

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Jackson Neprud, 4-H archer for Jones County, poses next to his target.

## South Dakota 4-H Shooting

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## Turn On Paperless + Automatic Billing for \$5 Bill Credits



**Valerie Marso**  
Chief Financial Officer

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](http://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” and then choose “Update My Paperless Settings.” Click the button to turn “ON” paperless billing.

### Mobile App

1. Download our free, secure SmartHub mobile app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.
2. The Provider is Oahe Electric.
3. Tap 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.

## COVE HEAT SALE

Oahe Electric Cooperative is offering great deals on our remaining Cove Heat inventory!

Call 1.800.640.6243 today to learn more!



## Lineman's Lens

We want to remind our consumers and members of the public not to attach anything to our electric poles. Doing so can create a serious safety hazard for linemen who need to climb the poles to maintain power; nails and staples can snag on worker's protective gear, causing cuts and tears while climbing the pole. It can also damage the pole's structure integrity, shortening the lifespan of the pole.

### 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](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](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

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#### OAHE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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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.

# Falls Are 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, remember the following.

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned to the left.
- 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.

*Source: National Safety Council*



### "Don't cut trees near power lines."

#### Remington Welsh, Age 11

Remington warns readers to not cut trees around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Remington! Remington's parents are Ryan and Rachel Welsh, members of Black Hills 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.



# Hearty FAMILY MEALS

## EASY CREAMY HAMBURGER PASTA

### Ingredients:

1 lb. ground hamburger  
1 lb. cooked pasta  
5 oz. spinach  
1/4 cup butter  
2 cups heavy cream  
1 tbsp. minced garlic  
1 cup grated parmesan cheese

### Method

In a large pan, brown hamburger and minced garlic. Remove any excess grease. Turn heat to low and add the butter and heavy cream. Stir and simmer for a few minutes until the butter melts and it starts to boil. Stir in the spinach and cook for about three more minutes. Stir in the parmesan and cooked pasta. Enjoy!

**Lyndell Todd**  
Rapid City, S.D.

## MINI BBQ BACON CHEDDAR MEATLOAF

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. ground beef  
6 oz. chili sauce  
4 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled  
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese  
1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs  
2 large eggs  
1 tsp. onion powder  
1 tsp. seasoned salt  
1 tsp. garlic powder  
2 tbsps. Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. yellow mustard  
1/2 cup BBQ sauce

### Method

Preheat oven to 425°F. Cook and crumble bacon. In a mixing bowl, mix together all meatloaf ingredients except the BBQ sauce. Divide the mixture into eight round loaves. Press a small depression into the middle of the meatloaves. Brush BBQ sauce on top of the meatloaves. Bake for 25 minutes. Turn on broiler and brown the BBQ sauce for two to five minutes.

**Kayla Beaner**  
Centerville, S.D.

## SKILLET CHICKEN POT PIE

### Ingredients:

1/4 cup butter  
1 cup chopped onion  
1/4 cup flour  
2 cups chicken stock  
1 cup milk  
1/2 cup apple cider  
1/2 tsp. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp. whole thyme leaves  
1/4 tsp. black pepper  
2 cups cubed cooked chicken  
1 large sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1/2-inch cubes (about 2 cups)  
1 cup frozen peas  
1 can (7.5 oz.) refrigerated biscuits, (10 biscuits)

### Method

Preheat oven to 450°F. Melt butter in large ovenproof nonstick skillet on medium-high heat. Add onion; cook and stir five minutes or until softened. Sprinkle with flour. Stir with whisk until mixture is well blended. Add stock, milk, apple cider, garlic powder, cinnamon, thyme and pepper; whisk until mixture is smooth.

Stir in chicken, sweet potatoes and peas. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook and stir 15 minutes or until sweet potatoes are tender.

Place biscuits on top of chicken mixture. Bake 10 minutes or until biscuits are golden brown.

