



# Cooperative Connections



Ione Fejfar welcomes veterans to Operation Black Hills Cabin in Custer as a place of healing and restoration

**A Healing Place  
for Veterans**

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**Co-ops and the  
S.D. National  
Guard**

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# 2020 – Year in Review



**Jeff Birkeland, CEO**

jeff.birkeland@wce.coop

**Throughout this whole pandemic, our goal has not wavered – keep the employees and our members safe.**

**Editor's Note: The following is excerpted from Jeff's annual meeting speech.**

Good evening and welcome to your 71st annual meeting. We have experienced many firsts this year, and the biggest one was dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. To say it has impacted us would be an understatement. Look at where we are at right now. We are holding an annual meeting without serving supper to our members, and we are also not giving out prizes. It's not because we don't want to, but because it's the safest way to have our annual meeting and minimize the coronavirus spread. We are also live streaming via YouTube, so members who did not feel comfortable attending in person can watch the annual meeting at their convenience. As Mike stated earlier, we had to modify how we approach everyday work. Throughout this whole pandemic, our goal has not wavered – keep the employees and our members safe. The thought of having an outbreak amongst our employees and then having an ice storm or anything else Mother Nature might throw at us is not pleasant. So that is why we keep making changes and adapting as we learn more about the virus.

This last month has been especially trying for us as that marked our first employee for testing positive. We have since had a total of two employees test positive. In the scope of things, this is just a bump in the road, and we will continue to serve our members to the best of our abilities.

I just mentioned that we had a few firsts this year, so I'll report another interesting development. Roughly a year ago, we were contacted by NorthWestern Energy about using our transmission line to bring wind energy to the market from Sept. 1, 2020 through Oct. 31, 2020. Very interested in the concept, we said we would help. Here's what led up to NorthWestern Energy asking that question. There are two windfarms just east of Chamberlain that are served by the Mt. Vernon substation. If that substation goes offline, then the wind towers cannot produce electricity. As luck would have it, that particular substation was due for maintenance and needed to be taken offline to perform the work. So this is where West Central Electric comes into the equation. West Central and NorthWestern have an emergency tie-line between our two systems. If one of us has an outage, we can close the switch, which allows us to serve electricity to the other utility. It is a great back-up system and has served West Central and NorthWestern well over the years. This ability allows us the capability to provide electrical service to the wind farms so that they can produce electricity.

The process and study work took almost a year to complete, but I'm pleased to announce that as I stand here tonight, the wind turbines are producing electricity, and West Central's transmission line is getting that power to the market. So how much electricity are we talking about? The peak capacity of the wind farms is 40 MW. To put that into perspective, West Central's entire system peak is 36 MW. So if everything was perfect, those wind farms could supply our electricity needs. But I don't think that will ever happen, as, during this time frame, the wind towers have peaked at 26 MW.

TransCanada – Where are things at with TransCanada? This project has to be the most studied and political hot potato of my lifetime. TransCanada first approached West Central back in 2008 about supplying electricity for two pump sites in our service territory. Twelve years later, here we are, still talking about whether or not it will get built. The last year has changed because there has actually been some construction activity on the infrastructure that supports the pipeline getting constructed. You also need to understand that West Central doesn't care if this gets built or not. TransCanada is a member of West Central, and if they request service and pay for the costs to construct the substations and lines, we will build the infrastructure. If TransCanada gets their approval to build the pipeline, West Central has been requested to build the following:

- Haakon County: 26 miles of 115KV transmission line and a substation.
- Jones County: 20.4 miles of 115KV transmission line and a substation.

# West Central Electric

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 018-988)

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Shad Riggle, Hayes

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Kenneth Miller, Draper

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Jim Willert, Belvidere

### Attorney

David Larson, Chamberlain

### CEO/Manager

Jeff Birkeland, Murdo

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Twitter: @WCElectric; Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectricCooperative](http://www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectricCooperative)

Design assistance by SDREA

## 2020 – Year in Review, Continued

As it stands today, TransCanada has the approval to build its substations and have pre-paid West Central to build them. So that's what we are doing. We have a contractor hired to construct the Haakon and Jones County substations with a March 2021 estimated completion date. Keep in mind, we are building these facilities even though there is no approval to build the transmission line, which serves power to the substations. So, if TransCanada does not get its approval, it will have millions of dollars in stranded assets. It has been an interesting story for 12 years, and right now, there is still not an end in sight.

The last bit of news I have is about the future. Several other SD Cooperatives have approached West Central Electric about building an electric car charging station network from the South Dakota-Wyoming border to the South Dakota-Minnesota border along I-90, and a similar fashion along I-29. What prompted this discussion is the possibility of getting money from the State of South Dakota to pay for 80 percent of the infrastructure. The charging stations along the I-90 corridor will be placed at Spearfish, Rapid City, Wall, Murdo, Chamberlain or Oacoma, Mitchell and Sioux Falls area. If everything goes well and we get this project up and running, West Central would have one charging station in Murdo and potentially a second one in Oacoma. This project is a work in progress, and although it's too early to tell if it will materialize, it is still an exciting concept.

