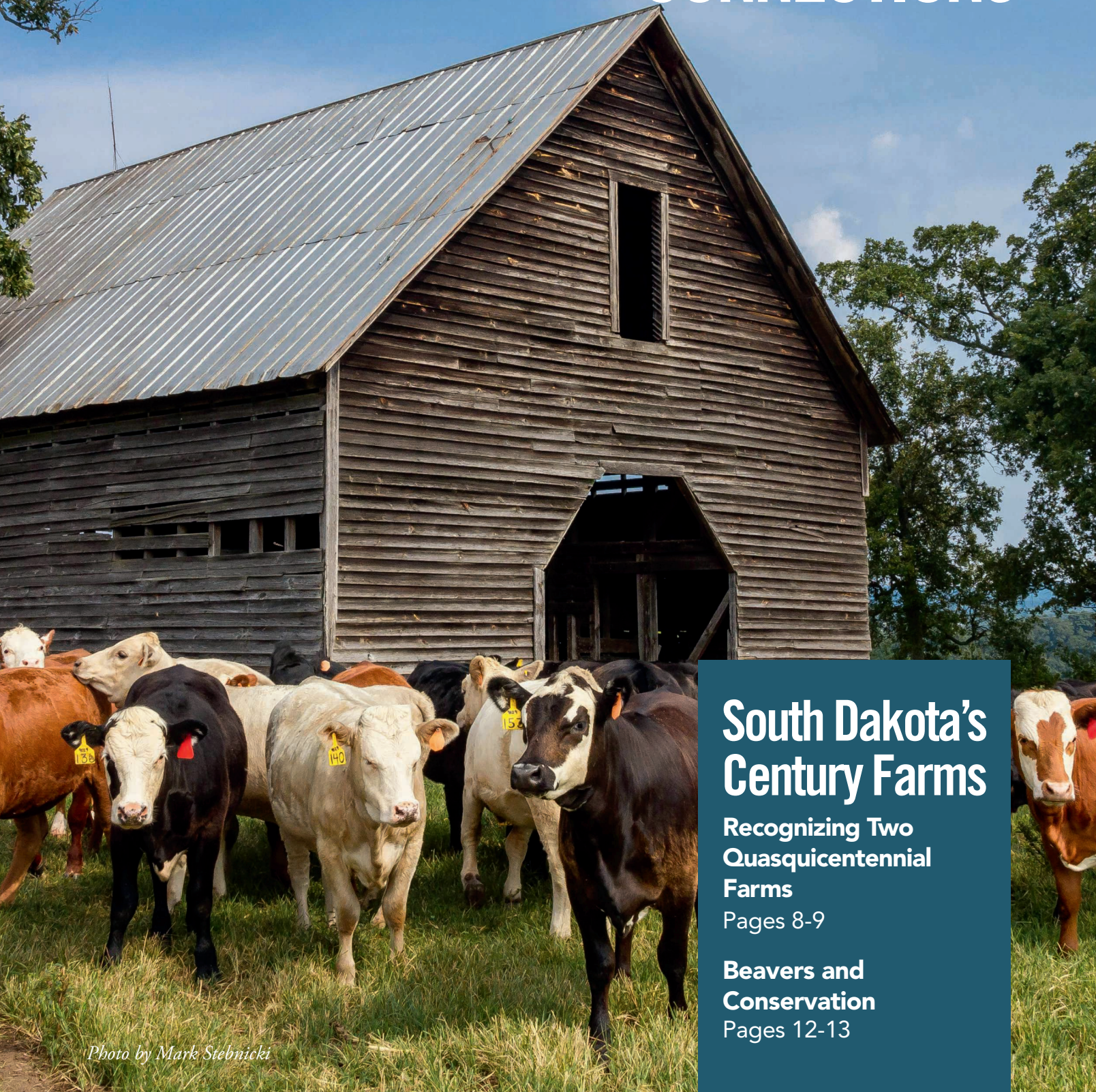




# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## South Dakota's Century Farms

**Recognizing Two  
Quasiquicentennial  
Farms**

Pages 8-9

**Beavers and  
Conservation**

Pages 12-13

*Photo by Mark Stebnicki*



# Clearing the Path to Reliability



**Chris Larson,**  
General Manager

Trees are majestic, beautiful and good for the soul. But we also know that our members depend on us to deliver reliable power to their homes and businesses. That's why Clay-Union Electric strives to balance maintaining the beautiful surroundings we all cherish with ensuring reliable electricity. You might not realize it, but there are several benefits to regular tree trimming.

## Reliability

Keeping power lines clear of overgrown vegetation improves service reliability. After all, we've seen the whims of Mother Nature during severe weather events with fallen tree limbs taking down power lines and utility poles. While many factors can impact power disruptions, about half of all outages can be attributed to overgrown vegetation.

This is why you sometimes see Clay-Union Electric crews or contractors (Jacobsen Tree Service) out in the community trimming trees near power lines.

In fact, all U.S. electric utilities are required to trim trees that grow too close to power lines. Scheduled trimming throughout the year keeps lines clear from overgrown or dead limbs that are likely to fall, and we are better able to prepare for severe weather events.

