



# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Gardening Greats

**Master Gardeners  
Cultivating Community  
Growth**

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**Bridging History**  
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*Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.*



# Rates: Are You Getting a Good Deal?



**Valerie Marso**  
Chief Financial Officer

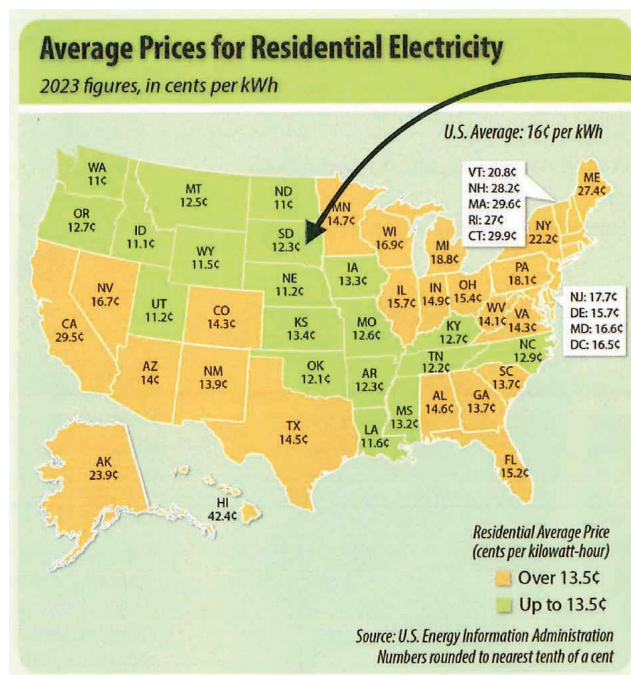
Does it seem like your electric bill is too high? You're not alone. I've never had anyone call in to say that their bill was extremely reasonable or even inexpensive. Maybe if it was free, but even then, that seems unlikely.

Sometimes to truly understand the value of something, you need to compare to others because you don't know what you don't know – right? So, let's do some rate comparisons!

Nationwide, the average cost per kilowatt-hour is over 13.5 cents. Here in South Dakota, it's a bit lower at 12.3 cents. But Oahe Electric's 2025 residential rate? Just 9.1 cents. Even our average 2024 blended rate — factoring in the facility charge, electric heat and air conditioning rate comes in at 10.9 cents which is still lower than the national and state averages.

After looking at that map, realizing where your rates fall — some being more than double what ours are — you are probably wondering how we do this sorcery of having such low rates, right?

Part of this can be attributed to a program that federal borrowers are eligible for that allows us to level out our margins. Here's how it works: If we experience an unusually dry, cold or otherwise extreme weather event, it can generate more sales, and in turn more revenue.



Instead of letting that extra income fluctuate our margins, we are allowed to take a portion of that and defer it to future years to maintain stable rates when there isn't excess revenue coming in.

Since 2002, we have utilized this program to the tune of \$4.1M to maintain level margins which mean stable and predictable rates. No wild swings, just smooth manageable rates for you.

# Have a Successful Planting Season Rooted in Safety

As farmers make plans to return to their fields for spring planting, Oahe Electric urges them to be particularly alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. Operating large equipment near these lines is one of the often overlooked, yet potentially deadly, hazards of working on a farm.

Start by making sure everyone knows to maintain a 10-foot clearance minimum from power lines. Sometimes a power line is closer than it looks — helpful safety steps include using a spotter and designating preplanned routes that avoid hazard areas.

Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting tractors on trailer beds. Many tractors now have tall antennas extending from the cab that could make contact with power lines. Avoid raising the arms of planters or cultivators near power lines, and never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.

Simply working too close to a power line is dangerous as electricity can arc or "jump" to conducting objects, such as a

ladder, pole or truck. Remember, non-metallic materials such as lumber, tires, ropes and hay will conduct electricity depending on dampness, dust and dirt contamination.

If your equipment does come into contact with power lines, stay in the cab and call Oahe Electric for help. If the power line is energized and you step outside, your body becomes the path to the ground. Even if a line has landed on the ground, there is still potential for the area to be energized. Warn others who may be nearby to stay away and wait until help arrives.

If exiting the cab is absolutely necessary because of fire, the proper action is to jump — not step — with both feet together, hitting the ground at the same time. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time. Hop to safety, keeping both feet together as you leave the area.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### OAHE ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 019-042)

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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.