### Energy Efficiency

#### Tip of the Month

Keep cold air out to save energy. Seal air leaks around pipes and any gaps around chimneys and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

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



**HAPPY  
THANKSGIVING!**

**West Central Electric will be  
closed Nov. 26-27 for  
Thanksgiving.**

**We wish you a safe and happy  
holiday.**

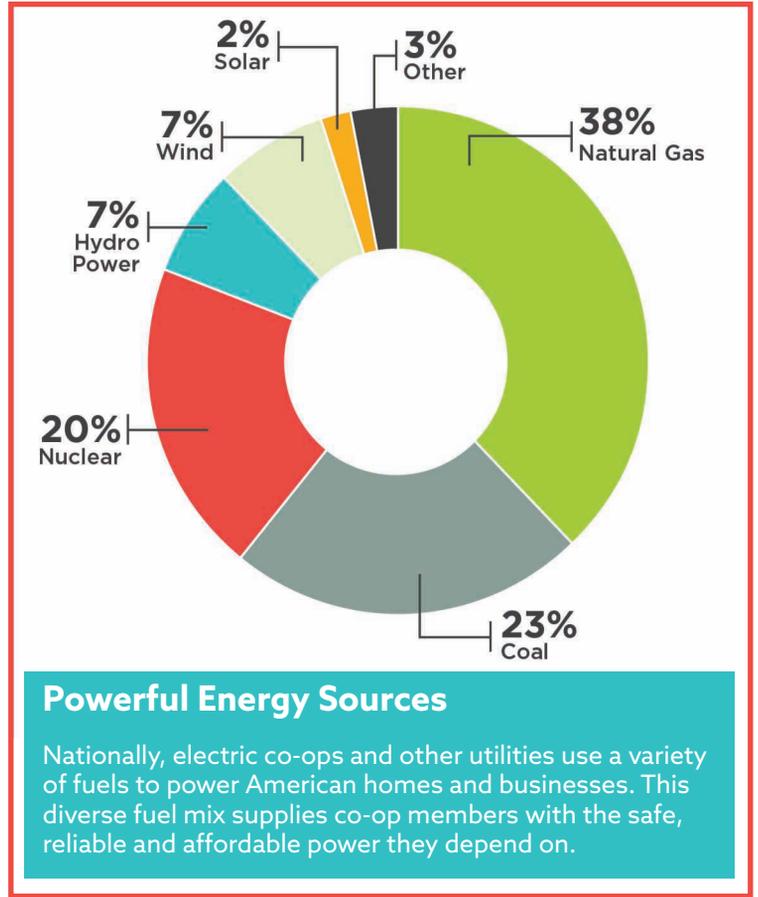
# Enjoy an energy-efficient feast this Thanksgiving

New electrical appliances use far less energy in your home than older ones, but that doesn't mean you should skimp on energy-efficient behavior in the kitchen.

During the frantic holiday season, making the simplest changes while cooking can save plenty of energy and money.

- There's usually no need to preheat the oven, especially if the food you're cooking - like a turkey or a ham - will be in it for a long time.
- Avoid opening the oven door to check on food. Instead, turn on the oven light and peer through the window to make sure your pumpkin pie or turkey isn't burning to a crisp. Opening the oven door - even for just a second or two - can drop the temperature inside the oven by 25 degrees.
- Place several items in the oven at once. All food will cook thoroughly if you leave enough room around pies or casseroles for air to flow.
- Electric ovens retain heat even after you turn them off, so it's safe to turn them off several minutes before a recipe's time is up. Electric stovetops work the same way: The metal element will keep cooking for several minutes after you turn it off.
- Choose glass or ceramic pans for the oven. They let you set the temperature 25 degrees lower than metal pans do.
- Match the pan size to the size of the stovetop burner so you don't waste heat. Just a 2-inch difference between pan and burner can waste 40 percent of the generated heat.
- Zap baked potatoes and vegetables in the microwave instead of simmering them on the stovetop. Microwaves use significantly less electricity than a stove or oven.
- Involve everyone in cooking. Leave the electric mixer in the cupboard and let the kids stir the cake batter by hand and recruit someone to chop the veggies instead of tossing them into a food processor. The experience might save some electricity and make everyone proud of contributing to the meal.

Keep these handy and helpful tips in mind as you prepare to entertain family and friends in your home this holiday season.



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



**"Keep Indoors!"**

**Grace Austin, 7 years old**

Grace is a member of West River Electric Association based in Rapid City. She encourages readers, "During a storm, all kids and pets should be inside. So, don't go outside. It's dangerous."

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.

# Savory Slow-Cook Selections

## Slow-Cooker Zucchini Soup

1 ½ lbs. sweet Italian sausage	2 tsp. salt
2 c. ½-inch celery pieces	1 tsp. white sugar
2 lbs. zucchini, cut into ½-inch slices	1 tsp. dried oregano
2 (28 oz.) cans diced tomatoes (or fresh)	1 tsp. Italian seasoning
2 green peppers, cut into ½-inch slices	1 tsp. dried basil
1 c. chopped onion	¼ tsp. garlic powder
	6 T. grated Parmesan cheese, or to taste

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir sausage in the hot skillet until browned and crumbly, 5-7 minutes; drain and discard grease. Mix celery into cooked sausage; cook and stir until celery is softened, about 10 minutes. Combine sausage mixture, zucchini, tomatoes, bell peppers, onion, salt, sugar, oregano, Italian seasoning, basil and garlic powder in a slow cooker. Cook on low for 4-6 hours. Garnish each serving with 1 T. Parmesan cheese. Note: Water is not needed in this recipe.

