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Cooperative Connections

APRIL 2016 VOL. 68 NO. 4

Tech Ed
Building Skills for Workforce of Tomorrow

P8-9


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South Dakota Electric Cooperative Connections

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Editorial

Make a Call to 811 Part of Your Springtime Plans

Ed Anderson
General Manager, South Dakota Rural Electric Association

Spring is finally here! With the snow melted and the ground ready for planting, eager homeowners are gearing up to start those outdoor digging projects. Before you reach for that shovel to start digging, remember to call 811, the national call before you dig number, to ensure that your buried utility lines are marked.

The Common Ground Alliance and its 1,700 members, including South Dakota's electric cooperatives, recognize April as National Safe Digging Month. Throughout April, cooperatives and other utilities will be promoting National Safe Digging Month through statewide outreach and local events. For more information, visit www.call811.com.

National Safe Digging Month was designated to remind residents that our land is made up of a complex underground infrastructure of pipelines, wires and cables. Striking an underground utility line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

A call must be placed to 811 before every digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs, to building a deck or installing a rural mailbox.

Every six minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.

Every six minutes an underground utility line is damaged because someone decided to dig without first calling 811.

Don't become part of the statistic – make sure to call 811!

Here's how it works:

- One free, simple phone call to 811 makes it easy for South Dakota One Call to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig.
- Call at least 48 hours prior to digging to ensure enough time for utility lines to be properly marked.
- When you call 811, a representative from South Dakota One Call will ask for the location and description of your digging project.
- South Dakota One Call will notify affected utility companies, who will then each send a professional locator to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines.
- Once lines have been properly marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the marked areas.

South Dakota 811®
Know what's **below.**
Call before you dig.

Power Tools and Equipment Safety

Many do-it-yourself projects involve the use of power tools. Working with power tools requires skilled instruction and training. They can be deadly if not properly used or maintained. The most common scenario for power tool-related electrocutions is when the equipment comes in contact with live electrical wires while it is being used.

Facts and Statistics:

• According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), there are nearly 400 electrocutions in the United States each year.

• Approximately 15 percent of electrocutions are related to consumer products.

• 8 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are attributed to electrical accidents with power drills, saws, sanders, hedge trimmers and other electric power tools.

• 9 percent of consumer product-related electrocutions each year are caused by accidents involving the use of lawn and garden equipment and ladders, which come into contact with overhead power lines.

Power Tool Safety Tips:

• Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) with every power tool to protect against electric shocks.

• Do not use power tools with an extension cord that exceeds 100 feet in length.

• Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes.

• Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls where electrical wires or water pipes could be accidentally touched or penetrated.

• If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a manufacturer-authorized repair center for service.

• When working with electricity, use tools with insulated grips.

• Do not use power tools without the proper guards.

• When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electric shock.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):

• Safeguards on outdoor electric tools are there for a reason. Make sure that they are always in place before operating.

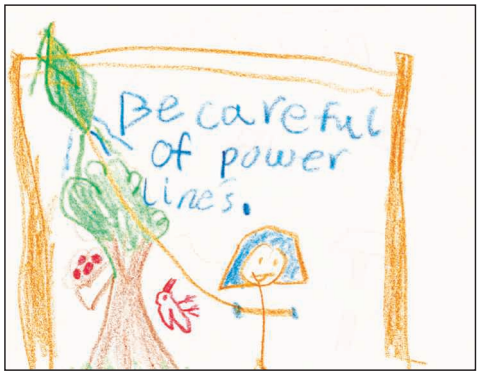
• Invest in the safety goggles, hearing protection, dust masks, gloves and other safety gear as recommended for each tool. A few dollars now are well worth the lifetime of good sight and hearing that they are protecting.

• Wear the appropriate clothes for the job. Wearing sandals while mowing the lawn is just asking for trouble.

Source: esfi.org

Kids' Corner Safety Poster

"Be careful of power lines."



Dani Carlson, 7 years old
Dani is the daughter of John Carlson and Kristina Matucha, Burke, S.D. They are members of Rosebud Electric, Gregory, S.D.

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.

Appetizers and Beverages

Hot Olive Puff

1 cup grated natural sharp cheese
3 T. soft butter
1/2 cup flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. paprika
24 stuffed green olives

Blend cheese with butter. Stir in flour, salt and paprika; mix well. Wrap 1 tsp. dough around each olive, completely covering olive. Bake at 400°F. for 10 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. May be prepared ahead and frozen until time to bake.

Carolyn K. Wickert, Baltic

Cucumber Sandwiches

1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
3 to 4 T. sour cream or real mayonnaise
1 (1 oz.) pkg. Hidden Valley Ranch salad dressing mix, dry
1 (1 lb.) pkg. small cocktail bread, rye or pumpernickel
2 large cucumbers, sliced 1/4-inch thick
Dill weed

Combine first 3 ingredients in bowl; mix well. Spread on slices of bread. Top with a cucumber slice and sprinkle with dill weed. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

Jan Nelson, Belle Fourche

Milk Punch

12 oz. fruit punch concentrate, thawed
2 quarts cold milk
2 quarts vanilla ice cream
1 bottle lemon-lime soda

Combine punch, milk and ice cream; stir until ice cream begins to melt. Add soda just before serving.

Shirley Dreher, Clark

Pepperoni Dip

1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sour cream
3 oz. chopped pepperoni
1 can chopped green chiles, undrained
1 to 2 T. minced onion

Combine all ingredients and put in a small baking dish. Bake at 325°F. for 30 minutes. Serve with crackers.

