earlier in the year is to put money in the hands of our members at a time when it's needed.

**Realizing everyone's income has been affected one way or another, it was decided to retire capital credits early.**



**Utility service has never been more important.**

If you're planning landscaping or any other digging projects, contact 811 first – the kids telelearning and adults telecommuting will thank you.

Call 811 or go to your state 811 center's website before digging.



[Call811.com/811-your-state](http://Call811.com/811-your-state)

**Call  
811  
Before  
You  
Dig.**

# West Central Electric Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 018-988)

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**Our Mission is to Provide Safe, Reliable Service to our Member Owners.**

West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Call 605-669-8100  
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Design assistance by SDREA

# WCEC Director Terms Expire

All nominating petitions shall be filed with the secretary of the cooperative, on or before the 20th day of July 2020, at the headquarters office of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., located in Murdo, S.D., for parties interested in becoming a member of West Central Electric's board of directors.

**Directors term vacancies include:**

Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 4	Zone 5
			
Lyman County Rural Director <b>James Smith</b>	Jones County Rural Director <b>Paul Patterson</b>	Haakon County Town Director <b>Marty Hansen</b>	Stanley County At-Large Director <b>Mike McQuiston</b>

West Central Electric's board of directors consist of 10 members representing five zones (one town and one rural director for each zone). All director positions are based on a three-year term.

All nominating petitions shall be in such form as prescribed by the board of directors, but shall contain a declaration signed by the candidate, under oath, certifying to the membership that he/she possesses the necessary qualifications and is willing to serve as director.

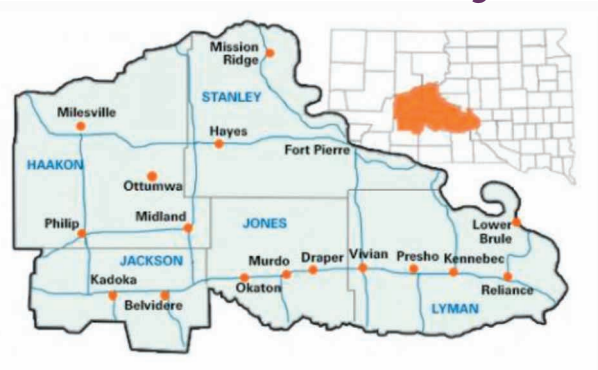
The petition shall be signed by not less than ten (10) members of the cooperative, each of whom shall be required to write their name, address and the date and time of signing.

In the event that more than one nominating petition is filed in any one zone, a zone meeting shall be held in each zone for the purpose of selecting one candidate for director to represent the members located in such zone as their official nominee.

Each zone meeting shall be held in August.

Notice of the meeting shall be sent to all members living in the appropriate zone by first class mail or in the *West Central Electric Cooperative Connections* publication, not less than 10 days before the meeting.

## WCEC Territory



## Stay Safe at Home

Each year, electrical malfunctions account for thousands of home fires, injuries, death and property damage. The average American home was built in 1977, and many existing homes simply can't handle the demands of today's electrical appliances and devices. Keep safety in mind with these helpful tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

### Learn the warning signs of an overloaded electrical system:

- Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses
- Dimming of lights when other devices are tuned on
- Buzzing sound from switches or outlets
- Discolored outlets
- Appliances that seem underpowered

### How to avoid overloading circuits:

- Label your circuit breakers to understand the different circuits in your home.
- Have your home inspected by a qualified electrician if older than 40 years or if you've had a major appliance installed.
- Have a qualified electrician install new circuits for high energy use devices.
- Reduce your electrical load by using energy efficient appliances and lighting.

### Working from home?

Follow these electrical safety tips to keep you and your home safe from electrical hazards.

- 1) Avoid overloading outlets.
- 2) Unplug appliances when not in use to save energy and minimize the risk of shock or fire.
- 3) Regularly inspect electrical cords and extension cords for damage. Extension cords should only be used on a temporary basis.
- 4) Never plug a space heater or fan into an extension cord or power strip.
- 5) Never run cords under rugs, carpets, doors or windows.
- 6) Make sure cords do not become tripping hazards.
- 7) Keep papers and other potential combustibles at least three feet away from heat sources.
- 8) Make sure you use proper wattage for lamps and lighting.
- 9) Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Test them monthly, change batteries annually and replace the unit every 10 years.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

## The Secret Ingredient

Electric cooperative members know that the recipes published in their local electric cooperative magazine are time-tested by their neighbors. The recipes feature ingredients that are readily available in the region (there may be a few somewhat exotic components). For the most part, if you have a can of cream of something soup, a pound of ground beef, some flour, eggs and a little salt and pepper, you probably have the basis of many a recipe found here. We raise our mixing spoons to the hundreds of co-op members who have sent in their recipes over the years.



Dawn Trapp

And, we applaud the work of Dawn Trapp who has reviewed the recipes, compiled them for print and made sure our South Dakota, Minnesota and Nebraska cooks shine for their neighbors. Trapp is retiring after a 30-plus year career with South Dakota's electric cooperatives. Since 2000, she has compiled the recipes featured in this magazine. She previously compiled recipes for the *South Dakota High Liner Magazine* and edited *Home Cooking: 50th anniversary commemorative cookbook of the South Dakota High Liner Magazine* in 1998.

For a .PDF compilation of the first 20 years of recipes found in your local *Cooperative Connections* publication, contact your local electric cooperative.

## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Be safe: Don't shoot near power lines."**

**Gwen Smith, 10 years old**

Gwen is the daughter of Jared and Heidi Smith, Lake Norden, S.D. They are members of H-D Electric Cooperative, Clear Lake, S.D.