**Shelly Goetz, Sioux Falls, SD**

## Crock Pot Corn

2 (16 oz.) bags frozen corn	6 T. sugar
8 oz. cream cheese (but in chunks)	6 T. water
	½ cup butter or margarine

Put in crockpot on high for two hours or low for four. Stir every once in a while. Salt and pepper to taste.

**Helen Gregory, Lemmon, SD**

## Spaghetti Corn

1 can cream style corn	1 onion, diced
1 can whole corn	1 cup shredded cheddar
2 cups spaghetti, broken	1 stick butter, melted

Break spaghetti into 2-inch pieces. Do not drain whole corn. Combine all ingredients. Pour into buttered casserole dish. Bake uncovered for 30 mins. at 350. Cover and put back in oven for 20 mins. OR place in crock pot for 2 hours. OR Cook on stove for 50 mins. on lowest heat, removing for 10 minute intervals.

**Jane Ham, Rapid City, SD**

## BBQ Steakhouse Chili

2 T. oil	beans, rinsed
1 lb. beef top round steak, cut into 1/2-inch pieces	2-1/2 cups undrained canned no-salt-added diced tomatoes
1 lb. extra-lean ground beef	1 bottle (18 oz.) KRAFT Hickory Smoke Barbecue Sauce
1 onion, finely chopped	¾ cup KRAFT Shredded Cheddar Cheese
¼ cup A1 Dry Rub Bold Original	
3 cloves garlic, minced	
2 cans (16 oz. each) kidney	

Heat oil in large skillet on medium. Add next five ingredients; stir. Cook 10 min. or until meat is evenly browned, stirring frequently. Spoon into slow cooker sprayed with cooking spray. Add all remaining ingredients except cheese; stir. Cover with lid. Cook on low 7 to 8 hours (or on high 4 to 5 hours). Serve topped with cheese.

**Provided by Kraft Heinz**

## Chicken Cacciatore

1/2 cup KRAFT Zesty Italian	1 green pepper, cut in strips
1 tsp. dried oregano leaves	1/2 lb. sliced mushrooms
2 lbs. mixed boneless skinless chicken breasts and thighs	1-1/2 c. CLASSICO Tomato and Basil Pasta Sauce
	3 c. rotini pasta, uncooked

Mix dressing/oregano in pot sprayed with cooking spray. Add chicken; coat both sides of each piece with dressing mixture. Top with vegetables and pasta sauce; cover with lid. Cook on low 6-8 hours (or high 4-6 hours). About 15 min. before serving, cook pasta, no salt. Drain. Serve topped with chicken and vegetables.

**Provided by Kraft Heinz**

Please send your favorite holiday 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.

# Breathe Easy about Your Air Quality



**Pat Keegan**

Collaborative Efficiency

**If you live in an area with radon, keep it out of your home because it is the second leading cause of lung cancer.**

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on how to breathe easier in your home, please visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

**Dear Pat and Brad: I read your column a few months ago on sealing air leaks, but I've heard a home that's sealed too tightly can lead to air quality issues. How can I be sure I have healthy air as I seal air leaks in my home? – Lee**

Dear Lee: Sealing air leaks is one of the best ways to make your home more energy efficient, and there are steps you can take to ensure your home has an adequate amount of healthy, fresh air.

The average home loses about half its air volume every hour, so it can be sealed considerably (often at a low cost) and still have more than enough healthy air. Pollutants are the main cause of poor indoor air quality, and the most dangerous pollutant is carbon monoxide (CO). It can come from furnaces, water heaters or stoves that burn natural gas, propane or wood. The problem usually occurs in devices that are old, in need of repair or installed or operated in a manner that prevents clear, unobstructed supply and exhaust of combustion air.

Excessive moisture in the air can also be considered an indoor pollutant because mold and dust mites thrive when relative humidity is above 60 percent. One sign your home is sealed too tightly is window condensation, which can happen if moist air doesn't exit the home at an adequate rate. Pollutants can cause physical reactions such as coughing or sneezing, but carbon monoxide causes more severe reactions, such as headaches, dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, confusion, blurred vision or loss of consciousness.

So, what can you do to ensure healthy air as you increase your home's energy efficiency? The first strategy, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is to eliminate or reduce the source of pollution. The first pollutant to eliminate is carbon monoxide. If you have a combustion furnace, it should be inspected and serviced regularly. If you have any combustion appliances, it is critical that CO detectors are installed and replaced every five to seven years.

If you live in an area with radon, which you can determine by checking out the EPA's radon map, keep it out of your home because it is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon tests are not expensive, and your local health authorities can provide details. If radon levels are too high, you'll need to hire a professional to install a system that will divert radon gas out of your home.