Nancy Noess, Mitchell

Powerhouse Green Smoothie

3/4 cup seedless green grapes
1/2 cup ripe banana slices
1/4 cup chopped kale
2/3 cup non-fat plain Greek yogurt
1-1/2 tsp. canola oil
1/2 cup ice cubes

In blender, combine all ingredients. Blend for about 30 seconds to 1 minute or until desired smoothness is achieved. Yields 1 serving. Serving size: 1-2/3 cups

Nutritional analysis per serving: 290 calories; 7 g total fat (0.5 g saturated fat); 0 mg cholesterol; 42 g carbohydrates; 3 g fiber; 31 g sugars; 17 g protein; 75 mg sodium; 502 mg potassium

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Sunrise Smoothie

1-1/2 cups frozen sliced strawberries
3/4 cup milk
3/4 cup or 1 (6 oz.) can pineapple juice
1/2 cup vanilla yogurt
1/4 cup frozen pineapple pieces
2 T. sugar
2 T. orange juice
6 large ice cubes

Place all ingredients into blender. Blend until smooth. Garnish with fresh fruit. Serve immediately.

Charlotte Hoverstadt, Webster

Glazed Meatballs

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 cup dry bread crumbs
1/3 cup minced onions
1/4 cup milk
1 egg, beaten
1 T. parsley
1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/2 cup bottled chili sauce
12 oz. grape jelly

Combine first 7 ingredients; mix well. Shape into 1-inch balls. Place in cake pan. Bake at 375°F. for 20 to 30 minutes, until browned. Mix together chili sauce and grape jelly. Warm in microwave 2 minutes. Place meatballs in slow cooker. Add sauce and warm for 2 to 3 hours.

Margene Paige, Presho

Fruit Dip

1 can sweetened condensed milk
1 (6 oz.) can lemonade
1 (8 oz.) container Cool Whip

Mix together all ingredients. Serve with any kind of fruit.

Catherine Jungwirth, Ashton

Please send your favorite casserole, dairy and dessert recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2016. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

What You Can Learn from a Home Energy Audit

Patrick Keegan
Collaborative Efficiency

Dear Pat: I keep hearing about home energy audits. How do they work and will they save me money?
– Lorena C.

Dear Lorena: You are smart to be thinking about a home energy audit. Spending a few hundred dollars now can save you thousands of dollars over time.

A home energy audit is a detailed assessment of your home that can give you a roadmap for future energy-related investments. An energy audit can meet different needs:

• What efficiency investments will be most effective in reducing your energy bills?

• Are areas of your home sometimes too hot or too cold? An energy audit can identify problem areas and solutions.

• Are you considering a new furnace, air conditioner or rooftop solar system? An energy audit will help you "right-size" these systems and identify complementary measures that will help these large investments work most efficiently.

• Are you considering selling your home? An energy audit can document your home's efficiency to help improve its resale value.

Online audit tools can give you a basic understanding of how your home compares to similar ones. However, a qualified and professional home energy auditor can use their experience and high-tech tools to provide a thorough report of your home's challenges and opportunities. A professional energy audit can range from a quick, visual walk-through of the home to a more comprehensive, more informative – but more expensive assessment.

Energy audits require an examination of the building envelope (attic, floor and exterior walls) and the energy systems in the home, such as the water heater, air conditioner and furnace. Follow the auditor during the inspection and ask questions so you can understand where the problems are, what you can address yourself and where you may need further professional help. The auditor may analyze your recent energy bills to determine what your energy is used for and if use has recently changed. Finally, the auditor will ask about the energy use behaviors for those who live in the home. For example, is someone home all day or does everyone leave for work and school? Ford Tupper, an energy auditor with the Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina noted, "The residents' habits can make a big impact on the energy bill and can also be the hardest to change. If you go from being a household with two working adults to one with a new baby and an adult home most of the day, your energy use is going to go up."

An auditor may do some or all of the following tests:

• **Blower door test:** Windows are often the suspected cause for air leaks in the home, but there are usually larger and less obvious sources; a blower door test measures how airtight your home is and identifies where the air leaks are.

• **Duct blaster:** Ducts move the warm and cool air around your home; duct testing can measure whether your ducts are leaking.

• **Thermographic imaging:** Seth Rosser, an energy advisor at United Cooperative Services in Texas shared, "Identifying where more insulation is needed is a key component in our energy audits – too little insulation will make a member use more energy than needed. Adding more can provide a quick return on investment." Thermographic imaging is one way to identify where more insulation is needed. Infrared images show "cold" spots in a home's envelope.

If you take action based on your auditor's recommendations, you could lower your energy bill 5 percent to 30 percent and perhaps even more!

• **Health and safety testing:** Energy auditors are also trained to spot safety problems, such as a missing smoke detector or an appliance that could cause carbon monoxide issues. Some auditors can also test your home for radon.

Following the assessment of your home, the auditor will analyze the information and make recommendations on what systems could be upgraded or behavior changes you can make to reduce energy use and improve comfort. If you take action based on your auditor's recommendations, you could lower your energy bill 5 percent to 30 percent and perhaps even more!

Your electric co-op may be able to help you get started with your energy audit. Some co-ops even offer discounted audits or a list of qualified energy auditors in the area. Be sure whoever you hire is willing to answer questions and plan to be home during the audit – it is a great opportunity to learn what makes your home tick and how you can make it even better.

This column was co-written by Patrick Keegan and Amy Wheeless of Collaborative Efficiency. Patrick Keegan writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

U.S. Supreme Court Issues Stay on CPP

Electric cooperatives said they welcome the U.S. Supreme Court's Feb. 9 decision to block the Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan until all legal challenges to it are resolved.

"Charging ahead with implementation of the Clean Power Plan would have caused immediate and irreparable harm to America's electric co-ops," said NRECA interim CEO Jeffrey Connor.

"Had the stay not been granted, co-ops would have been forced to take costly and irreversible steps to comply with the rule, which is a huge overreach of EPA's legal authority. The Clean Power Plan is a direct threat to co-ops' ability to provide affordable and reliable electricity to their member consumers and should be erased from the books."

Under the 5-4 order, the Clean Power Plan is on hold until the Supreme Court either takes up the case and issues a final decision, or denies a request to hear an appeal.

That means a final resolution might not come until 2017. A federal appeals court is scheduled to take up arguments on the case in June.

Basin Electric Power Cooperative petitioned the Supreme Court Jan. 27 to stay the Clean Power Plan after a federal appeals court rejected pleas to halt the rule. NRECA, 38 electric co-ops and other utility interests joined the petition.