**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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.





# Looking Back

Oahe Electric Linemen reflect on Hurricane Helene Power Restoration





**Brady Gaer**

Journeyman Lineman

I was honored to head south and assist with the hurricane damage recovery. The hardest part of making the decision was leaving my wife and kids behind, not knowing exactly when I'd be back. But after discussing it with my wife, we both agreed that I needed to go help. She assured me she'd handle everything at home, so she truly deserves a shoutout for managing everything while I was away.

The drive took us three days in a convoy, passing through eight states. There was plenty of windshield time, but it gave me the chance to enjoy some incredible scenery along the way. It felt really fulfilling to be there, lending a helping hand. We met so many amazing people in South Carolina and Georgia, and the experience was truly rewarding.

The man camps we stayed at were an adventure in themselves—over 800 linemen camping out! The sight of all the line trucks lined up at night when we returned was something to behold. Both locations took great care of us, and we were treated incredibly well.

The terrain was different from what we're used to. Oconee County, with its rolling hills and abundance of trees, reminded me of the Black Hills in many ways—absolutely stunning. Wrens, on the other hand, had plenty of pine trees but was flatter, with a lot of farm land. The humidity was definitely higher than we're used to, but we made it through!

We worked alongside some fantastic linemen, and it was a truly memorable experience. If given the chance, I would do it all over again in a heartbeat.



**Austin Bergeson**

Journeyman Lineman

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the management and board of directors at Oahe Electric Cooperative for granting me the opportunity to travel to the East Coast for post-storm power restoration. This experience reaffirmed the significance of our cooperative's core values—especially our unwavering commitment to community.

Alongside 17 other dedicated South Dakota linemen, I had the honor of traveling to South Carolina and Georgia to assist those in need. The conditions were drastically different from what we're accustomed to—relentless humidity that left us damp all day, spiders as large as our hands, and rugged swamp and mountain terrains. Yet, every single member of our team rose to the challenge, and I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to tackle these obstacles with.

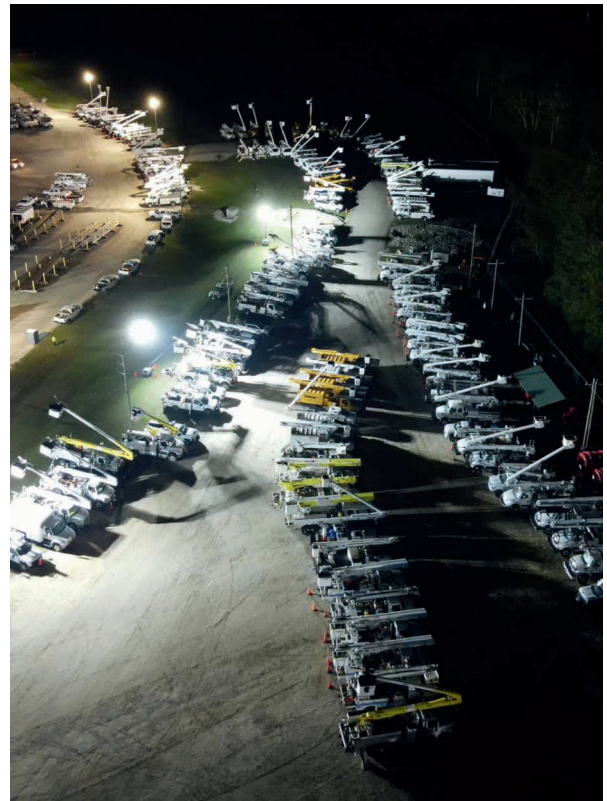
During my time away, I also witnessed firsthand the true essence of commitment to community here at home. I am incredibly thankful to the Oahe Electric staff for keeping everything running seamlessly and managing our daily operations while we were on the road. To my friends and neighbors who looked after the cows and helped with daily chores—your support meant the world. And to my amazing wife, who juggled three kids and ensured all the animals were fed—your strength and dedication are nothing short of inspiring.

This experience has taught me more about the power of community than I could ever have imagined. My deepest thanks to all of you.