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

# Dairy Delicious



## Chicken Lasagna

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 can cream of chicken soup  | 1 cup Parmesan cheese          |
| 1 can cream of mushroom soup | 3 cups diced chicken           |
| 1/2 cup milk                 | 3 cups shredded Cheddar cheese |
| 1 cup sour cream             | Lasagna noodles, cooked        |

Mix together soups and milk. In a separate bowl, combine sour cream, Parmesan cheese, diced chicken and cheese. Spread a thin layer of the soup mixture in the bottom of a 9x13-inch glass baking dish. Make a layer of cooked lasagna noodles. Spread an even layer of the chicken mixture. Top with another layer of soup. Repeat layers until gone. Bake at 325°F. for 1 hour.

Mary Hunt, Gary, S.D.

## Pineapple-Pretzel Salad

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 2 cups crushed pretzels       | 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened     |
| 1 stick butter, melted        |   |
| 1 cup sugar, divided          | 1 (20 oz.) can crushed pineapple, drained |
| 1 (8 oz.) container Cool Whip |   |

Combine pretzels, butter and 1/2 cup sugar. Spread on a 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 400°F. for 7 minutes; cool. Break into pieces; set aside. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese and remaining sugar. Add Cool Whip and pineapple. Mix well; refrigerate overnight. Just before serving, add pretzel pieces.

Linda Rauscher, Aberdeen, S.D.

## Cheesy Garlic Bread

- |                              |                      |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 cup Miracle Whip           | 1/4 tsp. garlic salt |
| 1/2 cup sour cream           | 1 cup chopped onion  |
| 1 cup shredded yellow cheese | 1 loaf French bread  |

Combine salad dressing, sour cream, shredded cheese, garlic salt and onion. Cut the French bread length-wise. Cover both sides, cut-side up, with mixture. Sprinkle with parsley and paprika, if desired. Bake at 400°F. for 8 to 10 minutes. Cut diagonally for a pretty presentation.

Jane Ham, Rapid City, S.D.

## S'mores Pie

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Graham Cracker Crust:</b>        | 2 tsp. ground cinnamon                             |
| 1-1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs    | 1 T. plus 1 tsp. vanilla extract, divided          |
| 7 T. butter, melted                 | 1 (7 oz.) jar marshmallow creme                    |
| 1/3 cup sugar                       | 1 (4 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened              |
| <b>Filling:</b>                     | 1 (8 oz.) container frozen whipped topping, thawed |
| 3/4 cup heavy cream                 |  |
| 6 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, chopped |  |

For the crust, mix all ingredients in medium bowl. Press into bottom and up sides of 9-inch pie plate. Set aside. For the filling, bring cream just to boil in small saucepan. Pour over chocolate in medium heatproof bowl. Let stand 1 minute then stir until smooth. Stir in cinnamon and 1 tsp. of the vanilla. Pour into prepared crust. Refrigerate 30 minutes or until chocolate is firm. (Freeze 15 minutes for faster chilling.) Beat marshmallow creme, cream cheese and remaining 1 T. vanilla in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until well blended. Gently stir in whipped topping until well blended. Spread evenly over chocolate layer in crust. Refrigerate at least 2 hours or until ready to serve. Garnish with chocolate curls or toasted marshmallows, if desired. Makes 8 servings

*Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 600, Total Fat 36g, Cholesterol 75mg, Sodium 267mg, Carbohydrates 65g, Fiber 2g, Protein 4g*

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

## Taco Cheese Dip

- |                                       |                                |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened | 1 (8 oz.) container sour cream |
| 1 pkg. taco seasoning                 | Shredded Cheddar cheese        |

Blend cream cheese, taco seasoning and sour cream well in serving dish. Spread shredded Cheddar cheese on top. Serve with chips.

Mary Ellen Luikens, Scotland, S.D.

Please send your favorite dessert, vegetarian or garden produce 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# The Kind of Audit You Want



Pat Keegan

Collaborative Efficiency

**A home energy audit is the perfect place to start if you want to reduce your energy bills or make your home more comfortable.**

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on a home energy audit, please visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

**Dear Pat and Brad:** I need to reduce my energy costs and don't know where to start. You often recommend a home energy audit. What will an audit tell me? – Jacob

**Dear Jacob:** You've nailed it! A home energy audit is the perfect place to start if you want to reduce your energy bills or make your home more comfortable. An audit can also help you decide whether to invest in a new energy source like a solar array or a new heating and cooling system like a heat pump or whether it's time to upgrade your current system.

It's possible to conduct your own energy audit using a website or app. Online and app audits are great tools you can use to learn about energy use and potential efficiency upgrades, but an in-person, comprehensive energy audit provides much more information.

When things are back to normal and it's safe to have visitors in your home, there are typically two options for an in-home energy audit.

The least expensive is a home energy survey, sometimes referred to as a "walk-through" audit that is essentially a visual inspection. If you have modest goals about what you want to learn from an energy audit and if you are fortunate enough to find an experienced and knowledgeable professional, this type of audit might meet your needs.

The second, more comprehensive energy audit requires more time and utilizes several diagnostic tools. The average cost for this type of audit is about \$400. Check with your local electric cooperative to see if they offer energy audits or provide a discount or rebate.

A comprehensive energy audit will look at four main areas. The first is the envelope of your home, which includes all the places where the exterior and interior meet – roof, walls, doors, windows and foundation. A critical tool for testing the envelope is a blower door test, which has a powerful fan that is mounted in an exterior door frame and used to de-pressurize the home. The auditor can then identify how well-sealed your home is and locate any air leaks. Some auditors will work with you to seal leaks and continue to take blower door readings as the home is tightened up. One advantage of this approach is avoiding excessive air sealing. It's possible, in some homes, to tighten the home too much, so the energy auditor can determine when to stop sealing leaks so that a healthy supply of air infiltration is maintained.