The order, issued without explanation, responds to a similar request filed by 29 states and industry interests. Legal analysts noted that it is unusual for the court to issue such a stay when a regulation has been finalized, indicating the court has doubts about the plan's legality.

The Clean Power Plan sets carbon dioxide limits for each state to achieve an overall emissions reduction of 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030. The rule's compliance period was set to begin in 2022. It is aimed at fossil-fuel generation.

NRECA has estimated that total compliance costs for electric co-ops could reach as much as $28 billion.

An appeals court is scheduled to hear arguments in June.

- By Cathy Cash/ECT.coop Staff Writer

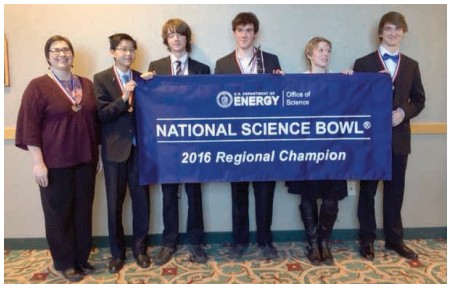
Rapid City Stevens Team Wins South Dakota Science Bowl

Budding scientists from Rapid City, S.D., Stevens High School will represent the Rushmore state at the National Science Bowl April 28 to May 2 in Washington, D.C.

The Stevens team had to beat another Stevens team to capture the South Dakota title on Jan. 23 in Huron.

At the national competition, the top 16 high school teams and the top 16 middle school teams in the National Finals will win $1,000 for their schools' science departments.

Minnesota will be represented at the national competition by a team from Edina Senior High School in Edina, Minn.



The Rapid City Stevens High School team of Coach Angela Giffin, Alan Zhu, Gabriel Spahn, Joshua Morin-Baxter, Rachel Fenenga and Nathan Wiley will represent South Dakota at the National Science BowlApril 28 to May 2.

Estimated 500 Attend Electric Cooperative Day at the Capitol

When the dust settled on the 2016 Electric Cooperative Day at the Capitol, only two sets of prepackaged silverware were left from the box of 500.

About 80 cooperative directors and employees from most of the state's cooperatives attended the event. Attendees were able to attend committee hearings in the morning and visit with their local legislators. In the afternoon, Chairman Chris Nelson of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission provided an update on various topics and SDREA Lead Lobbyist Darla Rogers and her colleague, Margo Northrup, provided updates on SB127, the railroad/utility crossing bill. Participants were also recognized from the floor of the Senate and House.

Skilled Education

Technical Schools See to Tomorrow's Workforce

By Brenda Kleinjan

Two South Dakota technical institutes are once again being recognized on the national stage for their efforts to educate tomorrow's workforce.

Highlighting the critical importance of improving student success in America's community colleges, the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program named Lake Area Technical Institute (LATI) and Mitchell Technical Institute (MTI) among the nation's top 150 community colleges eligible to compete for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence and $1 million in prize funds, as well as Siemens Technical Scholars Program student scholarships.

The Prize, awarded every two years, is the nation's signature recognition of high achievement and performance among America's community colleges and recognizes institutions for exceptional student outcomes in four areas: student learning, certificate and degree completion, employment and earnings, and access and success for minority and low-income students. Both schools have made the list since the inception of the award and Lake Area Tech has been a Finalist with Distinction each time.

Six Minnesota schools also made the list: Alexandria Technical and Community College in Alexandria; Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Coon Rapids; Minnesota State Community and Technical College in Fergus Falls; Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Granite Falls, Northland Community and Technical College in Thief River Falls; and Ridgewater College in Willmar.

"Everyone in our organizations is focused on one mission: building South Dakota's technically skilled workforce. Our students can be confident their education prepares them for in-demand technical careers; and business and industry can be assured our graduates are ready to tackle the challenges of today's dynamic and technology-driven environment. As a system of four technical schools, we are committed to continually improving. National recognition like the Aspen College Excellence program affirms our efforts are making a difference," LATI President Mike Cartney and MTI President Mark Wilson said in a joint statement.

Nearly half of America's college students attend community college, with more than 7 million students – youth and adult learners – working towards certificates and degrees in these institutions across the country. More than 6,300 students are currently enrolled in South Dakota's technical institute system.

"Community colleges have tremendous power to change lives and their success will increasingly define our nation's economic strength and the potential for

Right: Classroom instruction is part of technical institute education. Here, a Mitchell Technical Institute instructor works with a student in the classroom.
On the Cover: MTI instructor Jason Juhnke supervises a student in MTI's Heating and Cooling Technology program.

Photos courtesy Mitchell Technical Institute

social mobility in our country," said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. "This competition is designed to spotlight the excellent work being done in the most effective community colleges, those that best help students obtain meaningful, high-quality education and training for competitive-wage jobs after college. We hope it will raise the bar and provide a roadmap to better student outcomes for community colleges nationwide."

Tiffany Sanderson, director of South Dakota's Division of Career and Technical Education, points out, "The four technical institutes in Watertown, Mitchell, Sioux Falls and Rapid City do an outstanding job of preparing students as skilled scholars, ready to contribute to business' goals and the communities where they live. For half of our schools to be named to the nation's top 15 percent of two-year colleges, speaks heavily to their quality."

South Dakota's technical institutes came into being in 1965 as an extension of the K-12 education system. Since then, their status has changed to fully-accredited postsecondary institutions that award Associate of Applied Science (A.A.S.) degrees in technical areas requiring unique training and education from other postsecondary institutions.

Supporters for tech ed point out that the schools status under the South Dakota state constitution has not been recognized as the last change to the constitution dealing with postsecondary education was made in 1944. As a consequence, the state's technical institutes lack a clearly defined and recognized status, they say.

Voters in the November general election will be asked to consider supporting Amendment R – The Skilled Workforce Amendment, which advocates say will provide the foundation for fixing the shortage of skilled workers in South Dakota. The amendment would elevate the mission of the state's four technical institutes to a constitutional mandate, allowing for a stronger voice in prioritizing state and federal assets in support of the technical institute mission and increase their output – entry level skilled workers. Amendment R is a result of a House Joint Resolution that was passed unanimously through both the House and the Senate and had proponents from the South Dakota Board of Regents, the governor's office, business and industry, technical institutes and school districts.

