

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



From Cows to Canvas

Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

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Sacred Hoops: Shooting for Success

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Want \$10 Off Your Next Statement?



Valerie Marso
Office Manager

\$5 bill credit for signing up for paperless billing

When I first started working at Oahe Electric, postage was 33 cents. Fast forward 24 years and there has been 18 postage rate increases totaling 106% and countless conversations with members regarding lost bills. (And just for fun/reference, our residential KWH charge has increased 1 cent in that same time frame!) So what is a solution that mitigates the expense for the cooperative and provides value for our members? Paperless billing statements!! You will receive a notification that your bill is ready the same day that it is calculated instead of waiting for it to hopefully arrive in your mailbox at an unknown date. You can look at any of your previous bills as well as compare usage, make payments and more.

By signing up for paperless billing you are reducing your cooperatives operating costs for printing, postage, paper and envelopes which in turn ultimately saves all of our members money AND helps the environment!

Signing up is as easy as 1-2-3!

Website

1. Visit www.oaheelectric.com and click on “Register for SmartHub”
2. Click on “Don’t have an account? Register now”. Enter requested info then verify email
3. Then choose “Yes, Go Paperless”

You will need your account number, billing zip code and name on account.

If you are already registered for SmartHub but not paperless billing, just log on to your account and click on “My Profile” then choose “Update My Paperless Settings” and click the button to turn “ON” paperless billing.

Mobile App

1. Download our free, secure SmartHub mobile app from the Apple or Google Play Store.
2. The Provider is Oahe Electric
3. Click on Menu>Settings>Activate Paperless Billing

That’s it! On your next bill you will see your \$5 paperless bill credit! BONUS – if you are also a Mid Dakota Rural water patron, they utilize SmartHub as well and you can toggle between providers.

\$5 bill credit for signing up for automatic payments

Why waste time and money by writing and mailing checks? Plus you can have your bill paid on time even if you are on vacation if you sign up for automatic payments. Never have a late fee again! You can sign up for a draft from a checking or savings account OR you can use your debit or credit card. Both payment options will withdraw on the 20th of each month or the closest business day.

Now that you have signed up for paperless billing, signing up for automatic payments is super easy. (It is not a requirement as you can have one independent of the other.)

1. Click on “Bill & Pay”
2. Click on “Auto Pay Program”
3. Accept Terms and Conditions and then Enroll

That’s it! On your next bill you will see your \$5 automatic payment bill credit!

Members are eligible to receive one \$5 paperless bill credit and one \$5 automatic payment bill credit after the conditions are met. As always, contact our office if you have any questions.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

Board of Directors:

- James Feller – Assistant Secretary
605.962.6207
- Brandon Haag – President
605.215.6758
- Ryan Noyes – Treasurer
605.280.3500
- Ross Sperry – Secretary
605.280.7770
- Kirk Yackley – Vice President
605.258.2412

Employees:

- Tyler Arbach – Journeyman Lineman
- Austin Bergeson – Journeyman Lineman
- Mark Bruning – Line Foreman
- Matt Eldridge – Chief Operations Officer
- Trudie Feldman – Custodian
- Brady Gaer – Journeyman Lineman
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- Dan Lettau – Journeyman Lineman
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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.

Supporting Our Schools

In February, Oahe Electric, along with cooperatives throughout the state, submitted the report to the South Dakota Department of Revenue reflecting their Kilowatt Hour Tax Liability.

At the beginning of June, payments will be made to each county's treasurer's office, which will then be forwarded directly on to the school districts. ABO Schools, Pierre School District and the Highmore-Harrold School will receive over \$540,000 in tax revenue from Oahe Electric and their power suppliers, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and East River Electric Power Cooperative.

Commitment to Community – just another important aspect that sets your electric cooperative apart.

OAHE ELECTRIC TAX REVENUE		
SCHOOL DISTRICT	NO. OF METERS	TAX LIABILITY
Agar-Blunt-Onida	1,381	\$370,188.19
Pierre	1,717	\$144,092.90
Highmore-Harrold	286	\$26,121.07
Gettysburg	3	\$33.94

COVE HEAT SALE

Oahe Electric is offering great deals on our remaining Cove Heat inventory!
Call 1.800.640.6243 today to learn more!