## Lineman's Lense

Here's a shot of our overhead lines along the river—any guesses as to what is caught up there?

Believe it or not, these are fishing lines and lures left behind by people who weren't paying attention when casting.

Please, always look up and stay aware of nearby power lines!

## Who's Graduating This Spring?

We know we have many seniors in our service territory who will be graduating in the near future, and we want to hear from you!

Send Oahe Electric a graduation announcement at PO Box 216, Blunt, SD 57522, and you might just receive a graduation gift!

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Oahe Electric's 79th Birthday & Member Appreciation Lunch**  
Oahe Electric Cooperative will hold its 79th Birthday party on Friday, April 25 from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at the headquarters in Blunt. We will also hold a Member Appreciation Lunch at the Hughes County Shop in Pierre Monday, May 5, from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Please join us at one or both of these events for a great lunch, fun company and your chance at prizes!

# Power Life Safely

## May is Electrical Safety Month

Every May, Electrical Safety Month serves as a vital reminder of the importance of preventing electrical hazards at home. Electricity powers nearly every aspect of modern life, but if handled improperly, it can pose serious risks, including injuries and property damage.

Your electric cooperative understands the risks associated with improper electricity use, which is why we're committed to reminding you to stay vigilant and practice electrical safety not only in May, but year-round.

By following key safety practices, you can reduce the risk of electrical hazards and ensure your family stays protected. Here are five essential tips for powering up safely at home.

1. **Be vigilant.** Regularly inspect your home's electrical system for any signs of damage or outdated components and replace any frayed electrical wires or cords. The Electrical Safety Foundation International estimates roughly 3,300 home fires originate from extension cords every year, either from overloading, overheating or fraying. If you're relying on extension cords as permanent power solutions, consider contacting a qualified electrician to install additional outlets where you need them.
2. **Use Surge Protectors.** Safeguard your sensitive electronics and appliances from surges with surge protectors. These handy devices help divert excess voltage away from your electronics, reducing the risk of damage or electrical fires. Not all power strips include surge protection, so read the product label carefully. Additionally, surge protectors can lose effectiveness over time and should be replaced when damaged or outdated.
3. **Practice Safe Power Strip Use.** Avoid overloading electrical outlets with power strips that exceed the outlet's capacity. High-energy devices, like heaters, microwaves and hairdryers should be distributed across multiple outlets. Overloading an outlet with a "busy" power strip can lead to overheating and create a fire hazard, so be sure to check the power strip's wattage rating before plugging in items.

4. **Water and Electricity Don't Mix.** It may seem obvious, but accidents involving water contact with electrical items happen. Always keep electrical appliances and devices away from water sources, like sinks, bathtubs or swimming pools. Make sure your hands are dry before touching any electrical switches or appliances – never handle electrical devices with wet hands. Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs) should be installed in areas where water and electricity are typically in close proximity, including kitchens, bathrooms and outdoor outlets.
5. **Educate Family Members.** One of the best ways to ensure the safety of everyone in your household is to talk about electrical safety. Teach children not to play with electrical outlets or appliances and ensure they understand the potential dangers of electricity. Create and practice a home fire escape plan that includes electrical safety precautions in case of emergencies.

Practicing electrical safety at home is essential for protecting your family, property and peace of mind. Remember, electrical safety isn't just a one-time effort – it's a year-round responsibility. Taking these steps can help ensure a safer, more secure home for you and your loved ones.



**"Don't plant trees near power lines."**

### Jeremiah Barlow

Jeremiah cautions readers not to plant trees near power lines. Thank you for your picture, Jeremiah! Jeremiah's parents are Mosiah and Cristine Barlow, members of West River Electric Association.

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





# Delicious CHICKEN

## CHICKEN BREAST SUPREME

### Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts  
(boned and halved)  
8 strips bacon  
2 pkgs. chipped beef  
8 oz. sour cream  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
6 oz. evaporated milk

### Method

Wrap each half of chicken breast in a piece of bacon. Place in a baking dish lined with two layers of chipped beef.

Blend sour cream, soup, and milk. Pour over chicken.

Bake uncovered at 300°F for three hours. Serve over rice.

\*Makes 8 servings.