Here are a few additional pollutant reduction measures to consider:

- Never smoke tobacco inside
- Run the exhaust fans in bathrooms and your kitchen after use
- Store toxic cleaning and painting products outside
- Never idle a vehicle, even for a minute, in an attached garage.

The second strategy is ventilation. Your home probably has more than enough natural ventilation from outside air leaking into the home. If you suspect this isn't adequate, the best way to know for sure is to hire an energy auditor to do a blower door test.

Many experts recommend sealing the home as tightly as possible and using mechanical ventilation to ensure a consistent and adequate supply of outside air. The most energy efficient ventilation system is a heat recovery ventilator (HRV), which pulls in fresh air from outside and captures the heat from indoor air before it is exhausted to the outside.

The final strategy is to clean the air. Change your furnace filter every three months and keep your furnace supply and return air registers free of obstructions. If any rooms do not have an air return, keep the doors open. There are several home air cleaning systems available. The EPA offers a handy online guide: [www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/air-cleaners-and-air-filters-home](http://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/air-cleaners-and-air-filters-home).

# BRULÉ

## Internationally renowned band brings color and spirit to seasonal performances

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

What gets you in the spirit of the Christmas holiday season?

For a growing number of people, it's the annual high-energy holiday stage performance by Brulé, the world-renowned music and dance theater ensemble hailing from the Lower Brule Sioux Indian Reservation.

This year's dramatic "Silent Star Night, A Christmas Show" stage production is scheduled to take place at the Deadwood Mountain Grand on Saturday, Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. The show is designed to spread the message of hope, peace and a true and lasting reconciliation among the various cultures of the world.

Over the past 25 years, Brulé has taken its powerful award-winning performances across the world and treated audiences to its unique blend of Native American rhythms, sounds and inspired dance. It's a theatrical stage show reminiscent of other popular large-scale productions such as Riverdance, the Trans Siberian Orchestra and Celtic Thunder, but with a sharp focus on Native American history and culture.

The new age entertainment artists have sold more than one million CDs across the globe and have appeared on television programs such as Live with Regis and Kathie Lee and CNN Worldbeat.

The group has also racked up numerous music and entertainment industry awards as it continues touring with a schedule of more than 100 performances a year throughout the region.

The primary force that drives the band along its highly successful track is founder Paul LaRoche, an accomplished rock and jazz musician who has biological ties to the Lakota tribe, although he was adopted at birth and reared by a white middle-class family in Worthington, MN.

LaRoche would later reunite with his Lakota kin that includes two siblings and several aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. He founded the band based on the concept of blending elements of modern rock with traditional Native American sounds.

It didn't take long for the group to gain popularity and a loyal following after winning a Nammy Award from the Native American Music Association as well as many other accolades.

Last year, Brulé celebrated its 25th year as a performance group by



The critically acclaimed Native American band Brulé has entertained and inspired audiences around the world for more than 25 years.

releasing its entire collection of 265 songs on a set of 20 CDs. The massive set spans two generations of Brulé history and features a wide-ranging assortment of original recordings of the group's most popular tracks. A digital collection that includes previously unreleased songs is also available ([www.brulerecords.com](http://www.brulerecords.com)).

All proceeds from the anthology go toward the group's non-profit foundation called "Following the 7th Direction," an initiative aimed at reconciling diverse cultures and preventing Native American teen suicide. Statistics show that Native American teens are among the most likely minor-age demographic to attempt suicide.



Operation Black Hills Cabin is a healing place for U.S. military veterans in Custer.

# HEALING PLACES

## Organizations cater to military veterans in need

**Billy Gibson**

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

*“After 21 years of learning to live with the scars, the limitations, the tremors and the nightmares...I can honestly say this experience has filled my heart with fresh hope.” - Veteran Jason Cooper*

U.S. military veteran Jason Cooper needed some peace. He needed some quiet. He needed a reprieve from the rigors and stress of everyday life. So, Cooper gathered up his family and made the trip from his home in Kentucky to the Black Hills where he would find rest, relaxation and time for thoughtful contemplation.

Cooper and his crew spent a week-long vacation in a comfortable, cozy cabin in Custer as part of a project called Operation Black Hills Cabin (OBHC). Over the past 10 years, he and dozens of other wounded veterans have discovered a tranquil site to unwind and to enjoy the wide range of outdoor activities available in the area – all free of charge.

The program began as a service to provide veterans and their families with a free getaway and also as a means for organizers to express gratitude for the sacrifices made to protect freedom.

One of those founding organizers is Col. Marty Mahrt, a former Air Force pilot who joined the military in 1955 and flew 88 missions through two tours of duty in Vietnam. During his first tour, Mahrt was assigned to attack a munitions arsenal at Yen Bai Province. After releasing his ordnance and pulling away, Mahrt's F105 Thunderchief was hit in the right wing by enemy fire. The



Air Force veteran Col. Marty Mahrt is a founding board member of OBHC.

aircraft began a downward spiral, but Mahrt was able to eject and was soon rescued by a helicopter squadron and flown back to the U.S. for surgical treatment of a severe shoulder wound.