Without the mandate, technical institutes have no advocate to represent their realistic funding and program needs during the state's appropriations process. Per student funding is significantly lower for technical institutes than it is for universities of K-12 districts. This creates staggering disparities, organizers with Tech Schools for South Dakota note. South Dakota's technical institutes cost less to operate than two-year colleges in the six surrounding states, but receive less state support. Students are left to make up the difference, paying more than their counterparts at any two-year colleges in neighboring states.

Building a Better Future

Build Dakota is a new scholarship program created through a $50 million investment funded by a $25 million donation from T. Denny Sanford and a $25 million contribution from the South Dakota Future Fund.

Build Dakota Scholarships will be awarded to skilled scholars entering high-need workforce programs at South Dakota technical institutes.

Build Dakota gives students entering South Dakota tech schools an opportunity to plan a foundation for their future. You'll come out of school with no student debt and a set of skills in high demand, so you'll be ready to hit the ground running and start your career right away.

The scholarship application priority period is Oct. 1 through Dec. 31. However, some schools may still be accepting applications through March 20 for the 2016-2017 school year.

Program Details

- Both in-state students and out-of-state students are eligible for the scholarships.
- The scholarships will support tuition, fees, books and other required program expenses in the eligible technical institute programs.
- Recipients of the scholarships will commit to living and working in the state, in their field of study, for three years following graduation.
- In the first five years, a projected 300 scholarships will be awarded annually. Beyond the first five years, the endowment will support approximately 50 full-ride scholarships.

Eligibility Requirements

- U.S. citizen or U.S. national
- Applicants need not be South Dakota residents

Financial Need

Demonstrated aptitude through one or more of the following:

- The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) or other industry-recognized certifications in the career area.
- Technical, dual or concurrent credit courses taken in the career interest area.
- Career and Technical Education coursework completed in the career interest area.
- Work-based learning experiences, internships or work experience in the career interest area.
- Enrolling as a first-time student.

Student Commitment

In accepting scholarship awards, recipients will agree to:

- Enroll full-time in a technical institute program determined as a high-need workforce area in South Dakota.
- Following graduation, work full-time in the field of study in South Dakota for a minimum of three years.

The Skilled Workforce Amendment:

- Recognizes today's need for a job-focused post-secondary education system
- Helps provide businesses with much-needed skilled employees
- Educates skilled workers for immediate employment right here in South Dakota
- Allows our technical schools direct access to government decision-makers
- Clarifies where our technical schools fit in our state's education landscape
- Aligns South Dakota's public education system with trends in jobs-related education

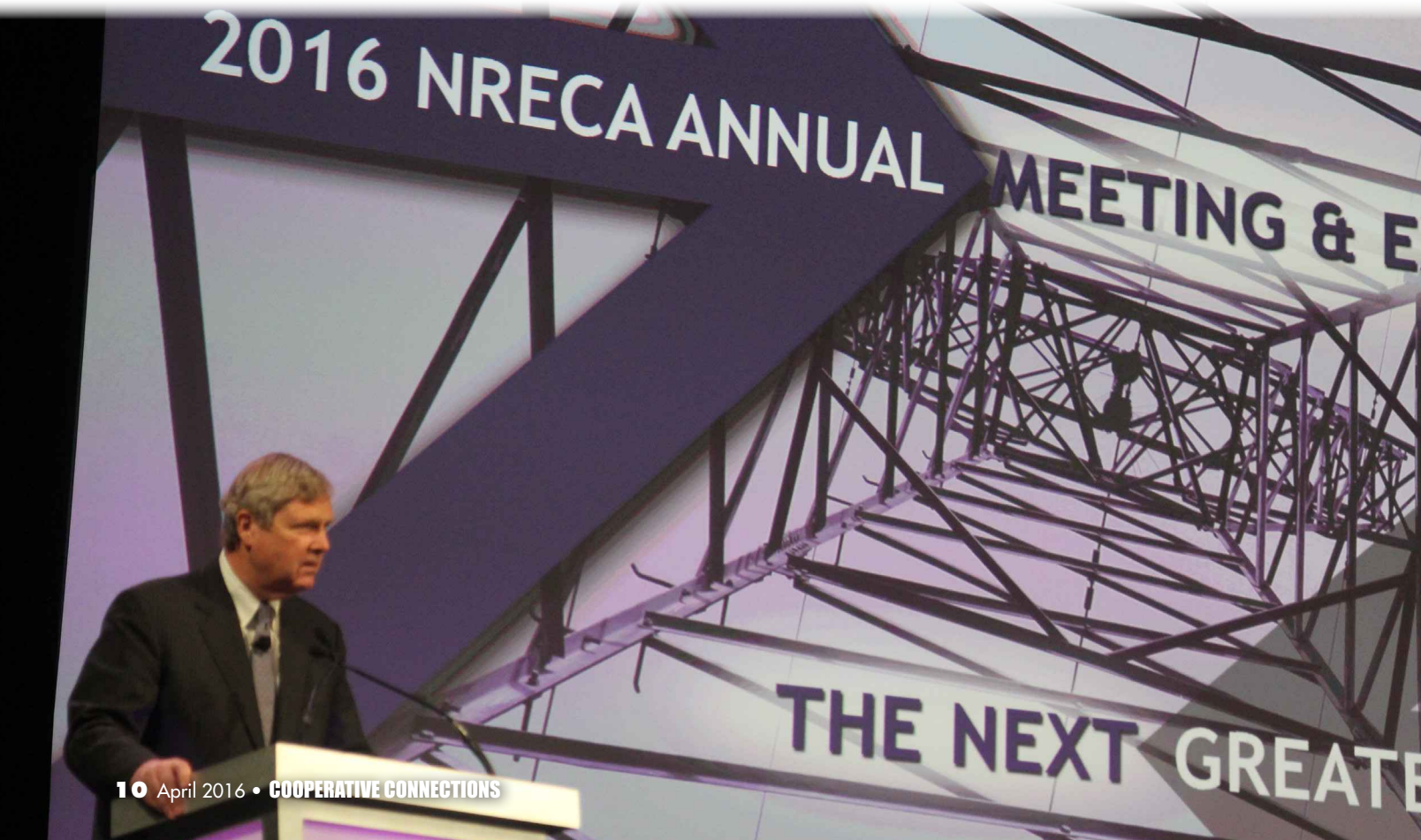
The Next Greatest Thing

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association held its annual meeting Feb. 14-17 in New Orleans, La., under the banner "The Next Greatest Thing."