Another tool auditors will use to look at your building envelope is a thermal imaging camera, which shows hot and cold spots that pinpoint exactly where insulation is needed on walls and ceilings. The camera works best when the exterior temperature is much colder or much warmer than the interior temperature.

The second focus of the audit is your home's HVAC (furnace/AC unit) system and water heater to see how energy efficient they are and whether they should be replaced. If your home has air ducts, the auditor can conduct a duct blaster test to see if your ducts are properly sealed. Ducts located in unheated areas are often a major source of energy loss.

The third area the auditor will review includes other energy end use, such as lighting, appliances and other "plugged-in" devices. The auditor may also suggest steps like energy efficient lighting or a smart thermostat.

The fourth area included in a comprehensive energy audit is health and safety. Does your home have the correct number and placement of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors? Should your basement be tested for radon emissions? Make sure you get answers to these questions.

Some audits include a sophisticated energy analysis of your home using energy modeling software. These analyses can rank the different energy efficiency opportunities in your home from most to least cost-effective. This will tell you how much you can save if you invest in all the cost-effective upgrades.

After the energy audit is complete, the auditor should sit down with you and explain the findings in detail. This conversation should include a discussion of ways to operate your home to achieve more energy savings and more comfort.

A home energy audit may seem like an unnecessary expense, but it truly can save you money in the long run because it helps to ensure every dollar you put into energy efficiency pays for itself.

## Yankton, S.D., Fifth-Grader Wins Arbor Day Poster Contest

Sienna Vera Weiman, a fifth-grade student at Sacred Heart Elementary School in Yankton, is the winner of the 2020 South Dakota Arbor Day Poster Contest. Sienna's poster was chosen out of 567 entries from fifth-graders all over the state.

Weiman's first-place poster was selected for its interpretation of the contest theme "Trees Are Terrific...In Cities and Towns!" Weiman will receive a \$125 cash prize and a certificate of achievement and her poster will be featured on the division's poster contest promotional flier.



Weiman's teacher, Barb Geigle, will

receive \$175 for the purchase of educational supplies.

Abigail Ingham of Madison Elementary School in Madison, S.D., was selected as the second-place winner. Ingham receives a \$100 cash prize and a certificate of achievement. The third-place winner, Joclyn Vargason of Edmunds Central School in Roscoe, S.D., will receive a certificate and a \$75 cash prize.

The top 12 artists' posters will also be featured in the annual Arbor Day Poster Contest Calendar.

The annual Arbor Day Poster Contest is designed to help promote the importance of Arbor Day and tree planting and is open to all South Dakota fifth-graders. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the poster contest provided children the opportunity to stay busy and learn about the importance of trees in their communities. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's Resource Conservation & Forestry Division (RCF), the South Dakota Society of American Foresters, Aspen Arboriculture Solutions, LLC and the South Dakota Arborists Association sponsor the state contest.

## Call Before You Dig

### Calling 811 Remains An Essential Safety Step, Even During A Pandemic.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission is urging South Dakotans to be especially vigilant about utilizing 811's Call Before You Dig service to mark underground utilities and to exercise extreme caution with excavating projects.

"Underground utilities are always essential to the health and safety of South Dakota citizens, but with the current COVID-19 pandemic, these utility services are more important than ever," said PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. "Hospitals and their staffs rely on electricity and broadband networks to provide the best care for those in need. Our healthcare systems are already being stretched thin and damage to these utilities would only cause further strain to those on the front lines," he continued.

Whether you're landscaping, starting to build a new home or putting up a new fence, calling 811 at least two days before starting any kind of digging should always be your first step. Those two days give utility providers time to go out and mark all the natural gas, electricity, communications, water and sewer lines on your property. This simple step helps avoid injury to those working and damage to the essential infrastructure that not only keeps utilities functioning properly, but also connects you to the world outside your front door.



"Each of us has been asked to do our part to flatten the curve of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and making major changes to our daily routines. These necessary changes have made access to quality broadband more essential now than ever before. With students using distance learning to continue their education and many adults working from home, we really rely on quality internet to function in our everyday lives. Preserving those connections by following safe digging practices is important," said PUC Vice Chairman Chris Nelson.

Uneven surfaces, erosion and previous digging projects can all cause the depths of utility lines to vary and change over time, enhancing the risk of hitting an underground utility. For this reason, every digging project warrants a call to 811. Striking even a single line can result in service disruptions, serious injuries and costly repairs.

"Coronavirus has caused a lot of uncertainty but one thing you can be certain of is calling 811 will help ensure you remain safe and connected while working outdoors. Spending a little time outdoors is important for our health; especially during this outbreak when we're spending so much time at home. Remember, whether you're working, playing or just soaking up some sun, practicing safe distancing is an essential step to help flatten the curve no matter where you are," said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

South Dakota 811 is a free service. Homeowners and excavators with upcoming, outdoor construction projects must contact the South Dakota 811 center 48 hours before digging, excluding weekends and holidays. The center will then quickly notify all affected utility companies of your upcoming excavation plans and utility companies will dispatch crews to mark the underground lines at the respective dig site. To learn more about 811 and safe digging practices, visit [www.SD811.com](http://www.SD811.com).

# BIG (Little) GARDENS

## Growing Vegetables in Limited Spaces

L.A. Jackson

Contributing Writer and Photographer

Spring has arrived! So, if thoughts of producing oodles of fresh, homegrown edibles have you ready to dig in the dirt, it's time to roll up those sleeves and start a vegetable garden!