(Above) Oahe Electric Linemen Austin Bergeson (left) and Brady Gaer (right) before leaving for South Carolina Oct. 2.

(Below) Utility workers traveled from across the U.S. and Canada, hauling heavy equipment thousands of miles.







West Central Electric CEO Jeff Birkeland, left, is the retired archery coach, and IT Coordinator Derek Wolf, right, is a first-year rifle coach for Jones County, South Dakota.

# SOUTH DAKOTA 4-H SHOOTING

## Shooters Prepare for the State Competition in April

Jocelyn Johnson  
jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

Dedicated practice is the price each marksman pays to qualify and compete at the South Dakota 4-H Shooting Sports state event.



Sophie Wolf takes aim during a weekly practice.

This year, hundreds of shooters will compete on April 25-27 to showcase marksmanship. Their hard work will be on display as every shot will impact the final score. Among these competitors is a dedicated group from Jones County, South Dakota. For the past two decades, employees from West Central Electric Cooperative in Murdo, S.D., have dedicated their time to coaching various 4-H shooting disciplines.

“It’s the cooperative giving back to the community and promoting our youth,” said Jeff Birkeland, CEO of West Central Electric. “A few years ago, we took 41 kids to state, and we brought home 43 state trophies. I’m proud of our kids.”

Birkeland coached archery for 15 years and happily recounted the experience with his two boys during that time.

“Kids want to shoot. We have the best participation in shooting sports

than we have in anything else.”

Birkeland’s son, Jacob, competed for 10 years in shooting sports among other 4-H competitions.

“While I explored many aspects of 4-H, shooting sports became my primary focus,” Jacob said. “I began my journey in shooting sports with BB gun and was introduced to archery. Archery quickly became my main area of competition, and it has been an incredibly rewarding and impactful part of my 4-H experience.”

This experience offered him a competitive edge as well as bonding memories that Jacob vouches as life shaping.

“One of the greatest highlights of my time in 4-H has been the lasting friendships and memories I’ve built along the way,” Jacob said. “Whether it was constructing a trophy shelf with my grandpa, having archery competitions against my dad to see who had to do the chores or representing South Dakota at the national shooting sports event – each experience has contributed to my personal and professional growth. I would not be where I am today without it.”





Matthew Birkeland, left, stands with Hayzen Sealey, right, at the spring state competition.

Derek Wolf, IT coordinator for West Central Electric and first-year coach for Jones County 4-H, said, “We begin practicing once a week in January. We work on safety first – getting the kids comfortable with their firearms. Then, we step into practicing for competition.”

Each county competes in three matches leading up the state competition, and every participant must make a qualifying score in at least one match to qualify for state.

“We encourage every kid to enter and compete in all three matches,” Birkeland said. “It’s better to practice at it instead of getting to state and having the wheels fall off.”

The art of practicing perfectly is what brings these competitors to state. Birkeland noted that those who practice, will win. And those who overcome a disappointment may come home with the trophy.

“It teaches those kids a lot about life,” Birkeland said. “You practice and practice, you put the time in and then one thing happens – one flinch,

one mistake and it’s over. Emotionally, hopefully it strengthens them a bit. Instead of breaking down and crying, you better be able to handle it...Limit your problems. Don’t increase them with a mental meltdown.”

Wolf agreed with this sentiment and described how overcoming a bad shot and being mentally tough is sometimes more important than being a skilled shooter.

“There are a lot of kids who find success in this, so I find it rewarding to be involved as a coach,” he said.

Wolf’s daughter, Sophie, competes in .22 rifle and archery and remarked that the highlight of the competition was that it challenged her and made her a stronger competitor. She trains twice per week for several hours while preparing for the state competition.

“I feel excitement when I compete,” Sophie said. “I love the challenge.”