Several local co-op employees took to the stage for breakout sessions during NRECA's annual meetings. East River Electric's Linda Salmonson was part of a discussion on "The Cooperatives' Vital Role in Growing the Rural Economy." Sioux Valley Energy's Carrie Law talked about the importance of branding as she participated in a Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives breakout (coverage at http://www.ect.coop/industry/trends-reports-analyses/why-brand-matters-for-electric-cooperatives/89359) and Basin Electric's Paul Sukut was one of the panelists in the "Clean Power Plan: What Co-ops Are Doing" discussion. (See ECT.coop coverage of Sukut's panel at http://www.ect.coop/regulatory-watch/environmental-regulation/electric-co-ops-weigh-options-clean-power-plan-stay/89631).

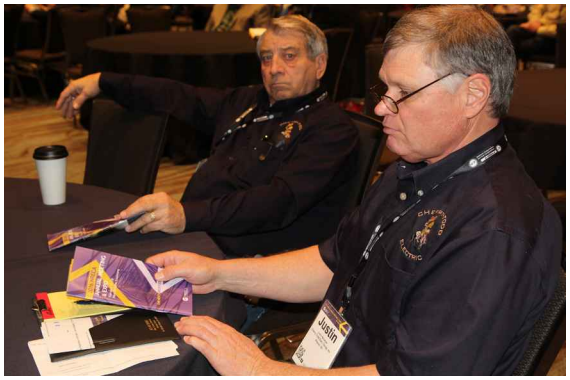
During the meeting, NRECA also unveiled its new major initiative to enhance voter engagement. The goal of the "Co-ops Vote" campaign is to boost voter turnout in areas served by cooperatives by encouraging electric co-op employees and their consumer members to exercise one of their most basic rights – the right to vote.

"America's electric cooperatives are leaders in the communities they serve throughout the country with a powerful sense of their civic duty," said NRECA Interim CEO Jeffrey Connor. "Co-ops Vote focuses elected leaders on the people who are most invested in the success of their own communities. With 42 million members across the nation, electric co-ops are a powerful voice on national issues that have a local impact. We want to be sure that voice is always heard."



Above Left: Sioux Valley Energy's Carrie Law, second from right, talks about the importance of branding during a Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives breakout session.
Above: Basin Electric Power Cooperative CEO Paul Sukut, second from left, discusses the Clean Power Plan during a panel discussion.
Left: East River Electric Power Cooperative's Linda Salmonson, second from right, participates in a panel discussion on electric cooperatives' role in growing the rural economy.
Below: Voting delegates listen to explanations on resolutions before casting their cooperative's votes.
Below left: Wheaton, Minn.-based Traverse Electric Cooperative director Roger Derby finishes turning in his voting credentials prior to NRECA's business meeting.

Right: Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative directors J.R. Reagle, left, and Justin Brickner listen to presentations during the annual meeting.
Opposite Page: United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack spoke at the closing session.



Beyond Belief

Don't Let Scams Make You an April Fool

By Brian Sloboda

A quick search of the Internet reveals many great ways to save energy around your home. Simple things, such as adding insulation or using energy efficient light bulbs, are simple and relatively inexpensive ways to save small amounts of energy. The same search will also reveal "amazing" products that claim to cut up to a third of your energy bill – without you changing anything about your energy use habits. Claims like this sound too good to be true, and there is good reason for that. These claims almost always turn out to be exaggerations or downright lies.

An energy efficiency scam is generally easy for a person who works at an electric co-op to spot and identify. However, it isn't so easy for most people. Scams generally center around misstatements of science or confusion over utility programs.

A popular scam is a little box that promises to save you energy. The box is a device that supposedly saves energy without the consumer making any changes to behavior, turning anything off or adjusting the thermostat. The people who sell these boxes often claim outrageous energy savings – sometimes as much as 30 percent or more. They often use terms, such as power conditioning, capacitors and power factor, all of which are legitimate industry terms.

The sales pitch usually goes something like this: The device being sold will control alternating current, power factor and reduce the cost of electric bills. It will condition your power and make appliances last longer. The device uses no power and has no moving parts. It will make the motors in your home run better. The sales material often claims that the utility doesn't want you to know about the device. That last part is actually true – because it is a rip off. Variations of the product have been sold to both residential and commercial customers.

There are several questions that you should ask a salesman (or yourself!) when reading an ad for the next magical cure-all:

1. Does it violate the laws of science? Some products claim that they are capable of "changing the molecular structure … to release never-before tapped power." Changing the laws of science is no

easy task. If the inventors truly can do this, the product will surely be sold at every store in the nation and they will become very wealthy. They won't be mailing out flyers or operating from a poorly designed web site.

2. Was the product tested by an independent group like a national lab or university? If the performance of the product was not tested and certified by a lab or other entity not connected to the company selling it, then be skeptical. Call the third party group and talk to them. Sometimes scammers lie about the tests.

3. Is it too good to be true? In today's economic times, saving money is top of mind. We want something to be true so that we can save money, improve our lives and feed our families. But wanting something to work doesn't mean it will.

Sometimes energy scammers contact consumers directly, either by calling or stopping by and claiming they represent the local electric co-op. Never give anyone personal or financial information who claims to be an employee of the co-op without confirming their identity. If they call, ask for a call back number, then verify their identity with your co-op. If they stop by, ask the person for a valid employee ID.