While the physics of time and space dictate that big harvests naturally come from big gardens, for backyard growers who prefer to pass on the challenges of tending mega-plots through the long, hot summer or who simply don't have an abundance of planting areas, there are alternative ways to raise impressive passels of veggies – it is simply a matter of making make less do more.

### Go to bed

First, for maximum production from limited growing areas, go with beds, not rows – in other words, place young plants or seeds according to their recommended spacing per plant and forget about distances between rows. Rows of plants looking like tidy lines of soldiers are better for large gardens in order to have paths to walk around, but this isn't necessary in small beds. Accessibility is, of course, still important, so, while you can stretch 'em as long as Texas, try not make beds over 4 feet wide – this shortens your reach into the plants and greatly minimizes embarrassing face-flops in the dirt.

### Small wonders

Size isn't everything in gardening, especially when it comes to growing backyard edibles. There are many vegetable selections – often tagged with such labels as “Bush,” “Dwarf” or “Patio,” – that are modest in height and girth, but still quite capable of producing impressive crops.

The most common big veggie that can be found in smaller sizes is the tomato. There are a ton of cultivars available, but, for starters, give “Tiny Tim,” “Bush Beefsteak” or “Early Wonder” a look. Keep in mind, however, that a majority of these slight-in-stature tomato selections are determinate, meaning they produce all the 'maters they are going to yield in a matter of weeks. Standard vine tomatoes, if kept healthy, typically crank out fruit continually over the long growing season.

Want a wider range of veggies in your small garden? Squash, watermelons, pumpkins, cucumbers, cantaloupes and green beans – all champs at chewing up space in a planting bed – can also be found in compact forms, either as young plants or seeds, at local garden shops in the spring.

### Grow up

Don't think you have to stick to Munchkin-sized plants. Typical strong growers such as tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers and squash can't be allowed to crawl across small growing spaces, but they can be trellised, staked or caged to grow up rather than out.

Even the long, rangy vines of watermelons, pumpkins and cantaloupes can be trained upwards on vertical supports, but to avoid the dreaded drop-and-splat factor, it's not a bad idea to cradle the developing fruits in supporting burlap, nylon or cloth slings.

Small watermelons such as “Sugar Baby” can be trained to grow up, not outwards, in a garden.  
COVER: A (literal) bed of cabbage taking center stage in a flower garden.  
OPPOSITE PAGE: Harvest eggplants when their skins are shiny, not dull.  
Photos By L.A. Jackson



Suspension weight and size problems with standard pumpkins are obvious, but there are many cultivars, including “Spookie,” “Jack O’ Lantern” and “Sugar Pie,” that yield smaller, more manageable 6- to 7-pound fruits. Ditto for big ol’ watermelons, but with so-called “icebox” varieties like the popular “Sugar Baby” and its 8- to 10-pound melons available, it is possible to hang ‘em high, too.

Growing vine crops on erect supports has other advantages besides saving space, starting with making harvesting easier. Also, vertical gardening improves fruit shape and, since beneficial air circulates through the foliage easier, can promote healthier plants.

## Beyond the veggie patch

Looking for even more growing ground? Limited-space gardening with edibles doesn’t need to be confined to small vegetable plots – in other words, anywhere you have dirt in your yard is a potential planting site. And many veggies can be easily inter-planted in the landscape as complements, rather than complications, to existing ornamentals.

One popular vegetable that bears the double standard of being both productive and pretty is the pepper. While blocky bell peppers might look a bit clunky in flower beds, there is a wide range of hot peppers that show off long-lasting fruits in many sizes, shapes and sizzling colors on relatively compact plants.

Like bell peppers, common pudgy eggplants probably won’t qualify as eye candy in an ornamental garden, but there are vibrantly colored fruits of cultivars such as “Fairy Tale,” “Prosperosa” and “Neon” that can also add extra visual sass to sunny flower borders.

And okra, which is closely related to the lovely hibiscus, stays true to its family ties with fancy foliage and delicate, hibiscus-like flowers. One particular standout beauty is “Red Burgundy,” an heirloom selection that has been a veggie garden favorite for many years because its gorgeous (and tasty) scarlet pods never fail to turn heads.

Other decorative edibles with strong, distinctive profiles such as curly spinach, cabbage, loose-leaf lettuce (especially red-tinted varieties like “Red Sails” and “Lolla Rossa”), kale and Swiss chard (look for “Ruby Red” or “Bright Lights”) are low-growing and, for vegetable plants, actually rather good looking. Any of these can be successfully incorporated as accent plants for perennial beds or flower gardens. In addition, root vegetables such as carrots, onions and radishes hide their crops below ground but freely flaunt flowing foliage that can be used to fill in the fronts of border plantings.

Many herbs are also great “double-duty” plants. Need examples? Rosemary’s spiky leaves and delightful (as well as edible) bluish-purple flowers make it an appealing addition to any landscape setting. Bronze fennel’s smoky look is a nice touch for container planters, while the rich, dark foliage of purple basil is a horticultural fashion statement waiting to happen. And curly parsley, with its deep emerald leaves, is an ideal alt-ornamental to line the front of a flower bed.

One word of caution about interplanting vegetables or herbs with other plants: If you spray any pesticides on neighboring ornamentals, make sure the chemicals are cleared for safe use on edible plants as well.

*L.A. Jackson is the former editor of Carolina Gardener magazine.*

# Harvest Time Tips

## When are veggies table-ready?

With proper care, spring vegetable plantings will grow up big, strong and productive to add plenty of homegrown edibles to the dinner table. But, while waiting for these crops to mature, now is not too soon to start mentally registering harvest tips to be ready when the bountiful times arrive. Such pointers can also be helpful to folks who don’t have gardens but go to pick-your-own farms. In addition, frequenters to farmers’ markets will probably find a few of these tips useful to help select produce at their freshest and tastiest.