In 2024, more than 1,600 participants competed in various disciplines at the spring state shooting event. These disciplines

are pistol, archery, rifle, hunting and western heritage. An additional 270 participants competed in the fall state shooting event for shotgun and muzzleloading. Each year, the top five shooters win trophies and this year’s winners may be chosen to represent at the 4-H Shooting Sports National Championships in Grand Island, Neb., on June 22-27. Last year, South Dakota tied for 2nd place with Missouri at the national event.

John Keimig, South Dakota State University Extension Youth Safety Field Specialist, emphasized that the shooting program is made great by the people who volunteer.

“One of the great things about small communities in South Dakota is people who give their time to volunteer,” said Keimig. “If it wasn’t for people who volunteer, we wouldn’t have this successful program – whether it be volunteers who work full-time for an electric cooperative or farmers and ranchers. They are the backbone of this program.”



Archers stand on the line at South Dakota’s spring state competition.

# Supporting Our Schools



**Valerie Marso**  
Chief Financial Officer

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 available for schools to request. ABO Schools, Pierre School District and the Highmore-Harrold School combined will receive nearly \$1,160,000 in tax revenue from Oahe Electric and their power suppliers, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and East River Electric Power Cooperative.

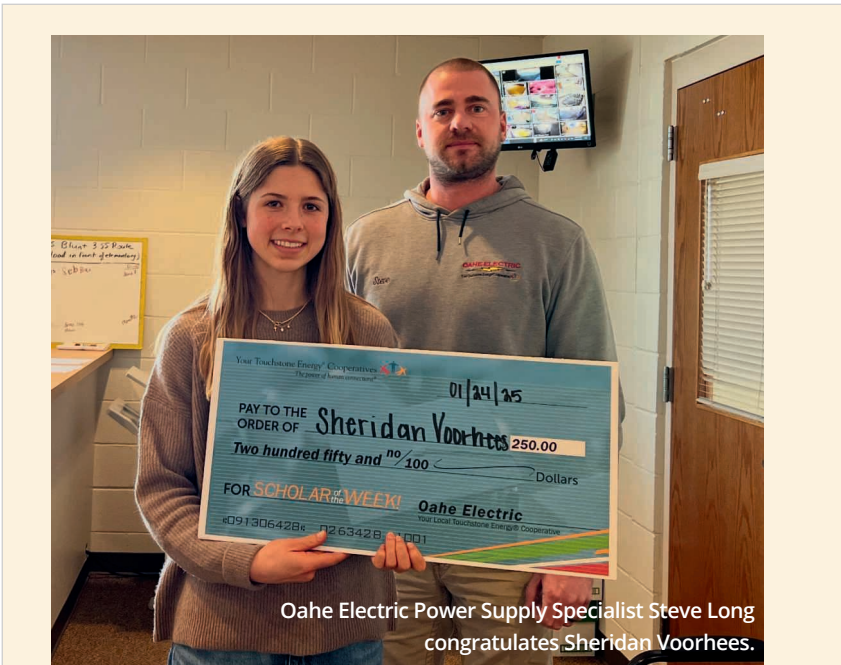
Commitment to Community – just another important aspect that sets your electric cooperative apart.

**Dear Oahe Electric Cooperative,**

*Thank you all for taking the time out of your busy schedule to attend the TF Riggs High School Post-High Planning and Career Fair. Our students are so fortunate to have this opportunity to meet with you and upon first glance at the initial responses to our student survey, they wish they would have been able to have a bit more time to spend there visiting your booths. This is certainly a tribute to you all and the interactions and impressions you had on our kids.*

*Thank you again! We hope you can join us again next year.*

**Cheryl Ulmen**  
**Business Instructor**



Oahe Electric Power Supply Specialist Steve Long congratulates Sheridan Voorhees.

## Scholar of the Week: Sheridan Voorhees

Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. is proud to announce its “Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week”. The recipient of this honor is Sheridan Voorhees, a senior at Sully Buttes High School in Onida. The honor, bestowed by Dakota News Now, gave Voorhees bragging rights for the week of Feb. 2, 2025.

