

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Anglers from across the region compete in the Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament each year to try their luck and test their skills

Hook, line and auger

Inside the Mobridge ice fishing tourney
Pages 8-9

Shake the blues with winter outdoor fun
Pages 12-13

Merry Christmas to You, Our Member Owners!



Jordan Lamb
Chief Executive Officer

The cooperative family has never been as alive as it is today. What makes your cooperative so special, you might ask? You, our members, own and elect members to operate your cooperative on your behalf. The end use member sets important things in our cooperative, one of the most important being rates, something extremely unique to cooperatives. Oahe Electric, East River Electric and Basin Electric are seeing flat rates into the foreseeable future in an extremely volatile time for the energy industry. Along with stable rates for our end membership, we are planning to distribute margins from the cooperative back to its membership within the next couple of months.

It has been an interesting year for all in the energy sector. Some equipment lead times are as far out as 4+ years (almost as long as it took me to graduate high school). Our cooperative has aging infrastructure that requires upgrading facilities, hardening our system backbone, improving reliability, and most importantly, weighing improvements against financial impacts to our rates, to continue to serve our member-owners as reliable and affordable as we have the past 70+ years.

Our recent rate studies forecast relatively flat rates through 2032 that historically have been outpaced by inflation. A few things that have high variable impacts on our future rates include:

- Interest Rates and Timing of Loan Draws
- Material Costs
- Material Lead Times
- Commodity Pricing (largely driven by LNG in the Electric Sector)

To hedge future risks, your cooperative largely supports an “All of the Above” generation portfolio including Coal, Natural Gas, Wind, Solar, Heat Recovery and several other peaking units alongside opportunity to obtain market purchases when pricing is affordable. To do this responsibly, we must ensure we have not only enough ‘peak’ electricity required but also during overnight hours, low sun hours, or low wind conditions when certain resources do not have the opportunity to run. We intend to continue operating a blend of generation portfolio while investing in research and development to ensure future new resources exceed carbon requirements while also providing stable base load, one coal plant with a sophisticated ‘scrubbing system’ operating within our cooperative portfolio already and will continue to do so for years to come.

Our Oahe Electric staff and directors wish you all a Merry Christmas and safe travels over your holidays! We look forward to 2023 with our members at the forefront of priorities within our cooperative!

Holiday Closings

Oahe Electric will be closed the following dates during the 2022 holiday season.

- Christmas** – Friday, Dec. 23 through Monday, Dec. 26
- New Years** – Monday, Jan. 2

We wish all our members the happiest of holidays and a wonderful new year!

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

Board of Directors:

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605.962.6207
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605.215.6758
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Austin Bergeson – Journeyman Lineman
Mark Bruning – Line Foreman
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Tory Smith – Journeyman Lineman

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Our Mission

Oahe Electric delivers high quality, low-cost electric service to our local member-owners. As a Touchstone Energy® Cooperative, we are committed to meeting the highest standards of customer satisfaction. We do business with accountability, integrity, innovation and commitment to community. As an electric co-op, we are part of America's most trusted network of high quality energy providers.



5 Ways to Save During Winter

Winter weather typically means increased energy use at home. Keep your bills in check with these tips to save energy—and money!

Mind the thermostat. If you have a traditional heating and cooling system, set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower. Consider a smart or programmable thermostat for additional savings.

Get cozy. Add layers of clothing for additional warmth, and snuggle up under your favorite heavyweight blanket.

Don't block the heat. If your air vents or heating elements (like radiators) are blocked by furniture or rugs, your home isn't being adequately heated.

Take advantage of sunlight. Open window coverings during the day to let natural sunlight in to warm your home. Close them at night to block the chilly night air.

Block air leaks. Seal windows and exterior doors with caulk and weather stripping to improve indoor comfort and decrease the amount of energy used to heat your home.

MEMBER THANK YOU NOTES

Dear Friend and Sponsor:

The Sully County Sheriff's Office would like to express our sincere thanks for financially supporting our child safety and drug education program.

We feel that it is our sworn duty to provide the public with the protection and safeguards expected of us. Our child safety and drug education program will help us do that. You have recognized that we need to reach our children, parents and senior citizens with accurate facts and information. The materials and

services we have selected were developed by the National Child Safety Council, the oldest child safety not-for-profit in the country. Because of your generous support, we are able to provide child safety and drug education programs for our children as well as parents and senior citizens.

Thank you again from the Sully County Sheriff's Office and all those who benefit from the program.

Yours in Safety, Service, and Protection,
Bill Stahl
Sheriff

Tips to use your electric blanket wisely

Heating pads and electric blankets cause around 500 fires throughout the U.S. each year. Almost all of these fires involve electric blankets more than 10 years old.

Learn how to stay safe and injury-free.

- Heating appliances should never be left unattended or used while sleeping.
- Do not plug electric blankets into an extension cord or power strip, as they could overheat and cause a fire.
- Look for dark, charred, or frayed spots or electrical cords that are cracked or frayed. Replace any worn or old heating pads or electric blankets.
- Never fold electric blankets when in use. Folded or tucked-in electric blankets could overheat and cause a fire.
- When purchasing electronics, including electric blankets, be sure to only purchase from reputable retailers. Purchase devices that have been approved by a nationally recognized testing laboratory.
- Do not allow anything to rest on top of a heating pad or electric blanket when it is in use. It may cause the device to overheat.
- There are two types of personal heating appliances: electric blankets and heating pads that are placed directly on the mattress. They are not meant to be used interchangeably or at the same time.