**Bell peppers.** The typical bell pepper can be picked when it is either green or red. A red bell pepper is just riper than a green one and tastes slightly sweeter. If you prefer to use a size-o-meter, harvest these peppers when they are about 3 inches in diameter.

**Carrots.** Carrots are normally ready when their orange crowns poke out above the soil line. For better storage, cut off all but about 2 inches of the fern tops after you pull carrots from the ground.

**Cucumbers.** Although they come in all sizes, standard cukes will, of course, be a deep green when mature. However, if a cucumber starts to show a yellow tint, it is past ripe.

**Eggplant.** Common varieties, such as “Black Beauty” and “Classic,” should have a shiny, dark purple color and be about 4 inches in diameter. Any eggplant that has been on the plant too long will lose its shine – this also applies to the newer, fancy-colored varieties such as “Neon” and “Ping Tung.”



**Okra.** The better tasting (and least slimy) okra pods are snipped off at about 3 inches long. *Chef’s Tip: For little or no slime, when boiling okra, leave the pods whole.*

**Green Beans.** These beans are at their best when they are about 3 to 6 inches long. At these sizes, the seeds haven’t started to swell yet, and the pods are tender enough to snap easily.

**Leaf Lettuce.** Wait until the plants are about 5 inches tall and starting to fully fill out with foliage. Then, begin your picking. Use scissors and only take outer leaves so the plants will continue growing strongly in order to extend the harvest season. This method works well for romaine lettuce and spinach, too.

**Summer Squash.** Tasty crook, straight-neck and zucchini squash will be had when they are picked at about 6 inches long. Round patty pan varieties are in their prime around 4 to 5 inches in diameter.

**Tomatoes.** Come on – everybody knows what a ripe tomato looks like! Sometimes, however, ‘maters are picked with a bit of green still showing. To turn the green to red (and make fruits fully ripe) simply place them in a cozy area indoors. A sunny windowsill won’t do because the sun’s direct rays could redden the skin but not ripen the inside of the tomato. Moderate warmth, not strong light, is the key to properly maturing a tomato.



The WCEC board will retire capital credits early in 2020.

# BOARD VOTES TO RETURN CAPITAL CREDITS EARLY

Jessie Tucker

[jessie.tucker@wce.coop](mailto:jessie.tucker@wce.coop)

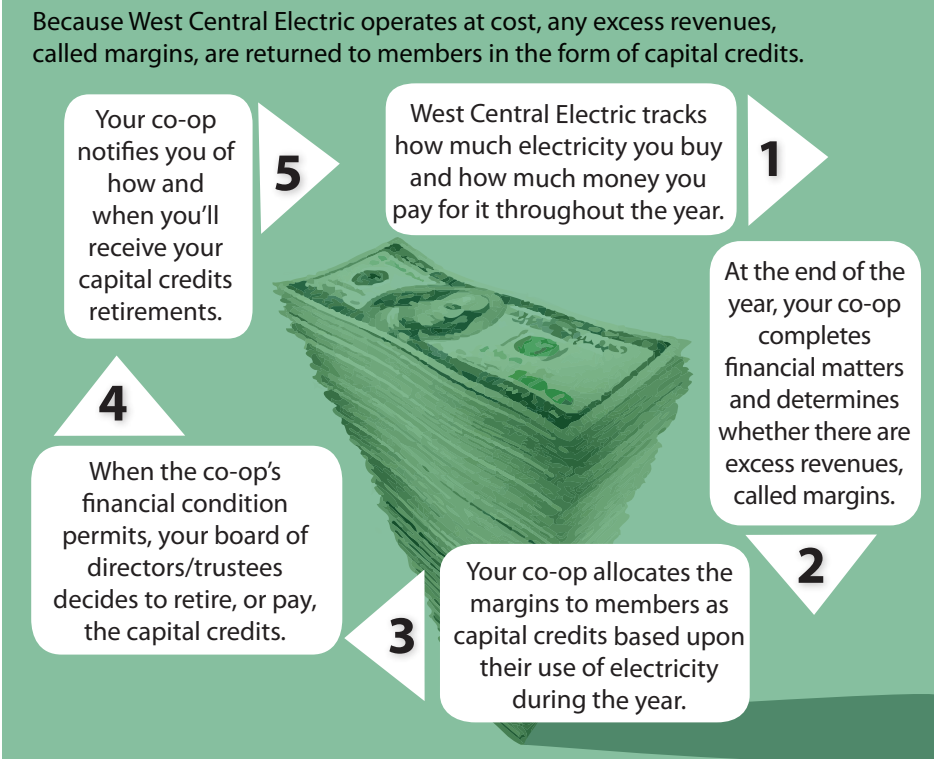
The COVID-19 pandemic has caused hardships on many of West Central's members and the effects can be seen by simply driving down the street and noticing empty businesses that were once open and thriving. Whether it is a restaurant cook that is not getting in any hours or a motel along the I-90 corridor that has seen dramatically less business, West Central understands that the effects are great and very much real.

It is because of this that the West Central board of directors has proactively chosen to retire capital credits early in 2020. "Typically, the capital credit retirements are paid in December, but this year we will be paying them in June. Many people and businesses could use the money now," said West Central CEO, Jeff Birkeland. "It's a great way to help our members. We truly care and want to help. After all, it is our members investment that we're returning back to them."

2020's capital credit retirement amount has not yet been set. West Central's board of directors is reviewing different options and will make the final decision during the May board meeting. Capital credit checks will be mailed out the first part of July.