Sheridan boasts a 4.00 grade-point average and participates in band, jazz band, student council, National Honor Society, oral interpretation, drama, volleyball, basketball, yearbook, girls state delegate and Sully Buttes History Club. Her plan is to attend South Dakota State University. Sheridan is the daughter of Pat and Tacea Voorhees of Onida.

Voorhees will receive \$250 from Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. in partnership with East River Electric Power Cooperative, to reward her for her academic achievements. Another perk for being selected, Sheridan is automatically in the running for a \$1,000 scholarship, to be awarded at a special banquet later this spring honoring all of this year’s scholars.

The “Scholar of the Week” is an ongoing joint effort between Touchstone Energy co-ops, like Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc., and Dakota News Now. The program recognizes the achievements of high school seniors throughout the region. The honor is awarded to highly motivated seniors who excel in the classroom as well as in their community.

Oahe Electric is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



# Operation Round Up Means Small Change Makes Big Difference

## What is Operation Round Up?

Operation Round Up<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> program is an opt-out program – meaning that you are automatically enrolled, with nothing else needing done to participate! If you are 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<sup>®</sup> donations are placed in a trust and are administered by an independent Board of Trustees. The board is made up of Oahe Electric members who serve on a voluntary basis. The board evaluates all requests for funds,

determines who will receive funding and how all Operation Round Up<sup>®</sup> 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 almost \$150,000. 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](http://www.oaheelectric.com). All applications are due by April 30, 2025. 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](mailto: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.

Together, by giving a few cents each month, Oahe Electric members can make a big impact on life in our area!

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR<sup>®</sup>-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

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





# RUNNING FREE

Photos by Alvis Uptis

## Wild Horses Roam at Black Hills Sanctuary

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

In the southern Black Hills, a watchful eye will catch a rare and breathtaking sight: a herd of wild mustangs galloping freely across thousands of acres of grassland in the Cheyenne River Valley.

For the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary staff and the hundreds of rescued horses they care for, it's just another day on the ranch.

The sanctuary operates like most working ranches, says Susan Watt, the president and CEO of the Institute of Range and the American Mustang. Staff regularly travel over 15 miles across the 10,000 acre ranch to fill water troughs and set out hay, mineral blocks and horse cake. It's a trek that takes them across picturesque grasslands, hills, bluffs and the muddy banks of the Cheyenne River. A bulwark against suburban sprawl, the land remains as nature intended.

"Wild horses have been part of North America since time immemorial," Watt explained. "We have a large population of American mustangs, Spanish mustangs, horses with blood lines that trace back to Spain and Portugal, and a small herd of Choctaw Indian ponies that were part of the Trail of Tears

– They are a very important part of American history we need to preserve."

The story of the sanctuary begins in the late 1930s with a young man named Dayton Hyde. At 13 years old, Hyde left his home in Michigan for his uncle's cattle ranch in Oregon after hearing captivating tales of the wild west's excitement and beauty.

Once he arrived, Hyde was completely enthralled by the western lifestyle. With each passing year, his connection to the land and the wildlife strengthened, shaping his identity as a cowboy, conservationist and writer.

Decades later in 1987, while on a trip to Nevada to purchase cattle, Hyde came across corrals of wild horses the federal government had rounded up using low-flying helicopters. Devastated by the idea of the free-roaming herds confined to pens, Hyde was inspired to create a refuge for wild horses where they could run free.

Hyde petitioned congress to allow him to take some of the captured horses and create a sanctuary. South Dakota Governor George Mickelson, who had learned of Hyde's ambitions and was supportive, invited Hyde to inspect a piece of land known as Chilson Canyon near Hot Springs, S.D.

For nearly 40 years now, that piece of land plus Hyde's hard work has given hundreds of wild horses another chance to roam wild. However, it's a luxury very few wild horses receive.

Since 2020, the Bureau of Land Management has reported



rounding up over 40,000 wild horses to control herd populations, which can grow rapidly in the wild. Their fates vary; At government holding pens, they await auction where if sold they'll be rehomed with owners who agree not to sell them for slaughter outside of the U.S.