The key is to be skeptical and ask questions. Asking tough questions and being skeptical will not offend honest people. Remember, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Brian Sloboda is a technical research analyst specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the Business Technology Strategies (BTS), a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

How to Spot a Scam

http://www.ag.state.mn.us/Consumer/Publications/howtospotascam.asp

Scammers are constantly reinventing new ways to perpetrate old ploys. Whether you're contacted by phone, mail, email, text or in-person, the following tips provide advice on how to spot a scam.

Look For These Tell-Tale Red Flags

You are contacted out of the blue. Scam artists aim fake invoices, phony debt collection notices and spam emails at unsuspecting consumers hoping they will pay before checking their records. You should never send money or provide personal information to unknown or unfamiliar people or entities. For example:

"Steve" received a call from a man with a heavy foreign accent who claimed to be calling from the IRS about supposed unpaid taxes. Steve knew he'd paid his taxes on time and didn't owe any money. When the individual said he had to pay immediately to avoid a penalty, Steve hung up.

You are required to send money upfront to receive a prize. Legitimate companies never require someone to pay money upfront to receive a prize. Consider this:

"Bill" received a mailing that claimed he'd won $1 million in an overseas lottery. The mailing stated that he needed to pay $500 for "taxes" to receive his winnings. Bill knew that foreign lotteries were illegal – and he certainly hadn't entered one – so he tossed the mailing in the trash.

You are asked to send money via a wire transfer or "reload pack." Scam artists often instruct consumers to send money by wire transfer or reloadable money packs. Sending money in these forms is the same as sending cash – it is nearly untraceable and once the money is sent, it is generally gone for good. Just consider:

"Mike" received a call from someone who claimed to represent the "U.S. Government Grant Department." The caller asked him to put $325 on a reloadable money pack and call back with the numbers on the back of the card to receive a $5,000 grant. Mike hung up because he knew that giving the number on the back of the card to the individual was as good as giving him cash.

You are asked to provide personal or financial information. Banks, government agencies and legitimate companies only ask consumers to provide personal information in rare circumstances and don't do so by email or text message. Scam artists impersonate these types of entities and use deceptive messages to lure consumers into providing their private information so they can use it to commit fraud. Never provide your private information in response to an unsolicited call, email or text message. Instead, call the entity at the number listed on its website or the back of your card. For example:

"Roberto" received a text message that appeared to come from his bank. It said he should call a toll-free number to reactivate his credit card. Roberto knew his credit card was working properly and didn't recognize the texter's number. He called his bank using the telephone number listed on the back of his credit card, which confirmed the message was a scam.

You are asked to keep it a secret. Scam artists may ask consumers not to tell anyone about the situation so the consumer doesn't get advice from someone who might detect the scam. If you are asked to keep a transaction a secret, you should do the opposite: immediately contact trusted family members or friends to investigate the situation and get their opinion:

"Delores" received a call from a man she thought was her grandson, "Mike." He said that he was in trouble and needed money fast. Mike claimed that he was embarrassed about the situation and pleaded with Delores not to tell anyone about the matter, especially his parents. After the call ended, Delores called her daughter, who said Mike wasn't in any trouble at all.

You are asked to act quickly. Scam artists may say that there is a limited time to act in order to get people to pay money before they have time to think the situation through:

"John and Mary" were in the market to sell their timeshare in the Bahamas. They received a call from a supposedly local Bahamian company that claimed it had found a buyer who wanted to buy the unit that same day and asked John and Mary to immediately pay a large upfront fee. When they asked for a few days to think about it, the individual claimed that they must send him the money that day or forfeit the opportunity. John and Mary let the "deal" go because they weren't going to send money before they had time to review the documents and research the company. It's a good thing they did, because this was a scam.

You receive payment in the form of a cashier's check or money order. Scam artists can create counterfeit checks and money orders that look remarkably authentic. After your financial institution cashes a check or money order, it generally has up to two weeks to reverse the transaction. If the check or money order ultimately ends up being counterfeit, your financial institution will probably hold you responsible for any portion of the funds that were used or sent back to the scam artist. For example:

"Terri" was trying to sell her car on an online classified site. One of the offers she received included a check for an amount greater than the sale price. The purported buyer told her the overpayment was for shipping and asked her to wire the money to a transporter. Terri asked her bank to look over the check. Sure enough, it was counterfeit. It's a good thing Terri didn't wire the overage to the transporter, because her money would have been gone for good.

It sounds too good to be true. If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Consider this:

"Rhoda" received a mailing that offered an "exclusive" work-at-home opportunity earning $5,000 a week. Rhoda became suspicious when she noticed the bulk mailing stamp on the envelope. She asked herself, "how many others had received a similar offer?" A quick Internet search told her that thousands of people apparently had – and the offer was a scam.