Capital credits are created when any earnings (revenues minus expenses) are left over at the end of each year. This creates a margin. At the end of each year, West Central assigns each member-owner's account a share of the margin, known as an allocation. The cooperative's goal is to rotate capital credits on a 25-year cycle.

## How Do Capital Credits Work?



Before returning margins back to members, West Central uses the capital to help offset the cost of debt for equipment and materials used for the construction and maintenance of the electric distribution system. This helps lower financing needs.

Board President Mike McQuiston added, "We are proud that we have been financially sound which enables us to retire capital credits on an annual basis, which is consistent with our mission to provide safe, reliable service to our member-owners."

# PRESENTING

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## Area Teens Honored

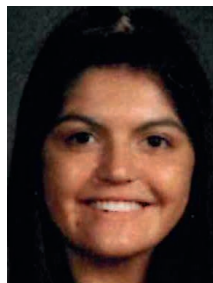
Although the 2020 Youth Tour has unfortunately been canceled due to COVID-19, we still wanted to take the time to recognize these young adults that were chosen to participate. We thank everyone who applied and we also wish circumstances could have been different.

My name is Keldon Fitzgerald and I am currently a junior at Philip High School and have lived in Philip my whole life. My parents are Jake and Aaron Fitzgerald and I have one brother and a sister. I am involved in many school activities including basketball, golf, FCCLA, FCA and choir. In my free time, I like to be outdoors and spend time with friends and family. I plan on attending college at South Dakota State to pursue a financial degree.



**Keldon Fitzgerald**  
Philip High School

Hi, my name is Jaida Haynes. I am currently a junior at Philip High School and a resident of Haakon County. I have a very supportive family and I can't thank my parents enough (Brad Haynes and Tanya Haynes) for all their help with applying for this trip! I love being involved in extracurricular activities, including basketball, volleyball, student council, FCCLA, pep club, FCA, band, drama, NJHS, TriM honor band and youth group! In my free time, I enjoy hanging with my friends, learning sign language,



**Jaida Haynes**  
Philip High School

paddle boarding, and being a lifeguard in the summer. I am beyond excited to experience this once-in-a-lifetime trip to Washington, D.C., and I want to thank West Central Electric for giving me this incredible opportunity.

My name is Alyssa Jones and I'm currently a junior in high school. I live in Lower Brule, S.D., and attend school at Lyman High School. Throughout school, I have participated in track, cross country, basketball and band. I live with my dad, mom and sister. In the future, I plan on pursuing a career in nursing and attending USD. I enjoy spending time with my family, traveling and learning new ideas. I look forward to attending this historical and philosophical trip.



**Alyssa Jones**  
Lyman High School

My name is Allison McManus, I'm 17 and am a junior at Lyman High School. I live on a farm near Reliance, S.D., with my family of seven. My parents are Donald and Melinda McManus and I have four siblings: Liam, Brady, Katie and Rory. I have been working as a cashier at Hieb's Cenex in Reliance since the summer of 2017. I participate in volleyball, track and as a wrestling statistician. I am also involved in drama, choir, band, student council, 4-H and FFA.



**Allison McManus**  
Lyman High School

# Outdoor Fever

## Celebrating South Dakota's Outdoor Spaces

Brenda Kleinjan

editor@sdrea.coop

**People are really rediscovering the outdoors again.**

South Dakota's state parks and wide-open spaces can be a beacon to those who have spent the winter and spring months cooped up at home.

"Parks are very good places to go outdoors and get out of the house," said Al Nedved, deputy director of parks for the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks.

Nedved said that in April 2020, the parks had seen an increase in use over 2019, due in part to better weather than the previous year and also to the COVID-19 restrictions.

"People are really rediscovering the outdoors again," said Nedved. "Our parks are open. We are strongly advising people to follow social distancing guidelines set by CDC (Center for Disease Control) and the state department of health."

In addition to the social distancing, the parks are encouraging people to be as self-sufficient as possible by using their own facilities. State park visitors are also asked to plan ahead and use the reservation website to purchase licenses and make reservations ahead of time to limit interaction at the parks as much as possible.

And as Americans head outdoors celebrating June as both National Camping Month and Nation Great Outdoors Month, thousands of South Dakotans will



Biking in South Dakota campgrounds is a popular family activity.  
Photo Credit: South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

be discovering and rediscovering the Rushmore state's park system.

The state's parks, established in 1919 with the creation of Custer State Park in western South Dakota, saw considerable growth in the post World War II era. The newest park, Good Earth State Park, was established in 2013 southeast of Sioux Falls.

"It's a very unique archaeological and historical site," said Nedved, noting the area was a vast trading center for Native Americans going back several hundred years.

The South Dakota State Park system includes 13 state parks, 43 recreation areas, five nature areas, one historic prairie, 69 lakeside use areas and 10 marina/resorts. In addition, the Division of Parks and Recreation manages the



Hiking trails are offered in many South Dakota state parks.  
Photo Credit: South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks



Access to water-based activities, such as this one found at Farm Island in central South Dakota, is a draw for South Dakota state parks.  
Photo Credit: South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks

114-mile Mickelson Trail, South Dakota’s Snowmobile Trail Program, and maintains 240 public water access areas.

“I always tell people the best-kept secret is the place you have not been yet. You never know where there is a site that will become a favorite spot,” said Nedved. “Each park is unique; it’s great to experience them all. Each is rich with natural, historical and cultural resources.”

Custer State Park is the largest of the parks at 71,000 acres, while Fort Sisseton in northeastern South Dakota is one of the smallest.

Palisades State park has geological structures that are really unique,” Nedved said.