According to Watt and other wild horse advocacy groups, those assurances don't always matter.

"The horses are supposed to be protected from slaughter," she continued, "But unfortunately, you put them in a trailer and cross the border into Canada or Mexico and they don't always check to see what's in the trailer."

The horses that come to the sanctuary are generally in "emergency situations," Watt said, which means the horses are being sent to slaughter or their previous caretaker died or is unable to take care of the horses.

In addition to preserving the herds of wild horses, Hyde envisioned the sanctuary as a means to protect and preserve the land's natural beauty and rich historical legacy, which includes long-ago remnants of human activity.

"This particular tract of land was the location for ancient petroglyph writings that ancient man did on cliff walls," Watt explained. "And we're protecting the pioneer history of this land; Our buildings that we use are pioneer homesteads."

Though Dayton Hyde passed away in 2018, his legacy lives on. Today the sanctuary is home to several hundred wild horses, a herd of cattle, thousands of acres of pristine prairie

and the inextinguishable spirit of the wild west.

"He used to say every ache and pain he ever had was from a horse," Watt laughed. "What Dayton Hyde really wanted was to protect this land from subdivision, to let it be for wildlife and wild horses, and keep it safe and protected. I think South Dakota should be immensely proud of what Dayton Hyde has done."

For more information about the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, visit [www.wildmustangs.com](http://www.wildmustangs.com).



(Above) Dayton Hyde, founder of the sanctuary.  
(Below) The sanctuary encompasses more than 10,000 acres of land along the Cheyenne River near Hot Springs, S.D.  
*Photos by Alvis Uptis*







The Vinyl Record Club at the Custer County Library meets once each month. Photo submitted by Custer County Library

# CATALYST FOR COMMUNITY

## Fun Awaits At Your Local Library!

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In honor of Dr. Seuss’s birthday, March is National Reading Month – and the best place to celebrate is at your local library. Whether you are into reading or are just looking for a fun weekday activity, your local library is sure to have something that interests you and your family. Stop in at your local library to learn about fun activities like the ones below!

### **Custer County Library – Vinyl Record Club, Seed Library, Letterboxing**

As the snow melts and the first leaves of spring begin to unfurl, the Custer County Library transforms into a hub of inspiration for community gardeners of all skill levels. With engaging seminars and resources for everyone to enjoy, Custer’s library is the perfect place for community members of all ages to cultivate a love for gardening.

One of the library’s most beloved initiatives is the seed library, made possible by the contributions of the Custer Mile

High Garden Club. This unique resource invites visitors to explore a collection of seeds that they can use whether they’re growing vegetables in their garden or flowers on the kitchen counter.

Seeds are sorted by type, Myers explained, with sections dedicated to seeds you start indoors, seeds you start outdoors, root vegetables, leafy greens, flowers, herbs and so on.

The library also hosts educational seminars covering topics including hydroponics and sowing seeds in the wintertime.

“Master gardeners come to talk on related topics and we’ll have free plant clippings and free seed packets available for people to pick up,” Myers explained. “It just kind of kicks off our gardening season.”

Gardening isn’t the only thing bringing people together at the Custer County Library. The Vinyl Record Club transforms the library into a relaxing lounge where community members connect over their shared love of music.

“Everyone brings their favorite albums,

and you can play a song or two to share,” Librarian Sarah Myers explained. “We just saw it as a potential to bring people together and capture that interest of vinyl. It’s kind of fun to see different generations of people interacting together.”

Myers also promotes outdoor opportunities through a scavenger hunt activity called letterboxing.

Similar to geocaching – just without the coordinates – letterboxing requires players follow hints and clues about their surroundings. Myers prepares clues in a similar fashion to the one below that guides players to a cache on the Mickelson Trail.

“Park near search and rescue, ready for a quest. Walk toward Hill City, following the rest. From the little stop sign, take 220 steps on track. Search high and low for a quartz throne, no looking back. If you see the football field sign, you’ve gone too far. Take a seat on the throne, reach down, and there’s your star.”