**Sharon Houchin**  
Central Electric Member

## CHICKEN ROLLUPS

### Ingredients:

8 oz. tube crescent rolls  
4 boneless chicken breasts  
(cooked shredded and seasoned to taste)  
8 oz. cheddar cheese  
(finely shredded, divided)  
10 1/2 oz. can cream of chicken soup  
1 packet chicken gravy mix  
1 cup water

### Method

In a bowl, mix the shredded chicken and 1/3 of the cheese. Take a scoop of the mixture and roll it into a crescent roll then place in a greased 9" x 13" pan. Bake at 350°F until the crescent rolls look browned on top. Mix the soup, gravy mix, 1/3 of the cheese, and enough water to make the mixture pourable. Pour over the crescent rolls. Sprinkle the remaining 1/3 of the cheese on top and bake again until the cheese melts and starts to brown.

**Nicole Einrem**  
B-Y Electric Member

## SMOKY CHICKEN TACOS

### Ingredients:

1 tbsp. oil  
1 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into thin strips  
1/4 cup Flavor Maker Taco Night Topping Seasoning  
1/2 cup water  
12 (6-inch) flour or corn tortillas, warmed

### Method

Heat oil in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook and stir just until browned.

Stir in Flavor Maker Seasoning and water. Bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes or until sauce has thickened and chicken is cooked through, stirring occasionally.

Spoon chicken into warm tortillas. Serve with desired toppings, such as shredded lettuce, shredded cheese, sour cream, guac or salsa.

**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.





## Lineman Appreciation Day

Mark your calendars — Friday, April 18, is National Lineman Appreciation Day! From hurricanes to ice storms and other extreme weather events, our nation's power lineworkers are always on the front lines, working tirelessly to restore service and keep our communities connected. Their dedication, bravery, and expertise ensure that we have reliable power every day.

At Oahe Electric, we're proud to honor these hardworking men and women who keep the lights on. Join us in celebrating their commitment, innovation and resilience.

Thank a lineman today! #ThankALineman

## Prioritize Safety Year Round



**Matt Eldridge**  
Chief Operations  
Officer

At Oahe Electric, we recognize Electrical Safety Month every May, but we also know the importance of practicing safety year round. From our co-op crews to you, the consumer-members we serve, we recognize that everyone has a part to play in prioritizing safety.

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, thousands of people in the U.S. are critically injured or electrocuted as a result of electrical fires and accidents in their own homes. Many of these accidents are preventable. Electricity is a necessity, and it powers our daily lives. But we know first-hand how dangerous electricity can be because we work with it 365 days a year.

To Oahe Electric, safety is more than a catchphrase. It's all of our responsibility to keep employees safe. Additionally, we want to help keep you and all members of our community safe. That's why you'll see Oahe Electric hosting safety demonstrations at community events and in schools throughout the year to

demonstrate the dangers of electricity. We discuss emergency scenarios, such as what to do in a car accident involving a utility pole and downed power lines. We caution students on the dangers of pad-mounted transformers and overloading circuits with too many electronic devices.

Electricity is an integral part of modern life. Given the prevalence of electrical devices, tools and appliances, we'd like to pass along a few practical electrical safety tips.

### **Frayed wires pose a serious safety hazard.**

Power cords can become damaged or frayed from age, heavy use or excessive current flow through the wiring. If cords become frayed or cut, replace them, as they could cause a shock when handled.

### **Avoid overloading circuits.**

Circuits can only cope with a limited amount of electricity. Overload happens when you draw more electricity than a circuit can safely handle — by having too much running on one circuit.

**Continued on page 7**



# Operation Round Up Means Small Change Makes 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 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¢ 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 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® 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!

Continued from Page 6

## Label circuit breakers to understand circuits in your home.

Contact a qualified electrician if your home is more than 40 years old and you need to install multiple large appliances that consume large amounts of electricity.

## Use extension cords properly.

Never plug an extension cord into another extension cord. If you “daisy chain” them together, it could lead to overheating, creating a potential fire hazard. Don’t exceed the wattage of the cord. Doing so also creates a risk of overloading the cord and creating a fire hazard. Extension cords should not be used as permanent solutions. If you need additional outlets, contact a licensed electrician to help.

We encourage you to talk with your kids about playing it safe and smart around electricity. Help them be aware of overhead power lines near where they play outdoors.

Our top priority is providing an uninterrupted energy supply 24/7, 365 days per year. But equally important is keeping our community safe around electricity.