Plus, we all know it's more cost-effective to undertake preventative maintenance than it is to make repairs after the fact.

## Safety

Working near power lines can be dangerous, and we care about your safety and that of our lineworkers. For example, if trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose a grave danger to families. If children can reach those trees, they can potentially climb into a danger zone. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor such as a tree.

Any tree or branch that falls across a power line creates a potentially dangerous situation. A proactive approach lessens the chances of fallen trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

## Affordability

As a co-op, Clay-Union Electric always strives to keep costs down for our members. If trees and other vegetation are left unchecked, they can become overgrown and expensive to correct. A strategic vegetation management program helps keep costs down for everyone.

When it comes to vegetation management,

there are ways you can help too. When planting new trees, make sure they're planted a safe distance from overhead power lines. Medium-height trees (40 ft. or smaller) should be

planted at least 25 ft. from power lines. Taller trees (over 40 ft.) should be planted at least 50 ft. from power lines. You can also practice safe planting near pad-mounted transformers. Plant shrubs at least 10 ft. from the transformer door and 4 ft. from the sides. If your neighborhood has underground lines, remember to contact 811 before you begin any project that requires digging.

Additionally, if you spot an overgrown tree or branch that's dangerously close to overhead lines, please let us know by contacting 605-624-2673 or [office@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:office@clayunionelectric.coop). We have deep roots in our community, and we love our beautiful surroundings. It takes a balanced approach, and our vegetation management program is a crucial tool in ensuring service reliability.

**Thank you again, for allowing us to provide your electric service needs.**

**Chris Larson**  
General Manager  
[clarson@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:clarson@clayunionelectric.coop)

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours  
Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.

#### Board of Directors

Tom Larsen, President  
Christopher Kinney, Vice President  
Mike Slattery, Treasurer  
James Ryken, Secretary  
Asst. Secretary - Vacant

#### Staff

Chris Larson, General Manager  
Beth Bottolfson, Manager of Finance  
& Administration  
Mike Kruse, Operations Manager  
Lori Rueb, Senior Billing Coordinator  
Penny Ascherman,  
Member Services Specialist  
Jackie Williams,  
Marketing/Communications  
Electrician Foreman - Vacant  
Josh Anthofer, Electrician  
Alan Gauer, Crew Foreman  
Mike Hauck, Lead Lineman  
Curt Johnson, Journeyman Lineman  
Nick Buckman, Journeyman Lineman  
Travis Wells, Journeyman Lineman  
Casey Ihnen, Journeyman Lineman  
Quinn Springer, Journeyman Lineman  
Jake Husby, Journeyman Lineman

#### POWER FAILURE – 24-hour service In case of Power Failure Call: 1-800-696-2832 or 624-2673

CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS is published monthly by Clay-Union Electric Corporation, P.O. Box 317, 1410 Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069. Periodicals Postage Paid at Vermillion, S.D., and additional offices. Clay-Union Electric members devote approximately 50 cents a month from their electric payments for a subscription to this publication. Subscriptions for non-members are available for \$12 annually.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Clay-Union Electric Sparks, PO Box 317, Vermillion, SD 57069;  
Telephone (605) 624-2673, 1-800-696-2832  
Fax (605) 624-5526.

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer*



## TEACHING ELECTRICAL SAFETY STARTS AT AN EARLY AGE



Journeymen Lineman Nick Buckman and Travis Wells spent a Wednesday afternoon teaching the Austin Elementary classrooms the importance of electrical safety during the field trip to the Clay County Extension office for 4-H Safety Day. Along

with learning about electricity safety they also had stations for water and life jackets, chemical look a likes, dog safety, campfires, and ATV/UTV roadway safety. It was a great day to get out and enjoy before school let out in 17 days, but who's counting.



### YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	March 2024	Year To Date
Number of Consumers.....	3,540.....	3,539 Avg.
Total Revenue .....	\$719,327.....	\$2,322,110
Total Cost of Service.....	\$812,671 .....	\$2,630,573
Operating Margins .....	\$(93,344).....	\$(308,463)
Other Margins .....	\$31,239.....	\$46,339
Total Net Margins.....	\$(62,105).....	\$(262,124)
kWh Purchased .....	7,573,677 .....	24,934,0974
Cost of Power .....	\$442,336.....	\$1,456,565
kWh Sales.....	7,277,119.....	23,812,176
Residential Average Usage .....	1,351 .....	1,575
Residential Average Monthly Bill.....	\$159 .....	\$175

# Prepare Your Family for Fire Emergencies

**In only a matter of minutes, a small house fire can rage out of control, reaching temperatures of up to 1,500°F. In most cases, you have one to two minutes to get out safely.**

We practice fire emergency drills at work and school, but don't forget to create and practice a home escape plan, as well. It is beneficial to keep your plan visible, like on the refrigerator, to help family and visitors remember what to do. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) stresses that even children as young as three years old can understand an escape plan.

### Helpful Planning Tips:

- Plan for two ways to escape from each room.
- Pick a meeting location away from your home.
- Plan for everyone in your home, including babies and others who may need help to escape.
- Teach children not to hide during a fire; they must get out and stay out.