America Mobilizes for Energy Efficiency

Progress since the first Earth Day continues into the future

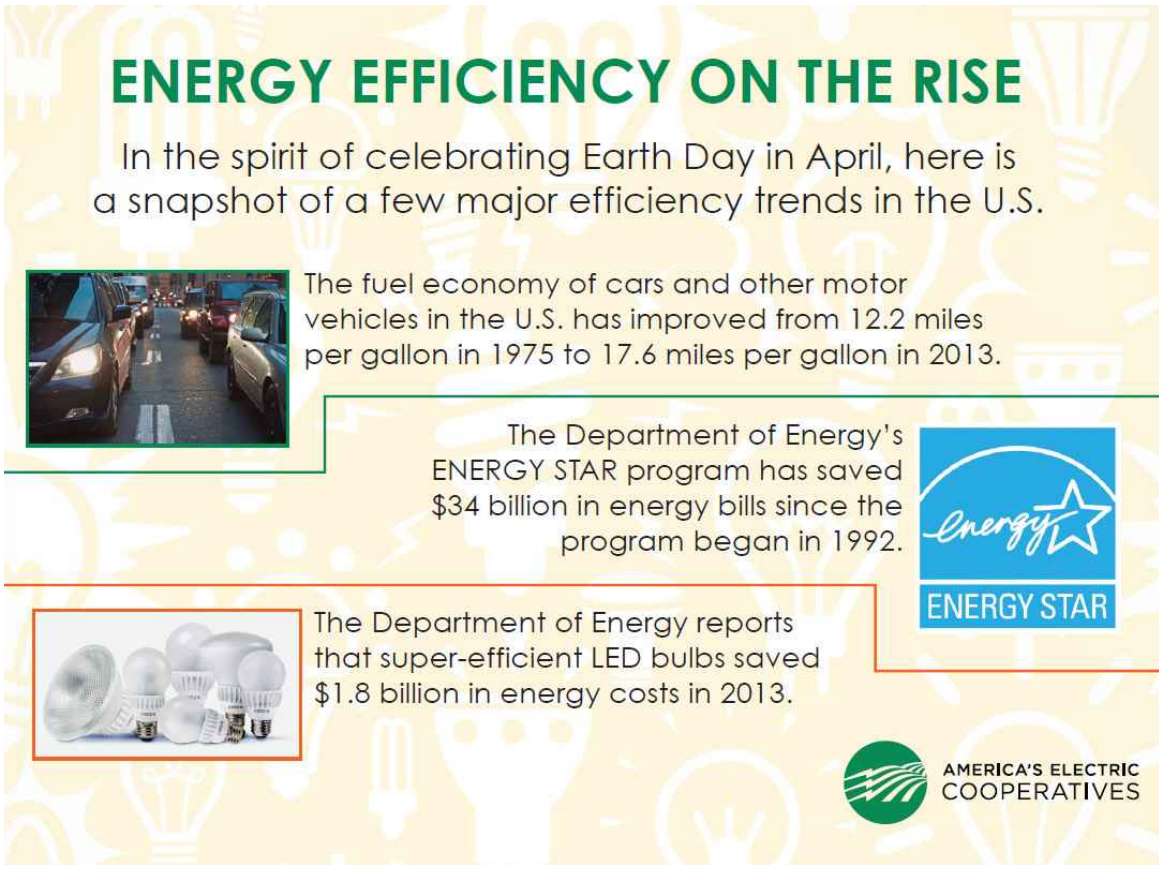
By Paul Wesslund

April 22 will mark the 45th celebration of Earth Day. The rallies and marches in the spring of 1970 called for more attention to protecting the environment. If you measure the success of that cause by greater energy efficiency, the results have been remarkable and the future holds great promise.

Here are a few examples of increases in energy efficiency during the past decades:

• The fuel economy of cars and other motor vehicles in the U.S. has improved from 12.2 miles per gallon in 1975 to 17.6 in 2013. You might think this would mean cars have lost some of their "giddyup," but horsepower steadily increased during that time, and 0-60 mph acceleration went from 14 seconds to 8 seconds.

• New light bulb technologies shine when it comes to using less energy. The Department of Energy says that from 2001 to 2010, lumens per watt rose from 45 to 58. That resulted in a 9



percent drop in the amount of electricity used for lighting during a decade when the number of bulbs increased 18 percent.

• The Department of Energy's ENERGY STAR® program of efficiency ratings for everything from appliances to buildings says people bought 5.2 billion ENERGY STAR-rated products, saving $34 billion in energy bills since the program began in 1992.

Here's what experts predict for the future.

The Department of Energy reports that super-efficient light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs saved $1.8 billion in energy costs in 2013, and that $39 billion would be saved if all bulbs switched to LEDs.

A report from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy says "There are large and cost-effective energy efficiency opportunities that, by 2050, can collectively reduce energy use by 40 to 60 percent relative to current forecasts."

"The best is yet to come," says Brian Sloboda, an energy expert with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Sloboda sees "amazing new technologies" that will continue the progress in energy efficiency.

He cites lighting as an example of how far we've come and how far we can still go. Light bulb efficiency has skyrocketed in the last 20 years, from incandescent lights, to compact fluorescent lights (the curly CFL bulbs), to LEDs. A promising new technology, OLEDs – organic light emitting diodes, isn't even a bulb, but lighting made of flexible material that can be applied to a variety of surfaces.

"Instead of having ceiling lights, the ceiling would actually be made of OLED material. During the day it looks like a regular ceiling, but at night the ceiling itself would glow," says Sloboda. "Instead of having light poles or roadway lighting, you could actually make the OLED material into the roadway so the stripes on the road provide the lighting. It could completely change the way architects design our buildings."

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEE) lists a variety of steps for a more efficient future. Those include better energy habits in our own lives, more efficient electronic equipment and smart systems (like thermostats) that adjust to your daily schedule.

"If we aggressively pursue these efficiency opportunities," says the ACEEE, "we can roughly double the rate of efficiency improvement in the next 35 years relative to the past 35 and reduce energy use to half the current forecasts."

Paul Wesslund writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Residential Lighting Goes High-Tech

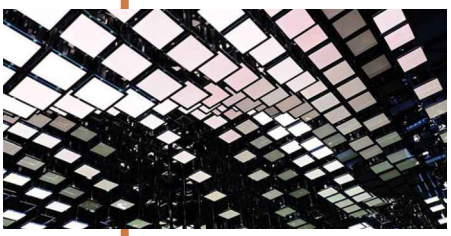
By Brian Sloboda and Laura Moorfield

Until recently, homes were lit with a single technology – incandescent lamps. This is the bulb that generations of Americans learned by, lived by – and even ate by. But those days are long gone.

Over the past 20 years, electric co-ops have promoted efficient lighting by adding CFLs to the mix. In 2012, about 30 percent of U.S. residential sockets were filled with CFLs, with incandescents making up the remaining 70 percent. Today, LED bulbs and fixtures are increasingly preferred in many residential and commercial applications for their efficiency, quality of light and compatibility with automatic controls.

Changes to federal lighting standards went into effect for incandescent bulbs in 2007, when Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA), which included provisions to reduce the energy use of everyday light bulbs.

At the same time, through industry efforts and government investment, LEDs dramatically improved in performance and dropped in price, making them appealing options for many applications.