Gums wins Connections annual recipe contest

Lily Gums of Clear Lake has been selected winner of the annual *Cooperative Connections* member recipe contest.

Gums submitted a beverage recipe she calls "Swamp Water" that was published in the April 2022 issue of the magazine. She received a \$25 gift card for her submission. Congratulations, Lily!

She is a member of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

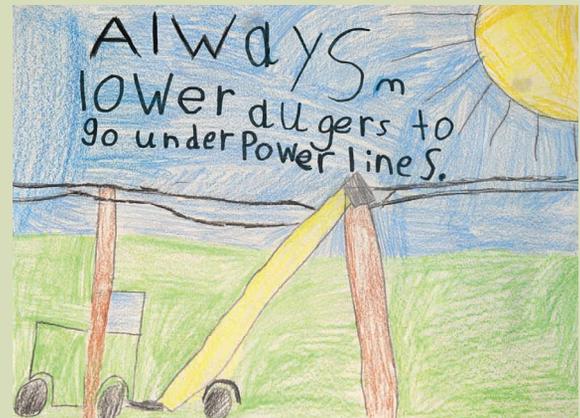


CO-OP LEADERS SERVE THEIR MEMBERS AND CONSTITUENTS



Ryan Maher is both a state senator and a board member at Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative in Timber Lake. He is one of three cooperative leaders who play unique roles in serving their co-op consumers while also serving their constituents as state lawmakers during the legislative session in Pierre.

To view the comments and insights of these lawmakers and learn more about how electric cooperatives work to improve our communities, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Be safe around power lines

Weston Kling

Weston Kling, age 7, urges equipment operators to always lower augers to accommodate for overhead power lines. Weston is the son of Tyler and Alexis Kling of Rapid City. They are members of West River Electric based in Wall.

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.

SUPER SOUPS



VEGGIE CHEESE SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1/3 c. shredded carrots
- 1/3 c. chopped celery
- 3/4 c. broccoli flowerettes (fresh or frozen)
- 2 tbsp. diced onion
- 1/4 c. butter or margarine
- 6 tbsp. flour
- 2 c. chicken broth
- 2 c. milk
- 2 c. Velveeta cheese, cubed

METHOD

Cook carrots, celery and broccoli in 1 cup water until tender crisp. Saute onions in butter. Add flour to blend. Add milk and stir to make white sauce then add cheese and stir until melted. Add chicken broth and vegetables in remaining water. Blend until smooth.

Nancy Stenson, Fort Pierre

CHEESEBURGER SOUP

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs. ground beef or ground chuck
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 1/2 med. onion chopped
- 1/2 stalk celery, chopped
- 5 med. peeled potatoes, chopped
- 4 c. turkey or chicken broth
- 3 c. half and half
- 1 tsp. poultry seasoning
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 lb. Velveeta cheese, chunked
- 2 tbsp. butter
- salt and pepper to taste

METHOD

Brown ground meat in large pot. Drain and return to pot. Add butter, onion, carrots, celery and potatoes. Cook for 5 minutes. Add broth, poultry seasoning, garlic powder and continue cooking until vegetables are tender. Add half and half and Velveeta cheese and continue heating until cheese has melted. Salt and pepper to taste.

Kathleen Meier, Firesteel

CHICKEN FAJITA SOUP

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp. oil
- 1 med. green bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1 med. red bell pepper, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1 sm. onion, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 1 pkg. McCormick® Organics Fajita Seasoning Mix
- 3 c. chicken stock
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) petite diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 c. frozen corn
- 1 c. tortilla strips

METHOD

Heat oil in large saucepan or Dutch oven on medium-high heat. Add peppers and onion; cook and stir 2 minutes. Add tomato paste; cook and stir 2 minutes. Stir in chicken, Seasoning Mix, stock, tomatoes and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 20 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with tortilla strips. Serve with desired toppings.

mccormick.com

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Oahe Electric Now Accepting Applications for 2023 Scholarships

Oahe Electric, in conjunction with Basin Electric Power Cooperative, is offering one \$2,000 college scholarship to a lucky dependent of an Oahe Electric member(s). In addition to this scholarship, Oahe Electric is offering four \$1,000 college scholarships.

The scholarship program recognizes and encourages the academic achievements of students in our region. It also serves as an investment in the economic future of rural areas.

Applicants for the scholarships must be a U.S. citizen and a dependent of Oahe Electric consumers. Applicants also must be students enrolled or planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, university or vocational/

technical school.

The scholarship recipients are chosen based on a combination of their written essay, SAT/ACT scores, overall grade-point average, work experience, participation in school and community activities, a personal statement of career goals and a written recommendation by a third party.

Applicants for the 2023-2024 academic year are being accepted until **Feb. 10, 2023**.

For more information, contact Samantha at Oahe Electric in Blunt, S.D., at 1-800-640-6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. Applications can also be downloaded by visiting our website at www.oaheelectric.com.