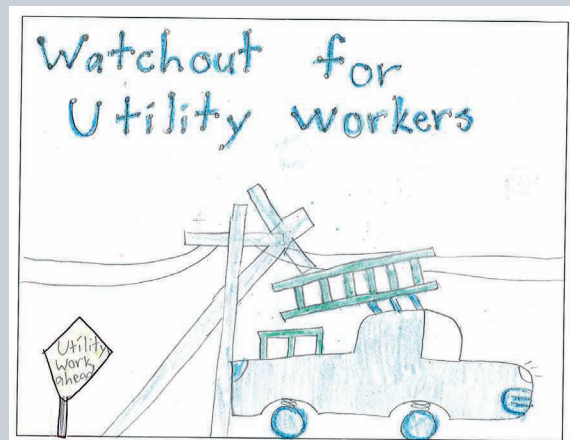
- Practice your escape drill with everyone in your family at least twice a year.

### Ways to Stay Safe:

- Clear toys, furniture and other clutter from exits.
- Check that windows open easily – fix any that stick.
- Test the batteries in your smoke alarms monthly.
- Be sure that security bars on doors and windows have a quick-release latch, and everyone knows how to open them.

### Special Considerations for Apartment Buildings:

- If you live in a multi-story apartment building, map out as many escape routes as possible to get to the stairways on your floor.
- If you live in a high-rise, plan to use the stairs – never the elevator – to escape a fire.
- A secondary route might be a window onto an adjacent roof or a collapsible ladder for escape from upper-story windows – purchase only collapsible ladders evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Reese Rindels, Age 9

Reese Rindels cautions readers to watch out for utility workers. Reese's parents are Rochelle and Kyle Rindels, members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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



# DELICIOUS *Dairy*

## CHOCOLATE FUDGE FROSTING

### Ingredients:

2 1/4 cups confectioners' sugar  
1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder  
1/4 tsp. cinnamon  
6 oz. (3/4 package) cream cheese, softened  
3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) butter, softened  
8 oz. semi-sweet chocolate, melted and cooled slightly  
1 tbsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Mix sugar, cocoa powder and cinnamon in medium bowl until well blended. Set aside. Beat cream cheese and butter in large bowl with electric mixer on medium speed until smooth. Gradually beat in cocoa mixture on low speed until well blended. Gradually beat in melted chocolate then vanilla until well blended.

McCormick.com

## RED VELVET HOT CHOCOLATE

### Ingredients:

4 cups whole milk  
1/4 cup sugar  
10 oz. semi-sweet baking chocolate, coarsely chopped  
2 tsps. red food color  
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract  
**Vanilla Whipped Cream**  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
2 tbsps. confectioners' sugar  
1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract

### Method

Place milk and granulated sugar in medium saucepan. While stirring, bring to simmer on medium heat. Remove from heat. Stir in chocolate with wire whisk until melted. Stir in food color and vanilla. Serve with marshmallows. For the vanilla whipped cream, beat heavy cream, confectioners' sugar and vanilla in medium bowl with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form.

McCormick.com

## LEMON PUDDING DESSERT

### Ingredients:

1 cup COLD butter  
1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened  
1 8 oz. tub cool whip, divided  
2 pkgs. (small) instant lemon pudding  
2 cups flour  
1 cup powdered sugar  
3 cups COLD milk

### Method

In bowl, cut butter into flour until crumbly. Press into an ungreased 9 x 13 inch glass pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 18 to 22 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack. In mixing bowl, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth. Fold in one cup cool whip. Spread over cooled crust. In bowl, beat milk and pudding mixes on low speed for 2 minutes. Carefully spread over cream cheese layer. Top with remaining cool whip. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or more. Yields 12 to 16 servings.

Mary Jessen  
Holabird, S.D.

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

## Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

MARCH 22, 2024 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on March 22, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Tom Larsen, Jim Ryken, Chris Kinney, Mike Slattery, and Gary Glover. Attending staff members included Chris Larson, Mike Kruse, and Jackie Williams.

**Agenda (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda.

Visitors to Be Heard – None

**Approval of Minutes from the February Board Meeting (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the 2/23/24 board minutes.

**Approval of Minutes from the February Executive Session (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the 2/23/24 executive session minutes.

**Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer** – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments and the monthly check list as presented.

**New Members and Refunds (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

**Early Retirement of Capital Credits** - None

**Contracts (ACTION ITEM)** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the contracts as presented.

**Policy Review** – Future Distributed Generation Discussion

**Work Order and Special Equipment Summary** – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve submitting the Work Order Inventories 512 through 515 and to approve submitting the Summary of Special Equipment for July-Dec 2023 as presented to RUS for reimbursement.

### Management Reports:

**A.** Manager's Report - Manager Larson provided reports on the monthly activities:

**April Board Meeting** - The date of April 26th, 2024 was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 8:30 a.m.

**East River REED/MAC** - The REED/MAC meeting was held on Feb 28th at East River in Madison.

**New Building** - Manager Larson reported on the various activities related to the new building and the preparation to sell the Cherry St. building.