While Mahrt and his wife Colleen are usually on hand to greet the veteran visitors to OBHC, the guests rarely get to hear of Mahrt's combat experience. As he puts it, “They don't need to hear anything from me. They have their own problems. I just listen to them and let them know that we're here to help them.”

Mahrt said that he was eager to join Pat and Jeff Baird when they began gathering local support for OBHC back in 2011.

“Just knowing a lot of people who didn't make it back, and seeing the wounded warriors coming back from Iraq, that was something that motivated us to get involved. You see these families, the whole structure of the family changes when a soldier

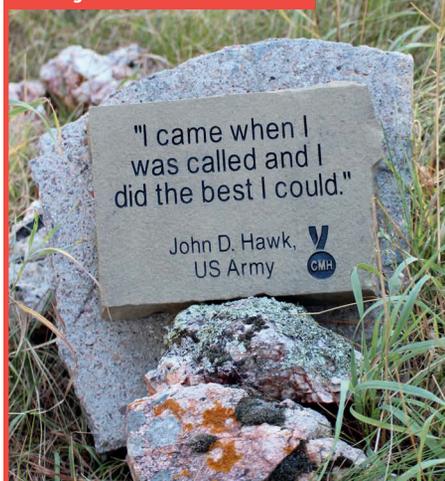


The Ranch Ministries in Blunt gives veterans an opportunity to hunt in one of the country's most prized pheasant harvesting territories.

and breadwinner is wounded and the wife has to take over," he said.

Mahrt points out that while the project isn't necessarily about providing psychological therapy for the veterans, there are emotional connections made in the process. He said a significant part of the program is the local community's participation. Business leaders and individuals provide free services or deep discounts for meals, entertainment, local tourist attractions and outdoor activities. The veterans also receive a gift card loaded with "Custer Cash" to help offset travel costs.

The Trail of Healing at Operation Black Hills Cabin has a series of messages etched in stone.



"We meet the families and welcome them," Mahrt said. "Sometimes the emotions get the best of me when I present them with their Visa card and they start crying and give me a hug. Sometimes you get emotional."

OBHC Board Secretary Ione Fejfar said the support of the community and way the residents of Custer treat the veterans and their families is part of the strength of the program.

"The people of Custer are absolutely wonderful," she said. "They really roll out the red carpet for them and everywhere our veterans go, they are treated with respect and honor and friendship. Between the cabin and the town, this is a very healing place."

She said every veteran who visits the cabin is asked to compose a brief letter of gratitude to the community that's published in the local newspaper.

### Oahe Electric Lends a Hand

The Ranch Ministries was founded by Marine veteran Ken Korkow on 540 acres in Blunt, roughly 20 miles east of Pierre. It's a faith-based retreat center he created to offer military veterans an open space to take part in team-building exercises, outdoor hunting and shooting sports, dirt track racing, firearms safety training, horseback riding and more.

According to Korkow, there's also a lot of bonding among brothers and spiritual growth that takes place along with all of the fun and games.

"We share the story of Christ, the one who heals and gives us purpose," said Korkow, who received citations for the Navy Cross and the Purple Heart.

Korkow explained the center is not only

open to veterans but to surrounding communities as well. Youth groups and adults have visited to participate in firearm safety and team-building exercises.

"A lot of people come here to get away from their everyday lives," he said. "We take care of the needs of our veterans, but we also depend on support and volunteers from the community for our success and we open our doors to those who want to come here and find fulfillment."



Liz and Ken Korkow provide a place where veterans can go to seek spiritual healing.

One of those supporting organizations is Oahe Electric, which has responded to requests to provide material and manpower to meet the ministry's needs.

According to Oahe Electric Member Services Manager Russ Hohn, "The Ranch has had a meaningful impact in our community and we've been able to give back through our Operation Round Up program, which is funded by our members. It's a prime example of our cooperative and our members demonstrating one of the seven cooperative principles: Concern for Community."

## ANNUAL MEETING



General Manager Jeff Birkeland gives his manager's report during the annual meeting.

# 71st Annual Meeting Ft. Pierre

By Jessie Tucker

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On Oct. 7, West Central Electric held its annual meeting at the Pat Duffy Community and Youth Involved Center in Ft. Pierre, SD. An estimated 55 guests partook in the evening's meeting, which differed from years past, in that it did not include a meal and prize giveaways.

After the National Anthem was played, Board President Mike McQuiston officially called the meeting to order at 5 p.m. (CDT). CEO/Manager Jeff Birkeland then recognized special guests and gave an introduction of the board of directors.

The board's report was given by Mike McQuiston and among other things, spoke of the busy year that the cooperative has had and the many changes due to the coronavirus.

"Your co-op is in good hands and I am excited to see just where West Central will be in the years to come," said McQuiston.

In his manager's speech, Jeff Birkeland informed members of many project updates. Jeff Birkeland also spoke of the current changes due to the coronavirus.