Oahe Electric Accepting Lineman's Scholarship Applications

Oahe Electric Cooperative is offering a \$1,000 scholarship for a full-time student registered or planning to register in a power line construction and maintenance program.

The purpose of this scholarship is to emphasize and support the education of future power line workers in South Dakota. Oahe Electric has committed to providing funds for financial assistance to students enrolled in power line maintenance programs with the hopes that graduates of that program will pursue a career with rural

electric cooperatives in the area.

Applicants for the scholarship must be a member or a member dependent of Oahe Electric. Applications for the 2023-2024 academic year are being accepted until **Feb. 10, 2023**.

For more information, contact Samantha at Oahe Electric in Blunt at 1-800-640-6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. Applications can also be downloaded by visiting our website at www.oaheelectric.com.

Four Tips for Winter Safety



Matt Eldridge
Operations
Manager

It's no surprise that winter months bring increased potential for fire risks and electrical safety hazards. This makes sense because during the coldest months, consumers are using additional electrical devices and appliances, like space heaters, electric blankets and portable generators.

The National Fire Protection Association estimates that 47,700 home fires occur each year in the U.S. due to electrical failure or malfunction. These fires result in 418 deaths, 1,570 injuries and \$1.4 billion in property damage annually. This winter, safeguard your loved ones and your home with these electrical safety tips from the Electrical Safety Foundation International.

1. Don't overload outlets. Overloaded outlets are a major cause of residential fires. Avoid using extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliance connections – they should be plugged directly into a wall outlet. If you're relying heavily on extension cords in general, you may need additional outlets to address your needs. Contact a qualified electrician to inspect your home and add new outlets.
2. Never leave space heaters unattended. If you're using a space heater, turn it off before leaving the room.

Make sure heaters are placed at least three feet away from flammable items. It should also be noted that space heaters take a toll on your energy bills. If you're using them throughout your home, it may be time to upgrade your home heating system.

3. Inspect heating pads and electric blankets. These items cause nearly 500 fires every year. Electric blankets that are more than 10 years old create additional risks for a fire hazard. Inspect your electric blankets and heating pads – look for dark, charred or frayed spots, and make sure the electrical cord is not damaged. Do not place any items on top of a heating pad or electric blanket, and never fold them when in use.
4. Use portable generators safely. Unfortunately, winter storms can cause prolonged power outages, which means many consumers will use portable generators to power their homes. Never connect a standby generator into your home's electrical system. For portable generators, plug appliances directly into the outlet provided on the generator. Start the generator first, before you plug in appliances. Run it in a well-ventilated area outside your home. The carbon monoxide it generates is deadly, so keep it away from your garage, doors, windows and vents.

CO-OPS IN THE CLASSROOM

What do socks, flashlights and bicycles have in common? All these materials are used to teach children in schools throughout Oahe Electric's service territory about electricity.

Co-ops in the Classroom is a program offered by Oahe Electric Cooperative's wholesale power provider, East River Electric Power Cooperative. Jenny Gross, Education & Outreach Coordinator for East River, travels throughout East River's service territory in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota to teach children about electrical safety, generation, conservation and economics.

During the hour-long presentations, Gross takes students on the journey of electricity at the atomic level, all the way to the hundreds of miles it travels from the power plant to our homes.

A variety of hands-on demonstrations engage the students. A Van de Graaff generator demonstrates the movement of electrons with some hair-raising results. "That one is always a crowd-pleaser," said Gross. "Not only does it provide a visible and audible example of how electricity moves, students also get a kick out of seeing their hair stand up and shocking their friends. Sometimes we even get the teachers to join in."

Another device that invokes a lot of excitement is the Pedal Power bicycle generator. Students are asked to become power plants as they provide the energy

that produces electricity for lights and small household devices. "The Pedal Power turns the concept of electricity from something abstract into something tangible. By providing the energy needed to make a light bulb turn on, the students are able to quantify just how much more energy an incandescent light bulb requires than a CFL or LED," said Gross.

By the end of the presentation, students develop a new understanding and appreciation for electricity.

Schools that would like the "Co-ops in the Classroom" program presented to their elementary students should have a teacher or administrator contact Oahe Electric's CFO Valerie Marso at 1.800640.6243 or vmarso@oaheelectric.com to schedule a presentation.



The annual Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament attracts more than 1,000 avid cold-weather anglers. *Photo by Mobridge Outdoors*

Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament offers fun and friendly competition

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Last fall, the world of competitive walleye fishing was shaken with a startling saga of deception and skulduggery worthy of a Tom Clancy novel.

Social media lit up showing the dramatic moment a tournament director in Ohio shouted at the top of his lungs with horror and disgust: “We got weights in fish! We got weights in fish!”

Suspicion had long surrounded a pair of locals who ultimately got nabbed stuffing lead weights down the gullets of their walleye. After the two sparked skepticism with a catch of nearly 36 lbs. - one-third heavier than the runners-up - the director gutted the fish right in front of the entire field of wary competitors and held aloft several shiny orbs the size of steel ping-pong balls.

The viral video received more than 10 million views as cameras captured the chaotic scene with one of the accused hanging his head in shame (his partner had slithered away to his truck) while fellow competitors cursed and threatened to inflict bodily harm upon the sly anglers who were later indicted on four felony counts.