**2024 Annual Meeting Date** - The dates of April 2nd with a backup of April 9th are the dates for the Annual Meeting and Open House.

**NRECA Annual Meeting** – Ryken, Kinney and Larsen gave a review of the NRECA Annual meeting that was held March 3rd to the 6th in San Antonio.

**Legislative Update** - Manager Larson reported on the legislative process and the SDREA weekly updates.

**VCDC** - On March 26th, the VCDC will be using the Cherry

St. location for a drive thru job fair.

**RUS Minor Construction** – Manager Larson reported on the progress being made by staff to get the minor construction work orders approved by RUS.

**RUS Work Plan/Loan** – Manager Larson gave an update on the status of the new four-year work plan and loan application.

**NRECA REED Article** – Manager Larson discussed an upcoming article about the REED Fund that will be published in the upcoming months.

**Distributed Generation Discussion** – Manager Larson presented information and an analysis on the effects small wind and solar installations have on their owners and to other members.

**B.** **Administrative Report** – Manager Larson reviewed the following report that was provided by Finance and Administration Manager Bottolfson:

- Financials
- Summary of Special Equipment
- Work Order Inventories
- Audit

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**C.** **Operations Report** – Operations Manager Kruse reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Monthly department work summary
- Wiring Crew
- New Services
- Service Upgrades
- Outage Report for February
- New Irrigation

*All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.*

**Financial Report** – Manager Larson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- kWh Sales Report
- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Power Bill

*Some financials were posted to the website earlier for board review. Additional financials will be posted for the board to review.*

**Legal Report** – None

**Strategic Planning** – None

**Safety Meeting Minutes** – The March Safety Meeting reports were posted to the website for the board to review and were discussed during the meeting.

**Cyber Security** – The February Cyber Security report from East River IT was posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

**Video and/or Meeting Reports** –

- East River Report
- East River Financials
- Basin Reports

**Executive Session** – The board went into Executive Session at 3:04 p.m., Executive Session was adjourned at 3:30 p.m. There was no action taken.

**Calendar** – The board reviewed the April 2024 calendar.

**Adjournment** – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 3:31 p.m.

**Thomas Larsen, President**

**James Ryken, Secretary**



People • Power • Purpose



South Dakota Rural Electric  
**YOUTH EXCURSION**  
July 22-24, 2024

**FREE YOUTH  
OPPORTUNITY TO  
VISIT BISMARCK, ND**



Calling all high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors! Is your parent or guardian an active member-owner of Clay-Union Electric? If so, you're eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion 2024!

If chosen, you will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 22-24, participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from.

Once participants arrive on the campus, they can look forward to building friendships, taking in the sights of North Dakota's capitol and learning "The Story Behind the

Switch." During their stay, students will get to hear from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. Students will be given the opportunity to tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, visit local attractions and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers.

**Deadline to apply is June 3, 2024.** Visit <https://clayunionelectric.coop/basin-youth-excursion> for the application. Up to 2 applicants will be chosen.

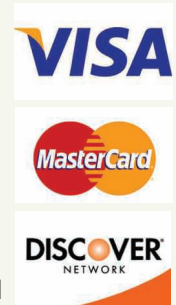
## Outage Reports

Date	Time	Township	Members	Cause
4/3	5:30 p.m.	Fairview	4	Contractor
4/6	5:45 p.m.	Star	5	Wind/Tree
4/12	10:45 a.m.	Emmet	1	Equipmnet Failure
4/15	1:50 p.m.	Gayville	372	Wind
4/15	2:15 p.m.	Pleasant Valley	195	Switching Error
4/16	5:27 p.m.	Marindahl	1	Lightning
4/16	7:30 p.m.	Gayville	1	Lightning

## Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your **PAYMENT DUE DATE** is the 20TH OF EACH MONTH. Your payment must **ARRIVE** in our office on the 20th to avoid any penalties. Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, NOT the postmark. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received within 10 days by 8 a.m., a \$25 collection fee will be applied and a final disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

### FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS.



**Bank Draft** – Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account. No fees apply for this service.

### Recurring Debit/Credit Card

– You may call in your credit/debit card payment and ask for recurring, it will then bill to that card every month on the 20th (or next business day) of each month until you call to cancel. No fees apply for this service.

**Pay by Phone** – You may call in your credit/debit card payment each month. No fees apply for this service.

**By Mail** – Send check or money order with your payment slip. Please be sure to mail early so we receive it by the 20th, we do not go by postage date.

**In Office** – We accept cash, check and money order or we can take your credit/debit card in our office. No fees apply for this service.

**On Line Billing** – Pay your bill on line at [www.clayunionelectric.coop](http://www.clayunionelectric.coop) No fees apply for this service.

Collection Fee .....	\$25
Standard Reconnect Fee .....	\$50
Reconnect Fee for Non-Payment.....	\$100
After Hours Reconnect Fee.....	\$150
Insufficient Funds Check Fee .....	\$30

**Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)**  
**10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.**



# South Dakota's Century Farms

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

## **Soukup Homestead: Raising families and farmers for over 125 years**

Nestled in the heart of southcentral South Dakota lies a cherished piece of land with a name that's been long-established in Charles Mix County – the Soukup Homestead.