These innovative OLED panels are only 0.7mm thick, but they produce bright illumination with a visual quality unrivalled by other light sources. *http://www.usa.lighting.philips.com/products/oled.html*

In the first quarter of 2015, traditional incandescents accounted for just nine percent of the market share in household lighting. EISA-compliant halogen incandescent replacements made up more than 44 percent of the market, with CFLs at 40 percent. And although the percentage of LED sales has increased dramatically over the last year, they made up just over 6 percent of the market share in the first quarter of 2015.

LEDs offer features beyond energy efficiency. Some LEDs are part of a system that allows the user to turn off lamps – or even change their color – via a smartphone app. This makes the LED lamp more of a consumer electronic than just a light bulb.

LEDs are essentially computer chips, so they are more difficult to produce than incandescent bulbs. This is one product where cheaper versions often produce a life span and color that is not what the consumer wants. Higher quality LEDs from reputable brands – such as GE, Philips, Cree and Sylvania to name a few – have tested well.

However, some fixtures inside the home do not work well with LEDs. Consumers with older dimmer switches often find that they must purchase newer switches to work with the LEDs. Consumers should pick LED lamps that come with a solid warranty in case there is a problem with quality.

What's next? While LEDs are still on the cusp of becoming our everyday lighting, there are other technologies in development. Organic Light Emitting Diodes (OLEDs) are similar to LEDs in that they are solid-state devices that produce light when current passes through them. But unlike LEDs, they are made up of multiple, organic semiconductive layers that produce diffused light. OLEDs are extremely thin and flexible, which has enabled them to be effectively used in displays, like mobile phone screens and TVs. Manufacturers are developing OLED lighting as well—primarily for decorative architectural panels at this point, although some OLED lamps are available today.

It appears that the age of the LED has begun. They are shatter resistant and have a long life. And yes, some even come with their own app.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Laura Moorefield consults for utilities, state and federal governments, and non-profits on energy efficiency, renewables, and program design. Laura founded Moorefield Research & Consulting, LLC in 2013. She currently resides in Durango, CO and is a member of La Plata Electric Association.

Regional Dateline

March 17-19
SD High School State AA Girls Basketball Tournament
PREMIER Center/Sioux Falls Arena, Sioux Falls, SD
605-224-9261
www.sdhsaa.com

March 17-19
SD High School State AA Boys Basketball Tournament
PREMIER Center/Sioux Falls Arena, Sioux Falls, SD
605-224-9261

March 17-19
SD High School State A Boys Basketball Tournament
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Rapid City, SD, 605-224-9261

March 17-19
SD High School State B Boys Basketball Tournament
Barnett Center, Aberdeen, SD
605-224-9261

March 18-20
South Dakota Taxidermy Competition and Convention
Watertown, SD, 712-540-5868

March 19-20
Curt Carter Memorial Gun Show, Watertown, SD
605-793-2347

March 19-20
Black Hills Motorcycle Show
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Rapid City, SD, 605-381-0467

April 1-3
Annual Hats Off to the Artists Art Show, Faulkton, SD
605-598-6525

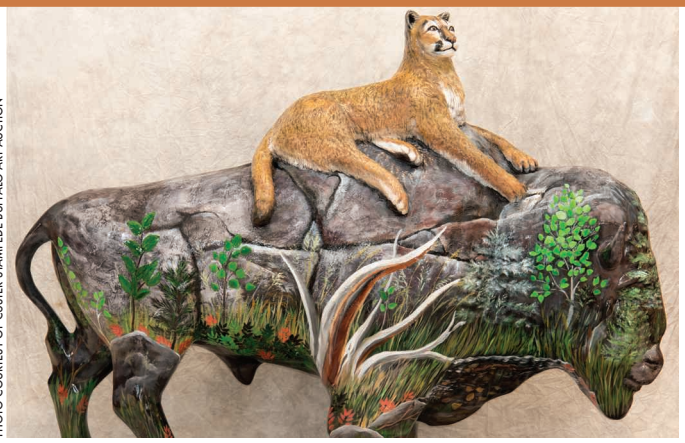


PHOTO COURTESY OF CUSTER STAMPEDE BUFFALO ART AUCTION

Events of Special Note

May 20
11th Annual Custer Stampede Buffalo Art Auction Unveiling
Custer, SD, 605-673-2244

May 27-October 10
Legends in Light® Laser Light Show, Nightly, Crazy Horse Memorial, Crazy Horse, 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.

April 2
Spring Coin and Currency Show, Elks Lodge
Watertown, SD, 605-882-4663

April 2-3
Professional Bull Riders Built Ford Tough Series
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

April 2-3
Spring Big Boy Toy Show
Brown County Fair Grounds
Aberdeen, SD, 605-229-3632

April 2-3
Oahe Home Builders Show
Expo Center, Fort Pierre, SD
605-280-9688

April 2-3
Zonta Spring Craft Show
Northridge Plaza, Pierre, SD
605-280-5806

April 7-9
Forks, Corks and Kegs
Deadwood, SD, 800-999-1876

April 7-9
Jackrabbit Stampede Rodeo
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD
605-692-7539

April 8-9
Lakota Omniciye Wacipi
Black Hills State University
Spearfish, SD, 605-642-6578

April 8-10
Sioux Empire Film Festival
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-4616

April 8-10
South Dakota Quilters Guild Spring Retreat, Rapid City, SD
605-895-2509

April 9-10
Dakota Territory Gun Show
Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

April 14
Red Green "I'm Not Old – I'm Ripe" Tour, Sioux Falls, SD
605-367-4616

April 15-16, 22-23
Schmeckfest, Academy Campus
Freeman, SD, 605-925-4542

April 23
RiverRat Marathon
Riverside Park, Yankton, SD
605-660-9483
www.riverratmarathon.com

April 23
Jeff Dunham: Perfectly Unbalanced Tour
Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

April 24
Jeff Dunham: Perfectly Unbalanced Tour
Rapid City, SD, 800-468-6463

May 7
Avera Race Against Breast Cancer, Sioux Falls, SD
605-322-8900

June 10-11
Two Rivers Exposition, Expo Center, Fort Pierre, SD
605-224-8686