Vinson Dargatz is pretty sure nothing close to that degree of high drama will be replicated at the 22nd Annual Mobridge Walleye Ice Fishing Tournament set for Jan. 14. Based on his experience participating in the event over the past 12 years, this competition is more fisherman-friendly and the atmosphere is much more focused on fun.

Dargatz, an apprentice electrician at Lake Region Electric based in Webster, has continued to make the four-hour trip from his home to Mobridge mostly

because of the fellowship and the relaxed, laid-back vibe of the festivities.

He typically gets together with his two brothers and three cousins for the tournament that he describes as a “yearly ritual.”



Vinson Dargatz is shown with one of his prize catches.

“We always have a lot of fun” he said. “We used to just bring a portable shack out on the ice and sit on some buckets while we fished. But now that we’ve gotten older, softer and a little smarter, we have an Ice Castle and we fish and hang out and grill some burgers.”

Number of two-person fishing teams competing

551

in last year's Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament

Dargatz confesses that the purchase of the 8 x 16-foot Ice Castle was actually his wife's idea. When it's time for an outdoor fishing excursion, the entire family with two boys and a girl always likes to come along. And mom insists on having adequate accommodations.

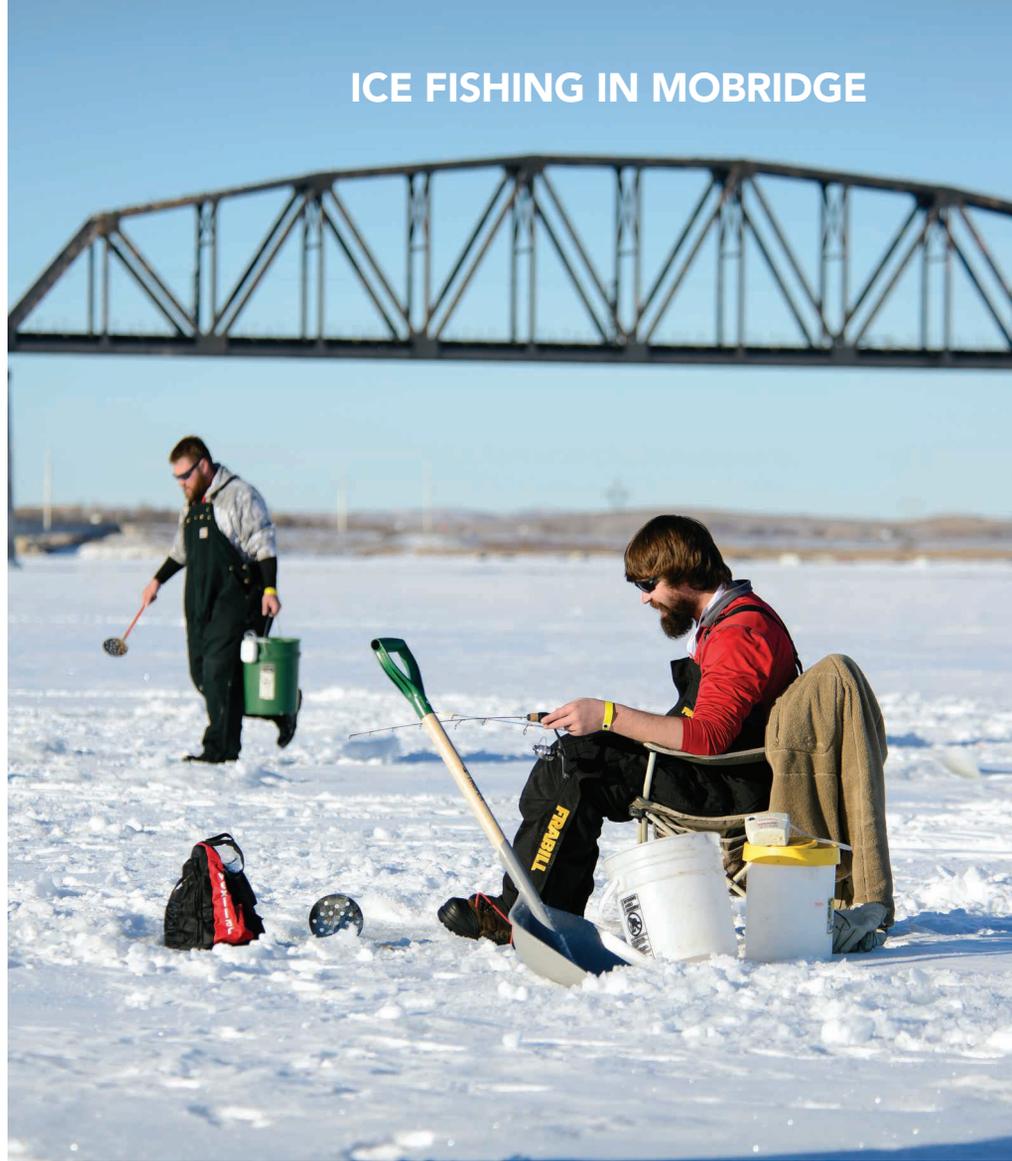
But Dargatz said when it comes to the annual winter escapes to Mobridge with the fellas, the family has to find something else to do. Besides, the town already doubles in size during tournament weekend and if every angler brought hangers-on in tow, Mobridge might expand to the size of Sioux Falls.