From under benches to tucked between rocks, players scour the area for the hidden stamp to ink their logbooks and continue to the next step of their adventure.

“We love getting people outside,” Myers continued. “This was a way for families to have little mini adventures. Libraries



are more than just books – they’re a place where you can build community and find community.”

## Madison Public Library – Chess Club, Trivia Night

In Madison, Librarian Lisa Martin keeps her community sharp with brain-building activities and clubs for people of all ages.

The library’s reach extends beyond its rows of books and walls; On Thursday nights, The Office Bar & Grill in downtown Madison transforms into a bustling trivia hotspot where the community tests their knowledge on an array of topics to lead their team to victory.

The library hosts five rounds of trivia. Participants can count on a round focused on current events, but the rest remain a surprise to keep everyone on their toes.

“Sometimes we do a theme to go along with a month,” Martin explained. “Last January, we decided to do “Dry January” where you try and go without drinking, but it was really just an excuse to have trivia about soda pop!”

The night’s winner receives a gift card to The Office Bar & Grill, but at the end of the year, the team with the most points walks away with a trophy.

The library also hosts a chess club, which Martin says attracts community members of all ages.

“It’s hard to get the boys in sometimes because they might not want to sit through things,” Martin said. “Chess club attracts that crowd, and we’ll have 10 guys sitting here anywhere from sixth grade to retirement talking to each other and teaching each other – sometimes smash talking – and it’s a lot of fun.”

Martin strives to offer something for everyone. Whether it’s inviting Lake Herman State Park rangers to demonstrate outdoor skills, holding puzzle competitions or hosting talented musicians, Madison Public Library will have something to get you involved.

## Gregory Public Library – STEAM Club

At the Gregory Public Library, the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) Club, is working to spark children’s imaginations and show them opportunities for new

hobbies, or even future careers.

The after-school club focuses on hands-on lessons where students often have an active role in the experiment.

“We started off by inviting Sanford in and the kids were able to do an experiment where they extracted DNA from strawberries,” Librarian Tara Engel said of the early days of the club. “We’ve also used our LEGOs to introduce engineering, we’ve used a lot of art supplies, we’ll do chemistry experiments with microscopes – Our STEAM Club is really getting kids thinking and doing things in a different manner.”

One of the most popular initiatives has been the bridge construction lab, where students use recycled materials like cardboard tubes to construct different bridges and learn basic engineering concepts.

“We use some of our bridge and construction books in our nonfiction section as examples,” Engel explained. “Then we have them use cardboard, construction paper, straws and strings to try and hold their bridge up.”

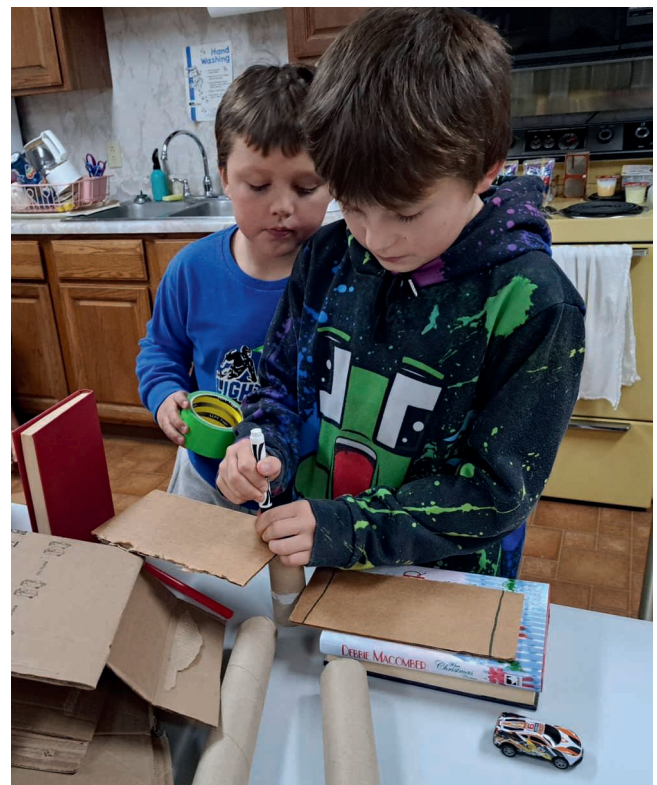
The moment of truth comes when the bridge’s structural soundness is tested by the weight of a Matchbox car driving across the deck.