“The Missouri River Parks offer incomparable opportunities for fishing and water recreation,” said Nedved, noting that parks on the river extend from Pollock in the north-central part of the state to the Adams Nature Area and Preserve by North Sioux City which features a well-preserved farmstead and a trail system.

“They are a great place to make memories and be together,” Nedved said.

The parks offer a variety of activities: camping and fishing are popular as well as other water-based recreation. Hiking, biking and trail-related activities are a draw

as are leisure sport activities like disc golf, volleyball and horseshoes.

“The biggest one is the ability to come out and enjoy the outdoors and have a really good experience,” said Nedved. “I like to tell people to think of parks as a really great place for your emotional and physical health. There’s no greater place to go and exercise than the great outdoors.”

Those intending to camp should do a little research and have a basic knowledge of the outdoors. In addition to packing bug spray, appropriate clothing and sunscreen, campers in the 2020 season should also plan on bringing masks and hand sanitizer.

Also on the list should be a NOAA weather radio or other device to track severe weather.

“South Dakota weather can be unpredictable at times. You need to plan ahead and be prepared for wind, hail and lightning,” said Nedved.

“We encourage everyone to enjoy the outdoors this summer and do it responsibly,” Nedved said.

Before you go, be sure to check the GF&P website at [gpf.sd.gov/parks](http://gpf.sd.gov/parks) for updates and current information.

**They are a great place to make memories and be together.**

## By the Number

A look at South Dakota’s state park system

- 16 Welcome Centers
- 9 Regional Offices
- 3 Fish Hatcheries
- 2 Outdoor Campuses
- 83 Dams
- 4,417 Campsites
- 223 Camping Cabins
- 2 Modern Cabins
- 7 Lodges
- 153 Picnic Shelters
- 93 Playgrounds
- 121 Comfort Stations
- 49 Fishing Docks
- 50 Fish Cleaning Stations
- 347 Boat Ramps
- 50 Beaches
- 349 Miles of Trails
- 328 Miles of Roads
- 155-Mile Canoe/Kayak Trail
- 1,518 Miles of Snowmobile Trails

# June is PTSD Awareness Month



## UNDERSTANDING PTSD

Jocelyn Romey

jocelyn.romey@sdrea.coop

Trauma is an experience that can occur in an instant – to anyone. It has the power to alter a life or change the future plans or outlook of someone who has suffered it. But does this mean that a traumatic occurrence comes with a life sentence? Does trauma affect people for life?

One unfortunate outcome of trauma is a diagnosed disorder known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the National Center for PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder is a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident or sexual assault. The normal occurrence of trauma is grief – for a time. During this time, it may be hard to do normal daily activities, like go to work, attend school or spend time with people you care about. But most people start to feel better after a few weeks or months. The National Center for PTSD maintains that if someone who has experienced trauma still has these feelings longer than a few months, then they might have PTSD. For some people, PTSD symptoms may start later on or they may come and go over time.

Dr. Brian Wilson, D.O., a psychiatrist for Fall River Health Services in Hot Springs, S.D., works closely with patients who have experienced trauma and PTSD. The following Q&A points to his knowledge and experience with people dealing with a traumatic aftermath.

■ **Do you see signs or symptoms of PTSD often? Is it common?** There are specific criteria used to make a

diagnosis of PTSD. Obviously, to be diagnosed with PTSD, an individual must experience exposure to a trauma, but not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will experience PTSD or meet the symptom criteria required for a PTSD diagnosis. PTSD is more common among populations that are more frequently exposed to traumatic events, such as military personnel, first responders, victims of natural disasters and victims of abuse, but PTSD can occur as the result of a wide variety of traumatic events and can occur as the result of exposure to a single traumatic event.

■ **Are there different levels of PTSD?** Depending on their type of practice, most mental healthcare providers see some individuals with PTSD. This amount varies between different practice settings. In my own practice, I work with a wide age range of patients. A large portion of my own practice is with military veterans and another large portion of my practice is with children who have experienced trauma and abuse. I also work with many adults who have experienced personal traumatic events. Because of this, I work with a large number of patients with PTSD.

A diagnosis of PTSD requires the presence of certain criteria, but the way those symptoms present and the severity of those symptoms can vary among individuals.

■ **How can PTSD be managed?** There are several treatment options for individuals with PTSD. There are different types of therapy that have shown effectiveness and

there are medications which are often used. Frequently, a combination of one or more of these therapies and medications is used to treat PTSD. With effective treatment, individuals often experience significant improvement and are able to continue living happy and productive lives.

■ **As a psychiatrist, what is something you would say to someone struggling with PTSD?** It is often difficult for someone with PTSD to recognize that they are experiencing symptoms of PTSD. It frequently presents as a combination of symptoms which may include irritability, anger, restlessness, difficulty sleeping, nightmares and disturbing memories of past events. Symptoms may also include sadness, crying, nervousness, worry, fear, emotional disturbance and mood fluctuations.

In children and adolescents, PTSD often presents as behavioral problems. These symptoms often have a negative effect on personal relationships, friendships, work and professional relationships and an individual's life satisfaction and happiness. Individuals with PTSD often attempt to self-treat with alcohol, drugs, unsafe and unhealthy life choices, and other dangerous and/or harmful behaviors without even realizing that is what they are doing. This is ineffective and even harmful and often leads to even more problems for those individuals.

■ **What is something that you would want people to know about PTSD?** Often people have misperceptions about mental health treatment and what it is. In the past, there was often a stigma attached to mental health problems

and they were often, incorrectly, seen as a character flaw or sign of weakness. There was an idea that asking for help meant that a person wasn't strong and there was something wrong with them. It was often something that "our family didn't talk about." As we understand more about the role of genetics, neuroanatomy and neurochemistry in mental health, we realize that the idea of a negative stigma related to mental health is inaccurate, outdated and wrong. We now know that PTSD is related to a combination of environmental and biological factors and that seeking help for PTSD is a sign of strength and the first step to a better quality of life and healing.