## Are You Interested in Becoming a Lineman?

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be a lineman? Oahe Electric Cooperative has expanded its commitment to community by offering paid internship to students. Interns will have the opportunity to go out in the field with linemen, learning about different wiring and materials as well as how to put it together. The internship is for juniors or seniors interested in pursuing a career in linework.

Linemen complete challenging and oftentimes very dangerous work around high voltage electricity every day to ensure that when you flip a switch, the lights always come on. From blowing snow, fallen tree limbs or heavy rains, linemen work in extreme weather conditions day and night to safely make repairs and get the power back on for our customers. It’s physically demanding work, but also incredibly rewarding.

It takes a lot to become a lineman, thousands of hours of training and testing happen behind the scenes before they make it into the bucket truck parked in your neighborhood. If you are interested in seeing what a day in the life of a lineman looks like, please contact Chief Operations Officer Matt Eldridge at 1.800.640.6243 or [meldridge@oaheelectric.com](mailto:meldridge@oaheelectric.com).



# GARDENING GREATS

## How Master Gardeners are Cultivating Community Growth

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdua.coop

After years of tending to her garden, Codington-Clark Electric member Dianne Rider of Hazel can confidently say she is an expert in horticulture. However, her extensive experience of working with the earth isn't the only reason she is considered a soil savant.

In 2016, Rider earned the prodigious title of Master Gardener through the South Dakota State University Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer Program. This program provides in-depth horticultural training – covering topics like plant science, soil management and sustainable gardening practices – so enthusiasts like Rider can share their extensive gardening knowledge with their communities.

Becoming an Extension Master Gardener volunteer is a commitment. Applicants must complete horticulture classes, pass the course test and contribute 40 hours of volunteer service

during the first year of involvement. Despite the challenges, Rider had aspired to this achievement for decades, but it wasn't until she retired from her teaching career that she was able to dedicate herself fully and earn her place as a Master Gardener.

Reflecting the adage, “once a teacher, always a teacher,” Rider continues to educate and influence those around her, even after retirement, through gardening.

“Becoming a Master Gardener has always been on my bucket list since they organized,” Rider said. “I’ve always been a teacher, so finding a way to help others through gardening is probably what’s most rewarding.”

As a Master Gardener, Rider plays a key role in organizing annual gardening events for SDSU Extension, including the Master Gardener Annual Update Conference at Joy Ranch near Watertown. This event, attended by more than 125 Master Gardeners, serves as a thriving forum for gardening clubs to exchange ideas on the latest and greatest

projects they are tackling.

“The event is a lot of fun, because when you get 125 Master Gardeners in one room – let me tell you, the conversations are riveting,” Rider laughed.

Master gardeners also help SDSU Extension achieve its broader goal: to make cutting-edge research easily accessible to the people who can benefit from the findings. Master Gardeners have regular continuing education opportunities with experts from the SDSU Horticulture team, such as Professor John Ball, a SDSU Extension Forestry Specialist and South Dakota Department of Agriculture Forest Health Specialist. Once equipped with this information, volunteers can share the most significant takeaways from research being conducted across the state through the university, providing a bridge between research and practical application.

“Dr. John Ball’s presentation on how to trim a tree after planting it is one of the best things that I’ve learned that I can now share with others,” said Rider. “He says that raising a tree is just like raising a kid: you have to shape your tree when

Missouri Valley Master Gardeners remove invasive bellflower and other non-desirable plants at the Dorothy Jenks Memorial Garden in Yankton.  
*Photo courtesy of SDSU Extension.*



they are young, otherwise they turn into ugly adults.”

Master Gardener Field Specialist Prairey Walkling emphasizes that the connection between research-based information and enthusiasts is what the Master Gardener Volunteer Program thrives on. And the research goes far beyond just trees. SDSU’s horticulture research also extends into innovative mulching techniques, soil care and even studies on the growth and quality of four popular zinnia varieties.

“SDSU Extension wants to empower individuals to reach their gardening goals through providing science-based information. Each person has different pieces of land, resources and goals for their gardens and landscapes,” she said. “We strive to provide them with trusted, research-based information to help them make decisions.”