FILLED TO CAPACITY

Lately, the walleye population is standing less of a chance for survival against the increasing number of competitors testing their luck and skill in the annual tournament. The field has ballooned to the point of being capped at 551 two-person teams with fishermen swarming in from 16 different states.

Only so many humans can be stuffed into the town's expo center where the group events are held.

All of these developments have bewildered Jeff Jackson, one of the tournament's founders and owner of the Wrangler Inn in Mobridge. He recalls more than two decades ago sitting around the table with a group of town leaders who were trying to figure out a way to attract visitors to the area and capitalize on all the outdoor adventure the Missouri



The Mobridge Ice Fishing Tournament draws eager competitors from 16 different states.

Photo by Travel South Dakota

River and Lake Oahe have to offer.

In the first year, 50 eager contenders were lured to the event by the opportunity to claim the super grand prize of a Mr. Heater. These days, the prize list represents more than \$225,000 in assorted items such as Ice Castles, four-wheelers, a Polaris Ranger, clam shacks, \$8,000 worth of outdoor gear from Scheel's and Runnings, and more.

Anglers can keep their spot in the field if they register early in mid-July, otherwise their spot will be thrown into a lottery. Three guaranteed positions are drawn each year for those who participate in the town's summer fishing tournament, the Annual Denny Palmer Memorial Walleye Classic. Three spots are auctioned off on Ebay, which typically fetch up to \$4,000 apiece, while a

final spot is raffled off.

Last year's winners were Travis Bergstrom and Tate Merchant, who registered four fish weighing a total of 15.8 lbs. including one lunker that tipped the scales at 9.33 lbs. Jason Converse and Josh Spilde finished second with five fish weighing in at 13.4 lbs.

Dargatz already has the July 2023 registration date on his calendar and reminder notifications set to make sure he doesn't miss out. He's anticipating another adventurous outing in this year's tourney.

"I think it's great for the town to have so many people visiting and spending money. It's pretty wild that a small town can pull something like that together. They run it like a well-oiled machine and make sure everyone has a good time."

No, It's Not Weird to Talk to Your Microwave

Valerie Marso

Chief Financial Officer

One of the most read pages in this magazine is the recipes. Consumers repeatedly comment on how much they love the recipe page! Another highly sought-after item is time. Seems we are always wishing for more of it. So for those of you who enjoy cooking and wished for a little more time, maybe some of these clever kitchen appliances are just the ticket!!

With every invention, it feels like we get a glimpse of what it's like to be a Jetson! As a result, even the most basic things we use on a day-to-day basis have become pretty advanced. It was just a few years ago that voice assistants like Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant weren't common things to have in your home, and now apps and voice assistants can control everything from your lightbulbs to your refrigerator. Your mornings can be transformed by a clever machine that remembers just how you like your coffee. You can talk to your microwave and control your blender from your phone.

Automatic pan stirrer – if your recipe calls for constant stirring, this gadget will save your arm and let you step away from the stove. Think gravy – YUMMMMM.

There is a smart double oven that claims to be twelve appliances in one acting as a convection oven, air fryer,

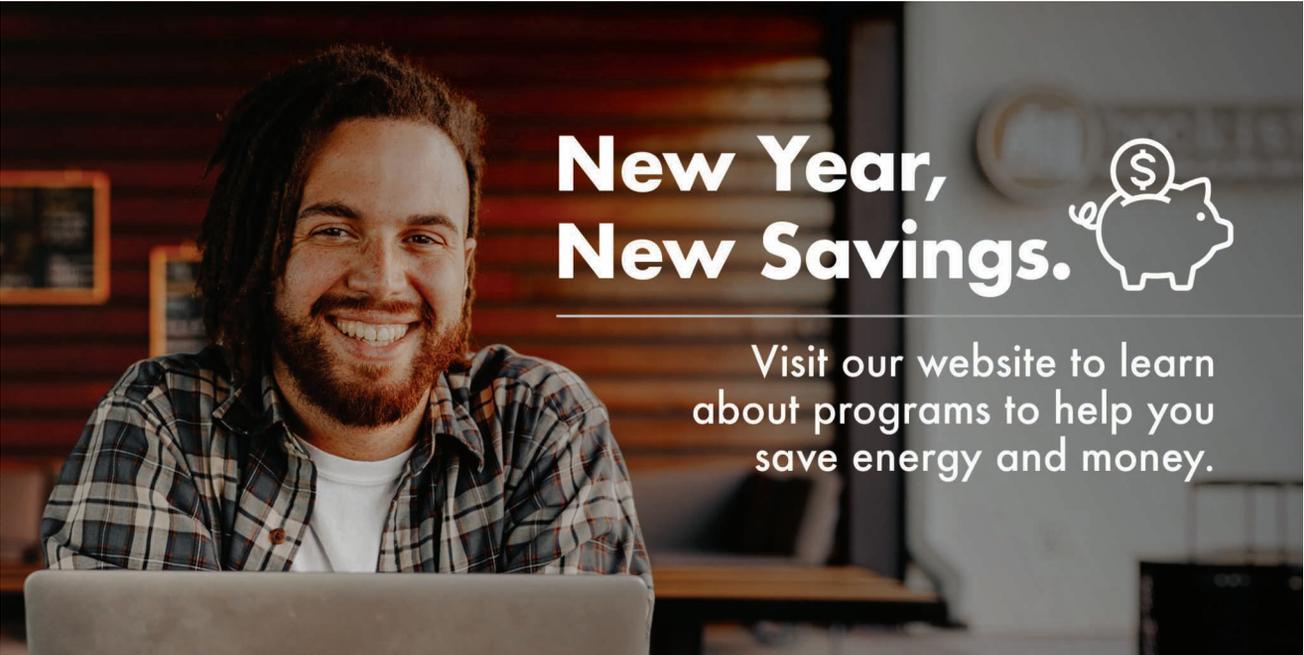
dehydrator, slow cooker, broiler, toaster and warming drawer. And you can control it all from your phone. You can link it to Alexa, Google, Nest and voice control it for the easiest cooking experience!