**We now know that PTSD is related to a combination of environmental and biological factors and that seeking help for PTSD is a sign of strength and the first step to a better quality of life and healing.**

National PTSD Awareness Month is observed annually in June. This time is dedicated to raise awareness about post-traumatic stress disorder. June 27 is also National PTSD Awareness Day. For more information about PTSD, visit [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov).

**Trauma-focused Psychotherapy Works Best**

Now more than ever, there are effective treatments for PTSD.



Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)

CPT teaches you how to change the upsetting thoughts and feelings you have had since your trauma.



Prolonged Exposure (PE)

PE teaches you to gradually approach trauma-related memories, feelings and situations that you have been avoiding since your trauma.



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

EMDR helps you process and make sense of your trauma while paying attention to a back-and-forth movement or sound (like a finger waving side to side, a light, or a tone).

**Medication Can Help**

If you prefer to take medication, you have four good options. *But remember: you will need to keep taking medication in order to keep feeling better.*



- Sertraline
- Paroxetine
- Fluoxetine
- Venlafaxine

**THE BEST TREATMENT FOR PTSD: The evidence is in.**



**Trauma-focused psychotherapy is the first-line treatment for PTSD.**

It lasts only about three months, and research shows that for most people its effects last long after treatment is over.



**Did You Know?**



Trauma-focused Psychotherapy

**53 OUT OF 100**

people who receive trauma-focused psychotherapy will no longer have PTSD after about 3 months of treatment.



Medication

**42 OUT OF 100**

people who take medication will no longer have PTSD after about 3 months of treatment.



No Treatment

**BUT ONLY 9 OUT OF 100**

people who don't get treatment will no longer have PTSD after about 3 months.



PTSD Treatment Decision Aid  
[www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/decisionaid)



AboutFace: Veterans talk about PTSD and PTSD treatment  
[www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/aboutface/](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/aboutface/)



National Center for PTSD  
[www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

October 2017

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

## June 5-7

Regional Qualifying High School Rodeos:

- Rodeo Grounds, Wall, SD, 605-529-5868
- Rodeo Grounds, Highmore, SD, 605-529-5868
- Tipperary Arena, Buffalo, SD, 605-529-5868
- Heartland Arena, Huron, SD, 605-529-5868

## June 7

Miss Prairie Village / Miss Prairie Princess Pageant, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644, [www.prairievillage.org](http://www.prairievillage.org)

## June 12-14

Regional Qualifying High School Rodeos:

- Tripp County Fairgrounds, Winner, SD, 605-529-5868
- Rodeo Grounds, Sturgis, SD, 605-529-5868
- Rodeo Grounds, Dupree, SD, 605-529-5868
- Derby Downs Arena, Watertown, SD, 605-529-5868

## June 19, 26 and July 3, 10

River City Friday Nights, 6 to 10 p.m., Live music, beer garden, vendors, food trucks, games and activities for the entire family, Main Street, Chamberlain, SD, 605-683-9051

## June 20

Divas Gone Country concert, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644

## June 20-21

Men's Club Fishing Tournament, Pollock, SD, Contact Brent Odde at 605-848-1967



## June 16-21:

South Dakota State High School Finals Rodeo, Stanley County Fairgrounds, Fort Pierre, SD, 605-529-5868

## June 24-27

Crystal Springs Rodeo, Extreme Bulls June 24, Rodeo June 25-27, Clear Lake, SD, 605-874-2996

## June 27

Railroad Day, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644

## June 28

Variety Show, Prairie Village, Madison, SD, 800-693-3644

## July 11

6th Annual Auto Value Car Show, Hav-A-Rest, Campground, Redfield, SD, 605-450-0332

## July 18

Wessington Fun Day, Pancake Breakfast, Parade at 10 a.m., Car Show at noon, Dance, Wessington, SD, Contact Mary Spicer at 605-458-2359

## July 21-25

98th Annual Days of '76 PRCA Rodeo, Arena, Deadwood, SD, 1-888-838-BULL, [www.DAYSOF76.com](http://www.DAYSOF76.com)

## July 23-24

Jr. Miss Rodeo South Dakota Pageant, The Lodge and Days of '76 Rodeo, Deadwood, SD, 605-641-8604, [jrmissrsd@gmail.com](mailto:jrmissrsd@gmail.com)

## July 24-26

Catfish Derby Days, Franklin, MN, 507-557-2259

## July 25

17th Annual Make-A-Wish 'On the Road to Wishes' Poker Run, Registration 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., C&S Motorsports, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-4533

## August 8-9

Threshing Show, Twin Brooks, SD, [www.threshingshow.com](http://www.threshingshow.com)

## August 8-10

Red Power Round Up, Fairgrounds, Huron, SD, 605-460-0197 [redpowerroundup2020.com](http://redpowerroundup2020.com)

## August 22

World of Outlaw Sprint Car Races plus Wissota MWM, Dakota State Fair Speedway, Huron, SD, 605-352-4848

## September 7

Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show, 1 p.m., 47326 183rd Ave., Clear Lake, SD, 605-881-8405

## September 12-13

Fall Harvest Festival, Delmont, SD, 605-928-3792, [www.twinriversoldiron.org](http://www.twinriversoldiron.org)

## October 7-8

Energize! Explore Innovative Rural Communities Conference, Milbank, SD, <https://extension.sdstate.edu>

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.