Walkling said the impact of these volunteers cannot be understated. According to Walkling, there are more than 400 Master Gardeners across the state and 14 Master Gardener clubs. In 2024, these vital volunteers hosted 153 gardening events, including farmers market booths, gardening workshops and demonstrations, reaching nearly 10,000 South Dakotans. Regardless of the event or what is being discussed, Walkling said Master Gardeners carry an infectious love of digging in the dirt.

“These volunteers help get people excited about gardening,” she said. “There are so many volunteer opportunities – teaching youth, teaching adults, maintaining demonstration gardens, answering questions, organizing events, engaging in horticultural research, writing horticulture articles – the sky is the limit.”



SDSU Extension Master Gardeners host an educational booth at the SD State Fair. From left: Lael Abelmann, Sharelle Meyer and Nancy Kadous.



Coteau Prairie Master Gardener Club (Watertown area) hosted the 2024 state conference at Joy Ranch. | Photos courtesy of SDSU Extension.

## Thank You Notes

I just want to thank you for the scholarship! It is going to be a great help in finding my school and I can't understate how much it means to me.

– Grace Hanten

Thank you so much for my selection for the 2025-2026 scholarship. Next year I plan to attend South Dakota State University to study business economics and political science.

Thanks,

– Sheridan Voorhees

Thank you for selecting me as a recipient of the Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. scholarship. I truly appreciate Oahe Electric and its people investing in my continued education. I am both proud and honored to be selected as a recipient.

Thanks again!

– Colton Brady

I am grateful for all opportunities the Pierre area has provided to me, and I greatly appreciate the Oahe Electric Cooperative's scholarship award.

Thank you,

– Keenan McQuiston

Thank you for selecting me as the lineman scholarship winner. As you know, I will be attending Mitchell Tech this fall. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the line crew last summer.

Best regards

– Bryce Becker

Oahe Electric,

On behalf of the 2025 Pierre Post Prom Committee, thank you very much for the generous donation. Your support is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

– Melissa Shaffer

## Oahe Electric Awards Pierre Senior \$1,000 Lineman Scholarship



Oahe Electric is pleased to announce **Bryce Becker** has been awarded the \$1,000 Lineman Scholarship.

Bryce is a senior at T.F. Riggs High School in Pierre. He is active in high school trap, 5-stand, and skeet teams, and enjoys hunting, fishing and riding dirt bikes. You may recognize Bryce as a participant in our

summer internship program from last summer! He plans on attending Mitchell Technical College's Powerline Construction and Maintenance Program for the 2025 fall semester.

Congratulations Bryce! We are thrilled for you to embark on this journey and wish you great success and fulfillment in your career as a Journeyman Lineman!

Hi my name is John McHale.  
I am an athlete and an employee of  
Special Olympics South Dakota.  
Thank you for your support!



Thank you,  
John McHale

**Special Olympics**  
South Dakota



800 E 1-90 Lane • Sioux Falls SD 57104  
605-331-4117

## Cove Heat Sale

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



# Oahe Electric Awards \$6,000 in Scholarships



Oahe Electric Cooperative, Inc. has awarded **Sheridan** Voorhees a \$2,000 scholarship, which is funded by Oahe Electric and Basin Electric Power Cooperative of Bismarck, N.D., and is for use during the 2024-2025 school year.

Sheridan is a senior at ABO High School in Onida, SD. Some of the activities she participates in are Band (Honors Band), Chorus, FCCLA (Chapter President), Student Council (Student Body President), National Honors Society (Chapter President), Volleyball (Team Co-Captain), Basketball (Team Co-Captain), Yearbook and History Club. She is also a very active member in both her church and her community. Sheridan plans to enroll at South Dakota State University this fall, majoring in Business Economics and Minor in Political Science. Her plans are to then attend law school and become practicing attorney. She is the daughter of Patrick and Tacea Voorhees of Onida. Congratulations Sheridan, keep up the great work!

In addition to the \$2,000 scholarship with Basin Electric, Oahe Electric also awarded an additional \$4,000 in scholarship to Grace Hanten, Sara Maher and Keenan McQuiston, who are all seniors at T.F. Riggs High School in Pierre, and Colton Brady, a senior at Stanley County High School in Ft. Pierre.