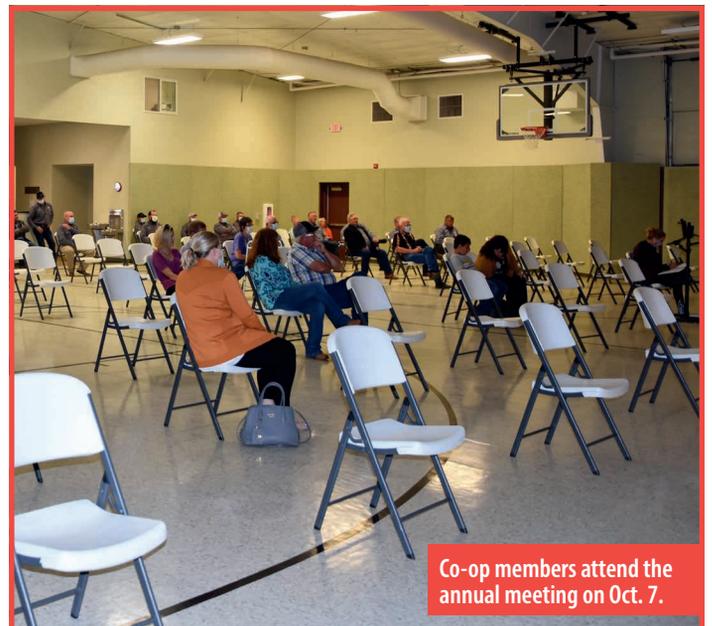
"The thought of having an outbreak amongst our employees and then having an ice storm or anything else Mother Nature might throw at us is not a pleasant thought. So that is why we keep making changes and adapting as we learn more about the virus," said Jeff. "The last month has been especially trying for us as that marked our first employee to test positive. We have since had a total of two employees test positive. In the scope of things, this is just a bump in the road and we will continue to serve our members to the best of our abilities."

Attorney David Larson presented his legal report and announced that

four directors were appointed to three-year terms:

- James Smith, Lyman County
- Paul Patterson, Jones County
- Marty Hansen, Haakon County
- Mike McQuiston, Stanley County

With no unfinished business or new business, the meeting was adjourned and Mike McQuiston thanked the attending members for coming.



Co-op members attend the annual meeting on Oct. 7.

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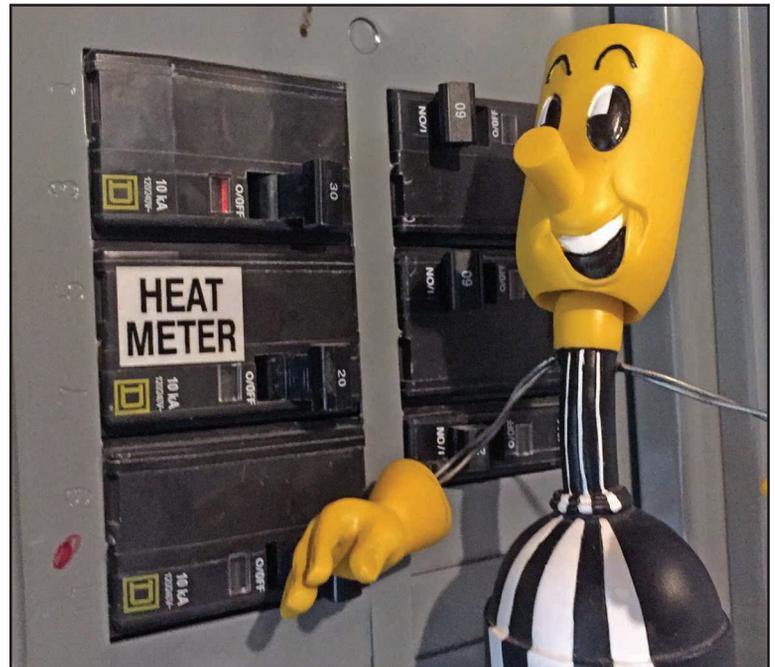
# Electric Heat Meters

The 2020-2021 heating season is here. Oct. 1 marked the beginning of the heating season and West Central's electric heat rate.

To receive the maximum benefit of our electric heat rate please check to make sure your heat meter breaker is turned on.

If you have electric heat but do not have a heat meter, please contact us at 669-8100 for more information about our electric heat rate.

If you are planning to update your current heating system or install electric heat on a new service, please call West Central Electric about the benefits of the electric heat rate and the rebates that are available for cooperative members.



## DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME REMINDER

Don't forget to fall  
back on November 1!  
Set your clocks back  
by one hour.



The South Dakota National Guard has been responsive in helping co-ops restore power to their members after natural disasters.

# S.D. NATIONAL GUARD

## Co-ops, SDNG work together to meet challenges

**Billy Gibson**

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The South Dakota National Guard and the state's rural electric cooperatives share a synergistic relationship that goes back for decades. Both the Guard and the co-ops are highly skilled, highly motivated and highly prepared to respond in an emergency situation and to deliver help when and where it's needed.

For cooperatives, the response typically centers around restoring power after a natural disaster so that members can return their lives and their business operations back to normal as soon as possible. The state's 28 electric co-ops are part of a state, regional and national mutual assistance agreement that assures help will arrive when needed, and that, in turn, help will be dispatched upon request.

Cooperative operations personnel throughout the state work in conjunction with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) in Pierre to formulate and maintain an emergency work plan designed to help expedite the process of responding to a natural disaster.