Almost anyone with Wagner ties knows a Soukup.

There are even a few members of the Soukup family who are also part of South Dakota's rural electric cooperative family, including Charles Mix Electric District 1 Director Denise Soukup.

But it all had to start somewhere, and good things take time.

That was the case for the Soukup's Century Farm and the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead, a farm located near Britton that's served by Lake Region Electric.

Really, it's a common theme for Century Farm families to be located within rural electric cooperative service areas.

The South Dakota Farm Bureau and the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources began the Century Farm Program in 1984 to recognize farm and ranch families who have kept the farm in the family for 100 years or more.

Farms reaching the milestone of 125 years, known as

Quasquicentennial Farms, and the venerable Sesquicentennial Farms, marking an impressive 150 years, are also given their due recognition.

With over 3,000 families honored to date, the program continues to shine a light on the enduring legacy of South Dakota's agricultural heritage. To qualify for these prestigious honors, farms must encompass at least 80 acres and provide documented proof of their original purchase date. That means a family member must have always had ownership of the land over the last 100 years, including during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl.

The annual award presentation is a cherished tradition held at the South Dakota State Fair.

After migrating with family from what is now known today as the Czech Republic in the late 1800s, Joseph and Mary Soukup



Tom Soukup stands beside his Farmall Red International Harvester 460 tractor. *Photo courtesy of Linda Soukup*



came to the Dakota Territory at a time when most of the land open for settlement had already been settled.

While living in Tabor with family, Joseph Soukup applied for a homestead on reservation land that was now open for settlement at the U.S. Land Office in town of Mitchell on Jan. 30, 1896.

"In the following five years he built a frame house 13 feet by 18 feet in order to establish a residence, then a grainery, a corn crib, and he also fenced in 80 acres," said Linda Soukup, the wife of Tom Soukup. Her husband is Joseph and Mary's grandson.

Joseph and Mary raised ten children on the very homestead that Tom and Linda raised their kids.

"There's a lot of pride in the heritage and the legacy of, you know, having it passed down," Linda said. A new house was built on the site of Joseph and Mary's original home's structure in 1952.

That's where Tom and Linda lived and became the third generation to live on the homestead.

"When we lived here and Tom's parents and their brothers and sisters used to all come here," Linda said, as she started walking towards one of the farm buildings on the property referred to as "the shed."

"And they would butcher hogs and cattle and we would process them down there. We had a meat cooler in the basement. And then one of the families owned the meat saw and one owned the sausage stuffer," she recalled. "That was always kind of what we did until, well, families got bigger, and you couldn't. You just couldn't keep up, you know? We could have had a critter in there all the time," she said.

Tom and Linda raised their children – Becky, David, Kathy and Mary – in the house as well.

Their son David works as a project engineer for Phillips Petroleum in Texas. Two of their daughters live in different towns but remain relatively close to the homestead.

Kathy Jaeger lives in Tyndall and Mary Ringling lives in Platte. In 1996, their daughter Becky and her husband, Mike

Brunsing were living in Montana when Tom and Linda decided to move into town, so in 1998 the Brunsings moved back to South Dakota and began helping Tom on the farm while living in the house.

Becky raised three children of her own in the house she grew up in herself.

Becky and Mike still live on the homestead but in a more recently built home.

Now her son Dylan, 28, is raising his own family in the 1952 farmhouse.

In doing so, he became the fifth generation on the homestead.

Dylan and his wife, Keely, have two sons – a 20-month-old and an infant born in late March.

### **After 126 years, Torger Gronseth's homestead continues to bring family together.**

It's hard for Carol Evans to put into words how she feels when she reflects on the 126 years of history of her family's farm in Marshall County.

"It's so important to us," Evans said. Then she takes pause.

"I'm sorry, it's emotional for me," she says, before telling her family's – and the farm's – origin story.

In 1872, her great grandfather, Torger Gronseth, immigrated to America from Norway at only 14 years old.

He made the trip to join his eldest brother in Minnesota. He officially "staked his claim" and homesteaded in the Pleasant Valley Township of Marshall County in 1901.

Over the next two decades, Torger and his wife, Berthe Lea, amassed over 960 acres of undeveloped land in the Coteau de Prairie of northeastern South Dakota.

To each of their six children, Torger bequeathed a quarter of land.

The pioneering couple sold a quarter to their daughter, Louise, upon her marriage to George Fiegel for \$1.

While they were building the house that Carol and Frank Evans now call home, the Fiegels welcomed their first child.

"All of them were born in that house built in 1920. The first born was born on

the actual homestead. The house was being built when my first aunt was born," Evans said.

Louise and George owned the house and quarter of land until 1972, at which point ownership was passed onto their daughter Joyce and her husband Orvin Nelson.

"We bought the house in 2011. Last year after my mom passed, we were able to buy the entire quarter," she recalled.

Carol and Frank then got to work refurbishing the 800-square-foot house.

The Evans live in Arizona in the fall, winter, and spring months, but spent years renovating the farmhouse over the course of several summers.

"We go back in May every year, and we've renovated the house from the chimney to the basement," Evans said.