**Grace** is involved in Volleyball (Captain), Knitting Club (Co-President), National Honors Society, FBLA, and the Gov-to-Gov Mentorship Program, as well as being a coach for Girls on the Run, where she plans and teaches lessons to young girls about proper running form and vital life lessons. She also has been her school's primary sportswriter for The Governor newspaper. Her intention is to enroll at The University of South Dakota where she plans on majoring in Health Sciences and minoring in Biology, after which she plans on attending PA school to become a Certified Physicians Assistant. Grace is the daughter of Robert and Kay Hanten of Pierre.

Congratulations Grace! We wish you the best of luck in your career!



**Sara** is active in Student Council (Senior Class President), Competitive Dance Team (Co-Captain), National Honors Society, FBLA, Gov-to-Gov Mentoring Program, Track, and Volleyball, as well as volunteering at United Way, Feeding South Dakota, and PARS. She plans on attending The University of South Dakota, majoring in Medical Biology on a pre-med track. She recently received conditional acceptance into the Sanford School of Medicine through the SSOM Alumni Student Scholars Program, and plans on enrolling there to obtain a MD. After attending medical school, she hopes to match into a SD Residency Program to pursue rural medicine. Sara is the daughter of Tim and Jamie Maher of Pierre.

Congratulations Sara, we hope you realize your dreams and find much success!



**Keenan** participates in National Honors Society, the Gov-to-Gov Mentoring Program, and the Governor's Golf Team. He also donates his time to Feeding South Dakota and other community service programs. Keenan plans on attending the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, where he plans to pursue a Chemical Engineering degree. He is the son of Jesse and Jamie McQuiston of Pierre.

Congratulations on your achievements Keenan, and best of luck with your future goals!



**Colton** is involved in National Honor Society, as well as AAU Youth Wrestling Program as a volunteer. Colton plans on continuing his education at Dakota Wesleyan University, and will major in Elementary Education and Exercise Science, while also playing DWU Football. He hopes to teach physical education and coach youth sports after college. Colton is the son of Brian and Amy Brady of Pierre.

Congratulations Brady and good luck achieving your goals, we wish you the best of luck on your journey!

## 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.



Local, state and federal officials celebrate the ribbon-cutting of the new Lieutenant Commander John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge, March 25, 2025. Photo by Marcy Anderson, Courtesy of the Pierre Area Chamber of Commerce.

# BRIDGING HISTORY

## The Demolition of the Waldron Memorial Bridge

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Tons of concrete and steel came crashing down in a planned demolition of the Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge that connected Pierre and Fort Pierre over a half mile stretch of river. The planned explosion marked a significant historic moment for not only Pierre and Fort Pierre, but also eastern and western South Dakota.

The demolition of the bridge unfolded in seconds. A plume of black smoke erupted from the detonating cord placed at key points in the bridge, quickly followed by a bone-rattling shock wave. Paul Nelson, a recently retired employee of the South Dakota Department of Transportation, witnessed the end of the bridge's 63-year lifespan. Nelson, a member of Oahe Elec-

tric, spent over 40 years with the SDDOT, serving most of that time as the regional bridge engineer. In this role, he was responsible for the maintenance, inspection and upkeep of the very bridge that he saw demolished.

As legacy bridge engineer, this was not Nelson's first experience with such a demolition. "I had actually witnessed the 1986 demolition of the old truss bridge that was just downstream of the current railroad bridge – so I have been around something of this magnitude before," he explained.

Even still, Nelson laughed that the modern demolition had a "pretty good report when it went off."

Although the bridge has been decommissioned, its history endures. In 2002, the bridge was dedicated to Lt. Cmdr. John C.

Waldron, a naval aviator from Fort Pierre who led a torpedo squadron during the Battle of Midway in World War II. His actions proved pivotal in the battle, but led to death of himself and most of his squadron. Of the 30 men who served under his command, only one survived the Battle of Midway.

Waldron's legacy is still commemorated through the new Pierre-Fort Pierre Bridge, which had its ribbon-cutting ceremony last month.

Construction of the new bridge began in 2020, just yards from the old bridge's location. In total, the bridge cost nearly \$50 million and is designed to last a century.

"This bridge is going to be a beautiful and wonderful enhancement to the communities and something that will last more than a hundred years," South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden said at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new bridge that now connects the two halves of the state.



# BRIDGE DEMOLITION



The Lt. Cmdr. John C. Waldron Memorial Bridge comes crashing down at 9:03 a.m., on March 13.  
*Photos by Frank Turner.*







Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.