According to SDREA Manager of Loss Control Services Mark Patterson, the more than 125,000 electric co-op consumers across South Dakota can rest assured their local power provider has the resources available to meet any and all challenges.

"We have a well-connected professional network of electric co-ops in South Dakota that's made up of exceptionally skilled linemen and supervisors who are absolutely the best in the business," Patterson said. "They have the experience they need to do the job as quickly and safely as possible, and they also have the resources at their disposal to rebuild the system and get the

power back on for our members who desperately need it."

Similarly, emergency preparedness is the South Dakota National Guard's stock in trade; although the Guard's scope of emergency response is quite broader. Not only do soldiers stand ready to be deployed to just about anywhere across the globe at a moment's notice, they also are trained to assist in a variety of stateside tasks.

The Guard's heroic work after the Rapid City Flood, The Spencer Tornado, the 1997 blizzards and the 2011 mass flooding are just a few active duty missions where the Guard came to the rescue to help save and protect life and property.

Most recently and most prominently, the Guard has been summoned to help contain and control politically-motivated



Co-op crews have relied on the National Guard to assist in power restoration efforts.



The National Guard and electric cooperatives share a commitment to serve the citizens of South Dakota, especially in stressful times.

violence and also deal with problems brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

After a coronavirus outbreak at Smithfield Farms in Sioux Falls made national headlines, the Guard deployed 25 ambulance teams - including four air support teams - and was recruited to conduct contact tracing in both Sioux Falls and Rapid City. Roughly 2,600 Smithfield Farms employees and their family members were tested for the virus with the assistance of National Guard personnel.

Gov. Kristi Noem expressed her appreciation for the work of the National Guard soldiers. “We knew they would be ready, they always are, but I don’t want anyone to take for granted how blessed we are to have men and women in our South Dakota National Guard that continue to step up.”

Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss, Director of Public Affairs for the South Dakota National Guard, recalls being personally involved in previous missions to help electric cooperative crews transport poles and other equipment, control work zones along roadways and pull vehicles out of wet, muddy ditches.

He said the soldiers take a great deal of pride in their work and approach their respective missions with the same commitment to serve as cooperative line crews demonstrate on a daily basis.

“We’ve had a tremendous partnership with the electric cooperatives when working alongside them to help respond to winter storms over the years. Our co-ops are on the front lines when providing power restoration during and after natural disasters, and they serve a critically important role in public health and safety. Anytime the SDNG is called up by the state to assist our co-ops in their mission, we look forward to the opportunity to support them.”

“It’s important for different state agencies and organizations to coordinate and work together during emergencies. These

relationships are vital to our state and communities to help quickly mitigate, respond and recover from these disasters. We provide a variety of resources to assist civil authorities to ensure the safety and well-being of our citizens.”

Patterson of SDREA concluded: “I think this is one of the things that makes our state very unique, the sense that we all need to pull together, especially in a crisis. Neighbors helping neighbors...that’s what our National Guard and our co-ops are all about.”



The National Guard takes pride in helping electric co-ops reconstruct downed power lines and poles.



# PHEASANT SEASON

## GFP Commission reminds hunters of new rules for 2020

**Billy Gibson**

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Pheasant hunters, field guides and other service providers received some welcomed news from the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Commission in September. The Commission approved new rules that are sure to make hunters happy, even as reports indicate that resident combination licenses are up 25 percent year-to-date compared to September of 2019.

The Commission approved the following rule changes:

- Extending the state’s pheasant hunting season through Jan. 31
- Modifying shooting hours for the first week of the season from noon to 10 a.m. CT beginning Oct. 17
- Increasing the daily bag limit from three to four roosters beginning Dec. 1, 2021.

Commissioners noted that while the new rules may please hunters, increasing the bag limit will not have a negative effect on the overall pheasant population as field research indicates a rooster can breed with up to 10 hens during the annual breeding cycle.

According to Heather Villa, wildlife administration chief, pheasant hunting enthusiasts and others involved in the industry can expect a robust season this year.

“Our information shows that license holders are purchasing their licenses earlier in the year. This is to be expected with having better weather compared to last year’s extended winter,” Villa said. “We are showing the highest resident annual fishing and resident combination license sales in five years. Nonresident annual fishing licenses are up 32 percent and are trending similarly to



2018, but are still lower than 2016 and 2017.”

Villa added that hunters can expect even more abundant opportunities to pursue their passion for the sport in the future thanks to the Habitat Stamp initiative, which was signed into law this summer and is part of Gov. Kristi Noem’s Second Century Initiative designed to improve the habitat and ensure future generations are able to enjoy the thrills and excitement of pheasant hunting. Just weeks after the law took effect on July 1, more than \$600,000 in revenue was produced from the sale of over 8,000 resident licenses and 15,000 non-resident licenses.

Revenue from the Habitat Stamp program can only be used to

develop habitat on public land and waters or to provide public access to private land. The stamp is required for anyone 18 or older when purchasing or applying for a hunting, fishing or furbearer license. The annual fee is \$10 for residents and \$25 for non-residents. The fee is not required for a one-day hunting or fishing license, youth hunting license, private shooting preserve license and other exempted categories.