Their summer stay at the farm begins with the help of Lake Region Electric Association.

"The first thing we do when we get there is turn the power on. Then we turn the water on and then we mow," she said.

The week over the Fourth of July holiday is especially meaningful to Carol. That's when her grandchildren make their pilgrimage back to the Gronseth/Fiegel/Nelson/Evans homestead.

"They're always here around Fort Sisseton Days," Evans said.

The traditional agenda for the kiddos also includes picnics at Roy Lake, routine farm work, and touching up the paint on an American Flag pallet display located at the base of Torger Gronseth's tombstone.

"Every one of the kids has learned how to drive when they're back in South Dakota – because it's safe," Evans said.

Evans ensures the next generation knows their family history.

"They know their great grandpa was only 14 years old when he left Norway. The strength of the person to do that – the longevity of our genetic background, the struggle, and the fact that we're so fortunate – are something they'll understand," Evans said.

"And that it's home. It's never going to the farm. It's going home."

# Coops in the Classroom



## Powering through classes with hair raising electrical safety day

**Jackie Williams**

[jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop](mailto:jwilliams@clayunionelectric.coop)

Monday, May 6th East River Electric, Jennifer Gross and Clay-Union Electric, Jackie Williams, were at Jolly Elementary School and joined by St. Anges to teach the 5th grade classes the importance of electrical safety and the difference between static electricity and to respect manmade electricity.

While the static electricity is fun to experiment with, the kids listened intently to learn the power of electricity.

They were also given the opportunity to generate power on a bicycle to see what it takes to power up 4 LED bulbs of 16 watts, 4 CFL bulbs totalling 48 watts or 4 incandescent bulbs for a total of 200 watts. While the LED and CFL's didn't give them much of a work out, they tired out quickly trying to power up

200 watts of electricity.

For more photos visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/clayunionelectriccorporation>





# Anatomy of a Power Outage

Scott Flood

Fifteen minutes from now, a stray bolt of lightning will connect a menacing cloud with a power pole about a mile east of your home. Your lights will flicker briefly before going out. Things will become eerily quiet as all your home's devices equipped with motors and fans stop providing their constant symphony of background noise.

You're experiencing a power outage, so you reach for your phone and call your electric co-op. Good move. Sometimes, members don't call because they assume their neighbors will. However, the more members who do make the call, the more quickly the co-op will be able to pinpoint the outage location.

Back at the office, the co-op's grid system operator noticed the sudden pause at the moment 300 million volts of lightning danced around a transformer, and they were able to triangulate the location of the outage. The system estimates just over 500 members are in the dark as a line crew tosses their dinner aside and steer their trucks in that direction.

Thirty minutes later, the lineworkers slowly drive along a

stretch of road, keeping one eye on traffic while inspecting every pole, wire and transformer. In another eight minutes, they stop and step out for a closer look. The mystery is solved with one glance at the burn mark across the surface of the transformer. Reaching the truck and ensuring it's safe, they move closer to the line.

If you watch the lineworkers, you might mistakenly assume they're not very motivated. After all, you're dealing with a power outage, you want it to end as soon as humanly possible, and it looks like they're simply taking their sweet time while you're missing the ballgame. But there's a good reason the lineworkers aren't rushing or running around.

Those power lines carry high-voltage electricity. It's safe when all elements of the system are in good working order, but it's potentially deadly when that's not the case. Lineworkers approach what they do deliberately, efficiently – and most of all, safely. Every action they take is carefully planned so they can spot potential hazards. When performing tasks, they follow standard procedures and safety requirements to ensure the repair is effective and sound. Working that way may take a little extra time, but it means they'll make it home safely at the end of the day (or night).

Less than an hour after finding the cause of the outage, the lineworkers load their tools and gear back onto the trucks. This time, the problem was easy to spot, the repair was fairly straightforward and the weather cooperated. But no two outages are exactly alike. The next one could be in severe weather or on a remote segment far off the main road. It could involve a fallen tree that needs to be cut with chainsaws or broken utility pole that needs to be replaced. Doesn't matter, because lineworkers will always get to the location and fix the problem as quickly as safety allows.

Driving back to the co-op, the lineworkers watch the passing homes and smiles, because the warm glow coming from the windows means the power's back on again. A couple members in their yard wave as the trucks pass by. They may not know why the electricity went off and what was involved in bringing it back, but thanks to the lineworkers, life is back to normal.

Lightning streaks across the world's skies roughly eight million times every day, and power poles, lines and other infrastructure provide attractive targets for helping it connect it with the ground. But outages can occur from a variety of causes, including fallen trees, vehicle crashes and even curious critters, like snakes and squirrels.

This is why your electric co-op invests in the right technologies and equipment designed to protect the power grid and prevent outages from plunging your home into darkness. And it's also why the lineworkers, who put themselves at risk to return your life to normal, are some of our favorite people.