# PROTECT AND SERVE

**In 1962, President John F. Kennedy proclaimed May 15 as National Police Officers Memorial Day and the week as National Police Week.**

**As we pay special recognition to our law enforcement officers, we want to spotlight some of the selfless work police officers do to better serve communities and make positive impacts in people's lives.**

## Jacob Boyko

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In Belle Fourche, it's fun to hang out with the cops.

That's the consensus among fifth graders in the Kids-n-Cops programs when officers from the Belle Fourche Police Department arrive at kids' homes early in the morning to pick them up for an unforgettable Christmas shopping spree.

"We pick up the kids from their houses, drive them around for about a half hour and let them activate the lights and sirens, then we bring them to Runnings and go on a shopping spree for their family," explained Police Chief Ryan Cherveney. "They can buy shopping cart loads of gifts for everyone in their house, and then still buy some gifts for themselves."

The outing continues with games, gift wrapping and a pizza party. At the end of the day, officers drop the kids off at their

homes, leaving behind not only presents but a lasting friendship.

The police department works with the school to target children who may be going through something at home or could otherwise benefit from a friendly acquaintance with some of Belle Fourche's finest.

The program is supported by donations from community – last year, the community sponsored \$500 shopping limits for 16 kids.

Cherveney, who's headed the program for more than a decade, says it's as big of a hit with his officers as it is with the fifth graders.

"It's one of the things every year the officers look forward to," Cherveney explained. "We never have to ask for volunteers because just about everybody volunteers. Even the guys working the overnights come in, do the event, and then

go home and try to get the last two hours of sleep before they come back to work."

Knowing the community members they serve and making a difference in the life of a kid boosts officers' mental health "tremendously," he added.

"It helps keep the officers grounded – they know the people that they're serving and that they're there to protect. [Knowing community members] can help alleviate a really stressful situation into a much more manageable one where we're able to work with people to resolve things."

He continued, "Our main focus is just being out there in the community, helping kids recognize that when we show up to their houses during negative events, we're there because we have a job – it's less scary for the children and they see we're people they can always come to when they need somebody"

The success of the program and the outpouring of community support has led the department to expand their community involvement beyond Christmas shopping, according to Police Administrative Technician Mardi Reeves. The police force also distributed grocery



cards, gift bags, food and blankets to families in need. Reeves estimates a community-wide impact of nearly 200 people in 2024.

Police officers and other first responders also coach little league sports, with plans to soon offer registration fee and equipment “scholarships” so any kid can get involved.

“There are a lot of under-privileged children who can’t be in sports that end up wandering around town with nothing to do and trouble tends to find them,” Reeves said. “Having them participate in a sport really helps with that.”

Chervený says he is grateful for the continued community support that not only makes the Kids-n-Cops program possible, but also creates lasting friendships and memories for kids and their families.

“We had a kid that went shopping with us, and he ended up buying a popcorn popper, oil, butter, cheese, and the different popcorn toppings along with gifts for his other siblings,” Chervený remembered. “The family had never been able to go to a movie – the parents worked rough schedules – so this was the opportunity. The kid bought some movies and a Blu-ray player and the whole purpose was so that they could sit down and watch movies as a family.”

Gregory Police Chief Ryan Cook also believes in the merits of community

involvement. In Gregory, he spearheads multiple community initiatives including the popular bike rodeo.

A partnership between the police department, Avera Health and Gregory’s volunteer ambulance and fire services, the bike rodeo teaches kids – and anyone else interested – the rules of the road for kids on bicycles as well as other safety tips.

“We have volunteers at different stations and the kids go around to each station and participate in whatever event that is,” Cook explained. “One of the stations is helmet sizing and we hand out free helmets, other stations make sure the bicycle chain is lubed up and tight and the different parts are working correctly, and so on.”

The department is involved in other ways, too. For example, the officers work with the post office to ensure children’s letters to Santa Claus are delivered to the North Pole and receive a response.

The involvement is a necessity, explained Cook, because police can’t do their jobs and serve their communities without building relationships first.

“You need to be someone the community trusts,” he said. “You want folks to be comfortable approaching you, knowing there’s an open door, knowing they’re welcome to make the phone call or stop in. And obviously, when our officers are active and out doing stuff, it’s that much easier.”

## Women in Law Enforcement



**Metzger**

Public service knows no gender, and neither does a career in law enforcement. That’s the message South Dakota Highway Patrol

deputy Emily Metzger wants to send to young girls with a passion for public service.