The program was instituted as a means of not only preserving and expanding prime pheasant habitat but also as a way to make sure South Dakota maintains top billing as a pheasant hunting destination – and the economic activity and development that comes along with it. State officials describe it as a “win-win” for not only hunters but photographers, birders, kayakers, anglers and anyone who loves the outdoors.

**Supporters of the new legislation say it's the state's sound habitat conservation and management practices that make South Dakota a prime destination for hunters throughout the country.**

Supporters of the new legislation say it's the state's sound habitat conservation and management practices, in conjunction with the willingness of the outdoors community to see the big picture, that make South Dakota a prime destination for hunters

throughout the country. With a pheasant population that exceeds 7 million, the state is consistently best in the country for bird counts and harvests. Last year, hunters bagged nearly 900,000 birds during pheasant season.

Here are some helpful tips for a successful hunt:

- Don't under-gun. Use a 1-1/4 ounce load of #4 lead shot or 1-1/8 ounce of #2 steel shot.
- Use a dog. Crippled birds can be hard to find without a dog. Concentrate on cover that complements the hunting style of your dog.
- Hunt remote pockets. Search for secluded pockets that may have escaped the hunting pressure of large groups. Small sloughs, plum thickets and fence vegetation hold pheasants.

### Bacon Stuffed Pheasant



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|---------------------------------------|---|
| 2 pheasant breasts, boned and pounded | 2 tablespoon sour cream                                     |
| 1/2 cup dry bread crumbs              | 1/3 cup smoked almond, chopped                              |
| 1/2 teaspoon seasoning salt           | 1/4 cup Brooster's Original Pheasant Nuggets finely chopped |
| 1/2 teaspoon pepper                   | 4 strips double smoked bacon                                |
| 2 teaspoons butter                    | 1/2 cup chicken broth or water                              |
| 1/2 cup onion, finely chopped         |   |
| 4 oz. pepper jack cheese              |   |

Preheat oven to 350-375 degrees. Gently pound raw pheasant breasts on both sides. Heat oil in pan, brown onions on medium. Stir in pheasant nuggets and smoked almonds, heat for one minute to combine flavors. In a mixing bowl, combine sour cream, seasonings, breadcrumbs, browned onions and pheasant nuggets. Melt butter and stir into stuffing mixture. Spoon the stuffing mixture equally in the center of each breast and place pepper jack cheese on stuffing and roll it up. Wrap a slice of bacon around each rolled up stuffed breast. The back will hold it together. Place in baking pan and bake for 50 minutes, or until the meat is tender.

#### South Dakota Tourism/Broosters

- Aim for the front half. Pheasants are not particularly fast, but many hunters shoot behind them. Lead the head, not the body, for a clean kill.
- Prepare for the weather. Fall can be a time of wide-ranging conditions. Plan to hunt in weather from sunny and 70 degrees to snow and below-zero wind chills.

More information can be found at <https://gfp.sd.gov>.

## Visit Co-op Connections Plus

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

Search for “Co-op Connections Plus” and you’ll find videos on human trafficking, the State High School Rodeo finals, grain bin safety, the Co-ops Vote campaign and more. Be sure to “like” and “subscribe.”



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

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**October 22**

Butte County CFEL Annual Christmas Fair, Newell City Hall, Newell, SD, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 605-456-9837

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**October 24**

Ladies Day Shopping Extravaganza, The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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**October 29-30**

Helping with Horsepower's Phobia - A Haunted Trail, Reclamation Ranch, 40789 259th St., Mitchell, SD, 7-11 p.m. 605-770-2867

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**October 31-November 1**

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

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**November 1 and 15**

VFW Bingo, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD, 605-279-2663

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**November 6-8**

YFS Kids Fair, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD

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**November 7**

Fall Fling Craft/Vendor Fair, Dakota Christian School, Corsica, SD, 605-366-7940

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**November 7**

Fairburn Community Center Bazaar, Fairburn, SD, 5:30 p.m., 605-255-4807

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**November 7**

Silver Star Bazaar, Lake Norden Community Center, Lake Norden, SD, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.



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**November 7**

BH Meat Fest, Fundraiser for Shriner Patient Camps, BH Harley Davidson, Rapid City, SD, 605-415-3577

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**November 7**

Helping with Horsepower's RibFest, 4 p.m., Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, Contact mattcarter1421@gmail.com to register your team

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**November 11**

MasterChef Junior Live, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD

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**November 12**

Zonta Club of the BH Expo, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

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**November 14**

Winter Marketplace Pop Up, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

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**November 14**

Annual Holiday Extravaganza, Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters, Sisseton, SD, 605-698-7425

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**November 17**

Baby Shark Live, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

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**November 20-21**

Holiday Arts Christmas Show, 112 E. 5th St. Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

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**November 21-22**

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S. Washington St., Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

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**November 27**

Black Friday Trap Shoot, Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League, 10:30 a.m., Lunch Available, 5000 North Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

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**December 5**

Rapid City Garden Club's 59th Annual Wreath and Center-piece Sale, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Lions' and Bridger Buildings, Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

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**December 5**

Festival of Trees, Newell City Hall, Newell, SD, Admission: Two Cans of Non-Perishable Food Items Per Person, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**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.**