A smart range hood? I didn't know I needed one until now! It has a guided cooking app built into it, a smart touch screen AND has dual cameras – one forward facing to video chat with friends and family about Grams recipe and another located above the cooktop for you to live stream your progress.

If you're used to being the bartender at your dinner parties, hand over the duties to a cocktail maker machine! You can choose from over 40 drinks. What's even better? Feel free to turn on "party mode" for a LED show on your bar cart.

And last but certainly not least, are you forever losing your coffee and rewarming it 17 times before you've even taken two sips? You need a mug that keeps your coffee at whatever temperature you desire so it is always ready when you find it! It even enters sleep mode after two hours of inactivity or when the mug is empty.

Hopefully, Santa brings you some of these super cool kitchen time savers and from everyone at Oahe Electric, we hope you have a wonderful Christmas seasons filled with happiness, warmth and love.



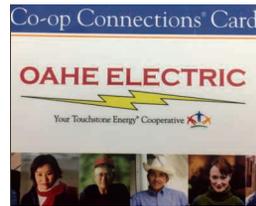
**New Year,
New Savings.** 

Visit our website to learn about programs to help you save energy and money.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know insulating your electric water heater can reduce standby heat loss by 25% to 45%? This could save you 7% to 16% on annual water heating costs. Insulating your electric water heater is an easy, inexpensive project that can improve energy efficiency and save you money each month. The Dept. of Energy rates this project as medium difficulty, meaning most homeowners can tackle this project on their own. You can purchase pre-cut jackets or blankets for about \$20 at most home improvement stores. Visit energy.gov for project tips and additional considerations.

Source: energy.gov



Cooperative Connections Card Program Vendors

Automotive

Graham Tire Company	605-224-8643	Pierre	Receive a 10% discount on regularly priced service work. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
Lamb Motor Company	800-952-2222	Onida	Receive a free alignment check with the purchase of 4 new tires.
Napa Auto and Truck Parts/Farnam's Genuine Parts, Inc.	605-224-8624	Pierre	Receive 10-50% off retail price.

Food/Convenience Store

Branding Iron Bistro	605-494-3333	Pierre	Enjoy \$1 off your order. Limit one per visit.
Gator's Pizza Pasta and Subs	605-224-6262	Pierre	Purchase any large pizza at regular price and receive a FREE order of breadsticks.
Grey Goose Store	605-945-0794	Pierre	Receive a free 20 oz. fountain soda or coffee with the minimum of a \$30 gas or diesel purchase.
The Corner	605-258-2400	Onida	Buy one breakfast sandwich at regular price, get second half off.

Health/Fitness and Beauty

Anytime Fitness	605-224-4011	Pierre	Receive a free two-week mini-membership.
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Home/Garden

Slumberland Furniture	605-945-1997	Pierre	20% off any regular priced Lazy Boy items. Excluding special orders.
Lee Real Estate	605-222-6003	Perre	Receive a FREE Comparable Market Analysis for real estate properties, which gives members current market values for home, land and commercial properties.

Services

Apryl's Animal House	605-224-9203	Perre	10% off a grooming or boarding
Inman's Water Technologies	605-224-5111	Pierre	Receive a 10% discount on the rental price of a water softener and/or reverse osmosis drinking water system by paying a year in advance. Receive 10% off of the purchase price of a new water softener or reverse osmosis drinking water system when you mention this ad. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discounts/specials.
Olson Plumbing Inc.	605-224-6436	Pierre	\$50 discount on any electric boiler, Marathon water heater, or fireplace
Small Engine House	605-224-5815	Pierre	10% off parts and labor

Sports/Recreation

Teton River Traders Gun Shop LLC	605-224-1371	Ft. Pierre	2% discount. Payments made by credit cards do not qualify for discount.
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Retail

Fastenal	605-224-4060	Pierre	10% off of fasteners and 5% off on all other products
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WINTER OUTDOOR FUN

The chill of winter doesn't keep outdoors enthusiasts from finding adventure at Farm Island Recreation Area. *Photos by Travel South Dakota*

Winter adventure-seekers find wonder in the chilly outdoors

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Mental health counselors have discovered that seasonal affective disorder can be much more than just a harmless case of the blahs - it's a real condition that afflicts millions of people when the daylight diminishes and the temps turn colder.