Originally from Kansas, Metzger attended the University of South Dakota in Vermillion to study criminal justice and public administration.

“I wanted to be in law enforcement since I was very young,” Metzger explained. My grandfather was in law enforcement, and in college I worked for the fire department and ambulance and really decided being a first responder was something I wanted to do.”

After college, she attended the police academy training in Pierre, where for 13 weeks she studied everything ranging from traffic stops to defensive tactics to interrogation. Then, another 10 weeks of highway patrol academy and another 10 weeks of field training.

“In South Dakota, the Highway Patrol offers a lot of different things,” Metzger said. “All of our education and training is 100% paid for and they pay your salary while you’re there.”

While the Highway Patrol isn’t exactly brimming with female troopers, Metzger said she’s on the scene to help just like anyone else.

“I have the same expectations as any trooper highway patrol – there’s no special treatment,” she said.

Metzger encourages young women interested in applying to reach out to a local law enforcement officer for more information.



Officer Allan Guinard helps local children with their Christmas shopping. Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Police Dept.



The Annual Bike Rodeo. Photo courtesy of the Gregory Police Dept.



**MAY 31, JUNE 28, JULY 26**  
**Fort Sisseton Lantern Tour**  
 Lake City, SD  
 605-910-4465

*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.

**APRIL 27**  
**Country Roads**  
 2 p.m. Matinee  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-760-5799

**MAY 2-3**  
**SD Spring Square Dance Festival**  
 Fri. 7:30-10:30 p.m.  
 Sat. 9:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m.  
 Faith Lutheran Church  
 601 N. Cliff Ave.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 Call for events & times  
 605-360-2524

**MAY 3-4**  
**Prairie Village Events**  
 Sat. Consignment Auction  
 Sun. Season Opening  
 Madison, SD  
[www.prairievillage.org](http://www.prairievillage.org)

**MAY 3**  
**West River Pheasants Forever Banquet**  
 5 p.m. Central Time  
 Draper Auditorium  
 Draper, SD  
 605-516-0143

**MAY 3**  
**American Legion Post 15**  
**Just Because It's Time to Dance**  
 6-10:30 p.m.  
 El Riad Shrine  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-336-3470

**MAY 3**  
**Rummage & Bake Sale**  
 8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 5103 Longview Rd.  
 Rapid City, SD

**MAY 6-7**  
**7th Annual Energize!**  
**Exploring Innovative Rural Communities Conference**  
 Hosted by SDSU Extension  
 Community Vitality  
 Platte, SD  
 605-626-2870

**MAY 10**  
**Cinco De Mayo Falls Park Fiesta**  
 11 a.m.-7 p.m.  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**MAY 17**  
**Norwegian Independence Day**  
 Vivian, SD  
 605-222-3296

**MAY 17**  
**Annual Plant Sale**  
 9 a.m.-11 a.m.  
 Codington Co. Extension Complex  
 Watertown, SD  
 830-534-5359

**MAY 23-25**  
**Brandon's Big Car Show**  
 Carnival & Car Show  
 Fri. 6-11 p.m.  
 Sat. 1-11 p.m., Car Show 1-4 p.m.  
 Sun. 12-5 p.m.  
 815 McHardy Rd  
 Brandon, SD

**MAY 31**  
**Auto Parts Swap Meet & Car Show**  
 8 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Brown County Fairgrounds  
 Aberdeen, SD

**MAY 31**  
**Miss Prairie Village Pageant**  
 6:30 p.m.  
 Lawrence Welk Opera House  
 Madison, SD  
[www.prairievillage.org](http://www.prairievillage.org)

**MAY 31**  
**Hay Country Jamboree**  
 7 p.m.  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-760-5799

**JUNE 5**  
**Danish Constitution Day Celebration**  
 6:15 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Danish Folk Dancing & Music  
 Daneville Heritage Museum  
 Viborg, SD  
 605-766-1312  
[danevilleheritage.com](http://danevilleheritage.com)

**JUNE 11**  
**Agricultural Women's Day**  
 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Agar-Blunt-Onida School  
 Onida, SD  
 605-769-0013

**JUNE 13**  
**Jesse James Days**  
 Garretson, SD  
[visitgarretsonsd.com](http://visitgarretsonsd.com)

**Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.**