Statement of Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident. Person with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202)720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800)877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1.) mail - U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2.) fax: (202) 690-7442; or 3.) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

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

Falls are 100% Preventable

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

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

Fall Hazards at Home

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: National Safety Council



Trim Your Trees

Brace Tapio, Age 8

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

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

SEAFOOD SPECIALS

CAJUN SHRIMP

Ingredients:

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

Method

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

McCormick.com

CRAB SALAD SPREAD

Ingredients:

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

Method

Mix by hand. Serve with Club or Ritz crackers.

Linda Hubbard
Rapid City, S.D.

CREAMY SHRIMP LINGUINE

Ingredients:

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

Method

Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well.

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

McCormick.com

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.

Line Crew News



Matt Eldridge

Chief Operations Officer

So far, this winter has been interesting for us here at Oahe Electric. With the weather going from one extreme to the next, it has been a challenge to schedule projects. With that being said let, I wanted to fill you in on what our linemen have been working on and what our plans are looking like for the upcoming construction season.

With the mild fall we were able to get a few projects completed and keep working on the maintenance projects that are always there. A couple of the bigger projects that are completed are the Codger's Castaway development and the Big Watt Digital expansion project.

The Codger's Castaway development project involved the installation of a powerline to the sewer lift station and a few of the lots to the north of that. As the lots are sold off and members start to build, we will continue to install powerline to serve power to the houses.

The Big Watt Digital project was an expansion of 15 megawatts. Big Watt Digital is a bit coin mine west of Onida. We have teamed up with East River Electric to provide a total of 27 megawatts for this mine. We have been installing very large cable and transformers in order to serve this load. The great thing about this load is that they shut down during our peak times. So this does not cause any other problems with the rest of our system.

We already have a couple of projected planned for this spring. They include the 293rd Ave. and the 1,804 overhead to underground line conversions. We will be replacing eight miles of overhead 3 phase with 3 phase underground wire. This will help with reliability of service to the Mid Dakota water treatment plant and the Grey Goose area. These two project along with installing new services will keep the line crew busy for most of the construction season.

If you are in need of a new service please be sure to reach out to me at 1.800.640.6243 or meldridge@oaheelectric.com.

Hi my name is SCOTTY BIGGS
I am an athlete and I work at
Special Olympics South Dakota
Thank you for your support



SCOTTY BIGGS



STORM SAFETY FILL-IN-THE-BLANK

Spring is a wonderful season, but it can bring powerful storms.

Read the clues below, then use the word bank to complete the storm safety tips.



1. Keep a _____ handy in case of a power outage.
2. Be watchful for signs of a thunderstorm, including dark skies, flashes of _____ or strong winds.
3. If a _____ is issued, seek shelter in a centrally-located room in your home, a basement or storm cellar.
4. If you're outside and hear _____, go indoors immediately.
5. Practice a tornado _____ with your family once a year.

WORD BANK

- thunder
- drill
- flashlight
- tornado warning
- lightning

Käsemeister Creamery

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check out the cheeses and other products offered by Käsemeister Creamery online at www.kasemeister.com.





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

Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

Frank Turner

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

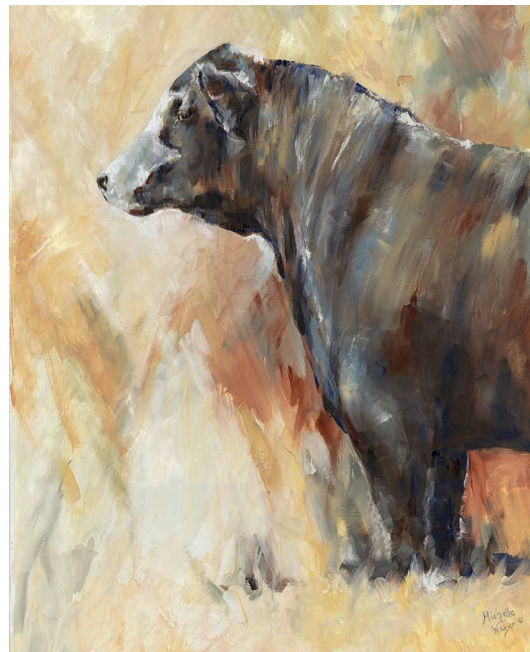
Traditionally, her oil paintings have been rooted in a realism, capturing every detail of the depicted animals. More recently, Weber has expanded her art to include a more whimsical and abstract representation of the rural lifestyle.