They also agree that one way to defend against the winter doldrums is to get out of the house, embrace the crisp invigorating air and enjoy all the season has to offer.

It doesn't take much time or effort to create a list of fun things to do to get the blood pumping and the spirit soaring. Stepping away from a stuffy den and going outside to build a snowman, hike a nature trail, roast marshmallows over a bonfire and engage in other activities with family and friends can help bring back some

mental and emotional balance.

Nick Harrington of South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks said his department is eager to accommodate anyone looking to extract some fun from the chill of winter.

Harrington notes that many of the state's 50-plus public camping and recreation areas are open for attendance during the long winter months, although some facilities are closed in an effort to protect delicate nesting habitats

for eagles and other species of wildlife.

Some comfort stations may close down during winter but the state has modern lodges available with amenities such as heaters and running water, including cabins, suites and group lodges for cold-weather outdoor vacationing.

Harrington said that while many vacationers from far and wide flock to South Dakota in the summertime, the state boasts more than 1,500 miles of nature trails for cold-weather adventurers to discover and is one



Fat-tire biking in Spearfish Canyon

8 WINTER WONDERLANDS FOR OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

- * Wind Cave National Park, Hot Springs
- * Snake Creek Recreation Area, Platte
- * Palisades State Park, Garretson
- * Custer State Park Spur, Custer
- * Randall Creek SRA, Pickstown
- * Pelican Lake, Pelican Township
- * Farm Island SRA, Pierre
- * Oakwood Lakes State Park, Bruce



Time spent outdoors during the winter can be beneficial to mental and physical well-being.

of the nation's top attractions for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, hiking, fat-tire biking and many other off-season outdoor adventures.

"Some people just enjoy getting out in the cold weather. They like the changing of the seasons we get in our region and they're always looking for new opportunities to explore what we have to offer without a lot of crowds," Harrington said. "It's already a beautiful state, but winter really changes the look of the landscape and is a big draw for many people looking for outdoor fun."

World-renowned summertime attractions such as the iconic Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse destinations take on an entirely different appeal during the snowy season. The Badlands geological formations, Ponderosa pine forests, open prairies, secluded lakes and

scenic waterways become even more alluring for landscape photographers, bird-watchers, hikers and wildlife enthusiasts when set against a charming and aesthetically pleasing wintry backdrop.

One of the most highly-attended state park destinations during both the summer and winter is Custer State Park with its 71,000 acres of trails, spectacular vistas and pristine lakes. The site is open year-round and during winter offers a wide array of things to see and do.

But there is still lots to explore across the state, including the more centrally situated Farm Island Recreation Area located four miles east of Pierre. Considered one of the park system's best-kept secrets, Farm Island sits nestled along the banks of Lake Sharpe

and the Missouri River and welcomes many winter guests who enjoy majestic glowing sunsets, ice fishing, eight miles of hiking trails, cross-country skiing and exploring the perfect natural habitat for birdwatching. There's also RV, primitive and cabin camping opportunities available.

For more ideas on how to plan trip and shake off the winter blues, check out this handy guide: www.travelsouthdakota.com/winter.

And after deciding on your winter vacation plans, don't forget to pack the following along with the rest of your cold-weather gear:

- Wool base layer
- Fleece mid-layer
- Windproof outer layer
- Waterproof boots
- Warm hat, scarf, gloves and socks.



BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Habitat for Humanity is active in all 50 states and 70 countries around the world. *Photos by Habitat for Humanity*

Habitat for Humanity builds homes and hope one family at a time

Billy Gibson

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Habitat for Humanity homes have walls that can talk. Well, they don't actually vocalize, but they do carry messages of hope and inspiration.

There's a time-honored tradition that calls for Habitat volunteers to take a break from their carpentry work and jot down personal notes on studs and sheets of plywood before the materials are nailed into place.

The simple scribbles are intended to infuse the space with messages of hope, harmony and good fortune showered upon those family members who will soon call the dwelling home.

"May all who enter this home as guests, leave as family," reads one brief affirmation rendered in green with a fat felt-tipped marker.

"Smile through the darkness. It will always bring light," reads another message of encouragement.

Some notes are based on Biblical scriptures: "Walk by faith, not by sight."

Still others recite Bible verses verbatim such as John 3:16, Jeremiah 29:11 and other familiar passages that share the promise of a bountiful future.

School-age volunteers are also quick to get in on the act. While the adults are busy at work with nail guns and power saws, the kids are taking permanent markers and drawing colorful images of sunbeams, flowers, hearts, backyard playgrounds, church crosses and whatever comes to mind. Inside the walls of one Habitat home in Mitchell there happens to be a sketch of a Happy Meal from McDonald's, complete with a fully-dressed hamburger, fries and a drink.

If nothing else, these personal postings serve as reminders of the passion that Habitat volunteers put into their work.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric Board Member Rick Cheloha currently has a compensated "retirement job" as a construction supervisor with his local affiliate but plans to step down soon and continue on as a volunteer.

Before moving to Tabor several years ago, he volunteered with the affiliate in Columbus, Neb., while working full-time as a construction manager with Loupe River Electric.