# REBUILDING HABITATS

Beavers provide many environmental benefits including drought resilience, flood control and wildlife habitat. *Photo Credit: Richard Hamilton Smith.*

## BEAVER-INSPIRED STREAM RESTORATION

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Centuries ago, the arrival of European traders in North America marked the beginning of a multi-century hunt for furs. The pelt of the North American beaver was at the forefront of this fur trade, prized for its use in crafting felt hats. These stylish hats fueled an ever-increasing demand for beaver furs that persisted for centuries, leading to a severe decline in beaver populations. By the early 1900s, beavers had become critically endangered, nearly vanishing from the expansive wetlands across the continent.

As the beavers dwindled, so did their dams. Lazy streams and rivers, once

tamed by beaver dams, began to flow more rapidly. The disappearance of the dams caused waterways to narrow and floodplains essential to willow trees and cottonwoods to vanish. The loss of these beaver-engineered habitats set the stage for the significant erosion of precious prairie lands.

In 2020, The Nature Conservancy set out to combat these issues by launching a project in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota State University and local conservation agencies to restore stream health in western South Dakota.

“Our West River streams make up a small percentage of the total landscape – just under two percent of our total acreage is stream and valley

bottom,” said Lori Brown, riparian health program manager with The Nature Conservancy. “Yet, nearly everything in the prairie depends on these streams, including us in our rural communities.”

Prior to launching the project, The Nature Conservancy engaged local landowners in discussions to best understand their challenges and needs. During the discussions, several landowners faced similar issues: streams were eroding the land, fence lines were being washed away, and the water table was too low. Despite having effective tools for managing grasslands, landowners lacked the means to best maintain healthy streams.

“We needed to explore options



that any landowner could implement – strategies that didn't require a hydrologist to implement or an engineer to design," Brown said. "Our ranchers and landowners are some of the best stewards of the land. A lot of them are hungry for information and tools that can help them help the land."

The solution was simple, inspired by the ingenious works of an aquatic rodent: an artificial beaver dam. After all, if a beaver can engineer a dam, why can't a landowner?

Known as beaver analog devices, these simple speedbump-like structures quickly became integral to a broader strategy known as process-based restoration, a method that uses nature to help nature. Composed of locally sourced sticks, rocks and mud, beaver analog devices replicate a key natural process once performed naturally by beavers centuries ago. When established correctly, they filter water,

slow fast-flowing streams, and even recreate floodplains.

After settling on a solution, The Nature Conservancy set out to implement the idea in the real world, working with 10 landowners to help build and record the effects of the simulated beaver dams.

"Every day that I go out to one of these sites and I see that the beaver dams that we have built aren't totally washed out, it absolutely amazes me," Brown said. "I've read the manuals and I know how it's supposed to work, but I'm always in awe at what we are able to accomplish with the right building blocks in place."

After four years of the project, Brown said there is a lot to be excited about as the benefits of the project are evident. Signs of stream restoration are well underway. Sediment is accumulating rather than eroding, and revitalized floodplains are sprouting new willow trees.

"Without any planting on our part, woody species are now returning to these stream channels," Brown said. "The next step will be to lean into the success of this project. We want to act as a support for our conservation partners and other interested landowners that want to see their stream condition improve on their properties."

Others have been inspired by demonstrations led by The Nature Conservancy and other conservation organizations in the state to take action to slow down and hold water.

"We are just starting to see some of the effects from our outreach and education side of this project," said Brown. "The most rewarding part of this effort has been hearing the stories from local ranchers and landowners and hearing them get excited about the project."



A rock structure installed to help prevent headcuts from eroding upstream reaches. Photo Credit: Joe Dickie, Generation Photography, Inc.





# Reliable Energy is in Jeopardy

### Steve Barnett

General Manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, a statewide association that represents 31 member-owned electric cooperatives. He previously served as Secretary of State for South Dakota.



South Dakota's families and businesses rightfully expect their lights to stay on at a price they can afford. Our national energy policies should support our cooperative mission, which is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to our member-owners.

Unfortunately, our country is now confronted with a harsh reality – we are quickly approaching a point where there won't be enough electricity to go around.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is the nation's grid watchdog. For years, the organization has issued a string of increasingly dire reports warning that threats to grid reliability are mounting, and more frequent rolling blackouts could soon become the norm. NERC's recent assessment predicts more than 110 gigawatts of always-available generation, enough to power about 35 million homes, will retire through 2033.

And all or parts of 19 states are at high risk of rolling blackouts during normal peak conditions over the next five years.

Keeping the lights on is not a partisan issue. Yet, politics and energy policy have had an outsized impact on how we got here. The current state of our nation's energy policy related to electricity can be summed up simply: Do more with less.

That's just not sustainable. From data centers to EVs, from home heating and cooling to the way we run America's farms, our nation is increasingly reliant on electricity to power the economy. As technology and energy demands advance, a recipe for rolling brownouts and blackouts is brewing.

Opposite that increasing demand for electricity is an alarming reduction in supply as our country shutter's existing always-available power plants to comply with various federal and state regulations.

### Jim Matheson

CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association that represents the nation's more than 900 not-for-profit, consumer owned electric cooperatives. He previously served seven terms as a U.S. representative for Utah.





South Dakota experiences extreme weather conditions throughout the year with temperatures rising above 100 degrees in the summer and falling far below zero in the winter. When the sun is not shining and the wind is not blowing, renewable energy sources do not fit the bill for reliability. We simply cannot fully retire power plants that still have a useful life ahead of them.