The library also makes use of challenge cards for LEGOs, where students draw a card with a creation challenge and students ranging from making the tallest tower to building a musical instrument that makes a sound.

“It’s fun to see how the students come together to form teams and work together,” Engel said.



(Above) Trivia Night winners in Madison.  
Photo submitted by Madison Public Library



(Right) Gregory students work on a cardboard bridge.  
Photo submitted by Gregory Public Library





**MARCH 14-15**  
**St. Patrick's Day**  
**Weekened**  
**Fri. 5 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.**  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

*Photo courtesy of  
 Travel South Dakota*

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.

**FEB. 28-MARCH 1**  
**Mardi Gras Weekend**  
 8 p.m. Fri.-10 p.m. Sat.  
 Main Street  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-578-1876

**MARCH 6**  
**SD Jazz Festival Concert**  
 Aberdeen Community Concert  
 Association  
 7:30 p.m.  
 NSU Johnson Fine Arts Center  
 Aberdeen, SD  
 Tickets Available at Concert

**MARCH 8-9**  
**Philip Area Annual Gun Show**  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sun. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 American Legion Hall  
 Philip, SD  
 605-859-2135

**MARCH 8**  
**Epiphany Sausage Sale**  
 10 a.m. until gone  
 Parish Hall  
 Epiphany, SD

**MARCH 8**  
**Minnehaha County**  
**Pheasants Forever Banquet**  
 5 p.m.  
 El Riad Shrine  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-376-8219

**MARCH 14-15**  
**Badlands Quilter Weekend**  
**Getaway**  
 Fri. 5 p.m.  
 Sat. 8 a.m.  
 Community Center  
 Wall, SD  
 605-685-5718

**MARCH 15**  
**VFW Teener Baseball Bingo**  
**Benefit**  
 5 p.m.  
 Tyndall Auditorium  
 Tyndall, SD

**MARCH 22**  
**Annual Banquet & Bash**  
 Britton Area Chamber of  
 Commerce  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Britton, SD  
 605-448-8130

**MARCH 26**  
**Hill City Garden Club**  
**Trip to Central Asia**  
 1 p.m.  
 Kathryn Cleveland  
 Hill City Super 8  
 Hill City, SD

**MARCH 29**  
**Ready. Set. Grow!**  
 9 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Couteau Prairie Master Gardeners  
 Codrington CTY Extension Complex  
 Watertown, SD  
 605-838-7098

**APRIL 4**  
**Mitchell Technical College**  
**2025 Alumni Gathering**  
**Cornhole Tournament**  
 5 p.m. Social  
 6:30 p.m. Tournament  
 The World's Only Corn Palace  
 Mitchell, SD  
 605-995-7342

**APRIL 4-5**  
**Annual Schmeckfest**  
 German Heritage Celebration  
 748 S Main St.  
 Freeman, SD  
 605-925-4237

**APRIL 4-6, 11-13**  
**Women Playing Hamlet**  
 April 4-5, 11-12: 7:30 p.m.  
 April 6, 13: 2:30 p.m.  
 Mighty Corson Art Players  
 Corson, SD  
 www.mightycorson.com

**APRIL 5-6**  
**Youth & Family Kids Fair**  
 Sat. 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Sun. 12-4p.m.  
 The Monument  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-342-4195

**APRIL 11-12**  
**Junkin' Market Days Spring**  
**Market**  
 Fri. 4-7 p.m.  
 Sat. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 www.junkinmarketdays.com

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