"I've been involved in 10 projects and none of them would have been possible without the help of volunteers and others who support the program in so many ways. Some people think we build free houses, but that's not true. They have to pay for the house, but they can qualify for a zero percent loan."

Patrick Soukup, manager of member services and marketing at Central Electric in Mitchell, is president of his local Habitat affiliate. Mitchell Regional HFH is one of eight affiliates in South Dakota, representing the global program that was founded in 1976 and serves in all 50 states and 70 countries.

Soukup said the Mitchell crew is on the cusp of completing its ninth home. He remembers the smile on the faces of new homeowner Sonja Wells and her family when they participated in a "nail pounding" ceremony during the construction process last November.

Volunteers, family members and supporters were on hand as Fr. Yamato



Above/left, Patrick Soukup works at the Mitchell Regional HFH plant sale, while volunteers write special messages to future homeowners.

Icochea prayed over the property, the Wells family and the many participants who donated their time and resources to make the project come to fruition.

Soukup said he is sold on the merits of the ecumenical Christian housing ministry, which conducts thorough screenings of housing candidates and requires homeowners to invest considerable “sweat equity” into the homebuilding projects.

“It’s very fulfilling for everyone involved to see a home build take shape and to see so many people put their

hearts and souls into something like this to improve the lives of others. It really makes a difference, it has a direct impact, and you can get a sense of that as you get to know the homeowners and the volunteers during the different stages in the process.”

Local HFH affiliates apply some creativity to raise funds for their projects. The Mitchell affiliate holds an annual plant sale in the town square. The Brookings affiliate stages an annual gala called “Nail the Runway” which is billed as a “construction-based fashion show with a twist.” The twist happens to be that all fashions must be designed from raw construction materials.

Participants try their best to strut down the runway with grace while outfitted in pieces of tile, wood, landscaping fabric, wallpaper, nails and anything else they can drag out of the tool shed. This year’s event is set for March 18 at the Swiftel Center in Brookings.

Dan McColley is Executive Director and Lead Mission Officer for the Brookings HFH. He admits that he stole – um, “admired and acquired” - the fashion show idea from an affiliate in Rochester, MN. McColley got his start with HFH as a volunteer at the Northwoods ReStore in Bemidji, MN. He gave up his financially rewarding day job as an operations manager to

join Habitat full-time and relocated to Brookings six years ago.

For McColley, his work with Habitat is very personal. He chokes up when describing how his father and mother worked multiple jobs to make ends meet for the family of seven.

“We would have qualified for a Habitat home,” he said, noting that the Brookings group has approved 84 homeowners since 1995. “If I can do anything to lift that burden for another family, that’s what this job means to me. Every day, it’s coming to work and trying to give others an opportunity to have the benefit of home ownership. We celebrate what we’ve done, then we look for ways to do more.”

One family that stands out for McColley involved a mother and daughter who lived together. The daughter required ADA accommodations.

“She told us she needed soft carpeting because her wheelchair wouldn’t fit through the front door and she got rug burns having to crawl around the house,” he said. “We were able to build a home that was ADA compliant where she could use her wheelchair, open cabinets easily and cook without getting burned. The work we do transforms the lives of our homebuyers, our staff, our donors, our volunteers and our communities.”



The annual “Nail the Runway” event staged by the Brookings Area HFH is a “fashion show with a twist.”

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth in LaCroix Hall at the Black Hills Stock Show to win an electric snow blower!

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Your E-mail Address: _____



JAN. 27 - FEB. 4, 2023
Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
800 San Francisco St.
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

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.

JAN. 1
American Legion Post 15
Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance Building
1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 13-14
ON YOUR FEET! THE MUSICAL
Show Dates:
Jan. 13, 7:30 p.m.
Jan. 14, 2 p.m.
Jan. 14, 7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

JAN. 14
Coats for Kids Bowling
Tournament
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.
\$80 for a four-person team
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

JAN. 14
Chinook Days
Winter Carnival
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Big Hill
Spearfish, SD

JAN. 20
Rapid Valley UMC
Soup Supper
4:30 p.m.-7 p.m.
Rapid City, SD

JAN. 21
Lakota Games on Ice
1 p.m.-4 p.m.
Mitchell Prehistoric Indian Village
Mitchell, SD

JAN. 27-28
Annual Deadwood Pro
Snocross Races
Jan. 27, 12:50 p.m.
Jan. 28, 8:25 a.m.
Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds
Deadwood, SD

JAN. 27 - FEB. 4
Annual Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo
Central States Fairgrounds and The Monument
Tickets may be purchased online and at the gate
Rapid City, SD
605-355-3861

JAN. 28
K9 Keg Pull
On-site registration
10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Deadwood Street by
Outlaw Square
Deadwood, SD

FEB. 3-4
TOOTSIE
Show Dates:
Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.
Feb. 4, 2 p.m.
Feb. 4, 7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

FEB. 10-11
Mardi Gras Weekend
Mardi Gras Events & Parade sponsored by Deadwood Chamber of Commerce
Main Street
Deadwood, SD

FEB. 11
Songs of Romance
7:30 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

MAR. 4
Annual Ag Day
9 a.m.-1 p.m.
Washington Pavilion
Sioux Falls, SD

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