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

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

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

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



A Weber painting, titled "Side Eye."

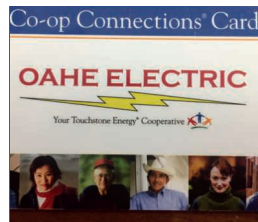


Weber is widely known for her oil paintings that capture the essence of an authentic rural lifestyle on canvas.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Area rugs are an easy, cost-effective solution to cold floors. Adding area rugs to hard-surface flooring can add warmth to any room and keep your feet cozy on cold winter days.

Choose rugs made from wool or other natural fibers and plush or high-pile textures for the most insulation. Place rugs in areas where you need additional warmth, like the foot of a bed or under a coffee table. Area rugs can enhance the aesthetic of your home and keep you cozier.



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

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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Small Change Can Make a BIG Difference

What is Operation Round Up? Operation Round Up® is just what the name implies: each month, Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. simply “rounds up” the electric bills of voluntarily participating members to the next highest dollar. For example, a member’s monthly bill of \$132.68 would automatically be rounded up to \$133, with the additional 32 cents going to the Operation Round Up Fund.

How do I participate? Oahe Electric’s Operation Round Up® program is an opt-out program – meaning that you are automatically enrolled, with nothing else needing done to participate! If you have not interested in donating, you can call the office at 1-800-640-6243 and request to be removed from the program.

How much will it cost members? The most a member can contribute is 99 cents per month x 12 months = \$11.88/year – this doesn’t sound like much, but with this small change, thousands of dollars can be generated and will mean a big difference to the

people and organizations in our area.

Where will the money go? All Operation Round Up® donations are placed in a trust and are administered by an independent Board of Trustees. The board is made up of community leaders who serve on a voluntary basis. The board evaluates all requests for funds, determines who will receive funding and how all Operation Round Up® funds will be distributed.

Who is eligible for funds? The funds are used to address charitable community needs, whether it is disaster relief for an individual, or an organization funding a special project. Since the program’s first disbursement in 2009, the program has distributed over \$108,000. The region served by the fund is primarily the electrical area served by Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., including Hughes and Sully counties.

How do I apply for funds? The easy-to-complete applications for funding are currently available and can be requested by phone at 605-962-6243. Applications

can also be found on our website at www.oaheelectric.com. All applications are due by **April 30, 2024**. Completed applications may be mailed to: Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., P.O. Box 216, Blunt, SD 57522, faxed to: 605-962-6306, or emailed to: oahe@oaheelectric.com. After the deadline, the Board of Trustees will meet and allocate the funds to those they feel are in the most need.

How do I get involved? There are currently two, five-year Board of Trustees position openings. Trustees normally have to commit one afternoon a year to review fund request applications in person, with the possibility of correspondence regarding emergency fund requests throughout the year. If you are interested in offering your time to this endeavor, please contact Samantha Irvine, Operation Round Up Coordinator, at 1.800.640.6243 or oahe@oaheelectric.com. Together, by giving a few cents each month, Oahe Electric members can make a big impact on life in our area!

CAREER FAIR FUN

Journeyman Linemen Tory Smith and Dan Lettau spent a day in January talking with students from the Pierre and Ft. Pierre area at TF Riggs’ Career Fair. We love having opportunities like this to speak with area youth about the lineman profession!

Disclaimer: Tory Smith, pictured here, really was enjoying his time at the career fair, we swear!





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

SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

Sacred Hoops Basketball Scores Big with Rural Youth

Frank Turner

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

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

also their life skills.

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

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



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

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

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

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

locations.”

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

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

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

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

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



The Sacred Hoops Basketball AAU West Coast National Championship Team.



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

Keeping Chickens

Shannon Marvel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

coop to get a more colorful plethora of eggs.

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Things you need to know when considering backyard chickens:

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

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