The final challenge to meeting our nation's energy needs is the arcane set of rules and regulations required to build anything in this country. The process for siting, permitting and building infrastructure – everything from solar farms, to pipelines to transmission lines – is mired in red tape and years of litigation.

These trends are not going to get any better in the coming years.

On April 25, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized four new rules to regulate power plants. The path outlined by the EPA is unrealistic, unachievable, and unlawful – exceeding the EPA's authority and disregarding Supreme Court rulings. It undermines electric reliability and poses grave consequences for an already stressed electric grid.

The American economy can't succeed without reliable electricity. Smart energy policy recognizes this fundamental truth, while keeping the lights on. This barrage of new EPA rules ignores our nation's ongoing electric reliability challenges and is the wrong approach at a critical time for our nation's energy future.

EPA finalized its rule against a backdrop of daunting threats to reliability as electricity demand surges and supply decreases. This will lead directly to more blackouts, higher costs, and uncertainty for America. That's a dangerous approach to regulation.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit challenging the EPA over its unlawful power plant rule on May 9. This suit points out that the rule goes far beyond what Congress has authorized the agency to do, violates the Clean Air Act and disregards recent Supreme Court rulings. The rule hinges on the widespread adoption of carbon capture and storage – a promising technology that is simply not ready for prime time.

South Dakota's Attorney General is also one of several dozen that have filed suit against the EPA for similar reasons.

Policymakers cannot overlook the laws of physics or the reality of the current situation. Adding more renewable resources to the nation's energy portfolio can be part of the solution; however, since the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine, our country also needs a robust supply of readily available energy resources to call on at a moment's notice.

Any long-term solution requires policymakers to recognize the need for time, technology development and new transmission infrastructure. These are essential ingredients for an energy future that prioritizes reliable electricity for all consumers.

Electricity powers industries, businesses, and technology. It fosters economic development vital for medical facilities, ensuring the functioning of life-saving equipment. Reliable power is essential for emergency services, law enforcement, and disaster response efforts. It also fuels innovation by supporting research, development, and deployment of new technologies.

Keeping the lights on is vital to South Dakota's economy. The stakes are too high to get this wrong.



**JUNE 12-JULY 20, 2024**  
**Prairie Repertory Theatre**  
**Summer Season**  
Oscar Larson Performing  
Arts Center  
Brookings, SD  
605-688-6045



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.

**JUNE 1**  
**The Hay Country Jamboree**  
7 p.m.  
Gayville Hall  
Gayville, SD  
605-267-2859

**JUNE 6**  
**2024 AmphiThursday**  
**Summer Concert Series**  
XTD, 6 p.m.  
Wakefield, 7 p.m.  
Parkston Ampitheater  
Parkston, SD

**JUNE 9**  
**River Honoring**  
Community Potluck, Live  
Music & Kids Activities  
4:30-9 p.m.  
Clay County Park River Shelter  
Vermillion, SD  
605-670-0540

**JUNE 13**  
**2024 AmphiThursday**  
**Summer Concert Series**  
Paul Weidenbach, 6 p.m.  
Angie Kriz & the Polkatoons,  
7 p.m.  
Parkston Ampitheater  
Parkston, SD

**JUNE 14-15**  
**Czech Days 75th**  
**Anniversary.**  
Tabor, SD  
taborczechdays.com

**JUNE 15-16**  
**Davis Flea Market**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Highway 18  
Davis, SD  
605-759-3883

**JUNE 20**  
**2024 AmphiThursday**  
**Summer Concert Series**  
Todd Keifer, 6 p.m.  
The Hegg Brothers, 7 p.m.  
Parkston Ampitheater  
Parkston, SD

**JUNE 21**  
**Dalesburg Midsummer**  
**Festival: A Celebration of**  
**Scandinavian and Rural**  
**Heritage**  
Dalesburg Lutheran Church  
Vermillion, SD  
dalesburg.org

**JUNE 21-23**  
**Scavenger's Journey**  
Yard sales, farmer's markets &  
specialty shops  
Wall to Wagner  
www.scavengersjourney.com

**JULY 18-21**  
**Danish Days**  
Danville Heritage Museum  
Viborg, SD  
605-766-1312

**JULY 20**  
**S.D. MCC Relief Sale**  
**Food Court, Bake Sale, Live**  
**Auction & Silent Auction**  
Free Admission & Parking  
Pioneer Hall  
Freeman, SD  
605-925-7009

**JULY 20-21**  
**Davis Flea Market**  
9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Highway 18  
Davis, SD  
605-759-3883

**JULY 20-21**  
**Charles Mix Saddle Club**  
SDRA Rodeo  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**AUG. 9**  
**Northern Bull Riding Tour**  
**Finals & Bull-a-Rama**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2763

**AUG. 10-11**  
**Fur Trader Days**  
Geddes, SD  
605-680-2160

**AUG. 17**  
**Yankton Extreme Bull**  
**Riding Tour**  
7 p.m.  
Yankton, SD  
605-760-2153

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