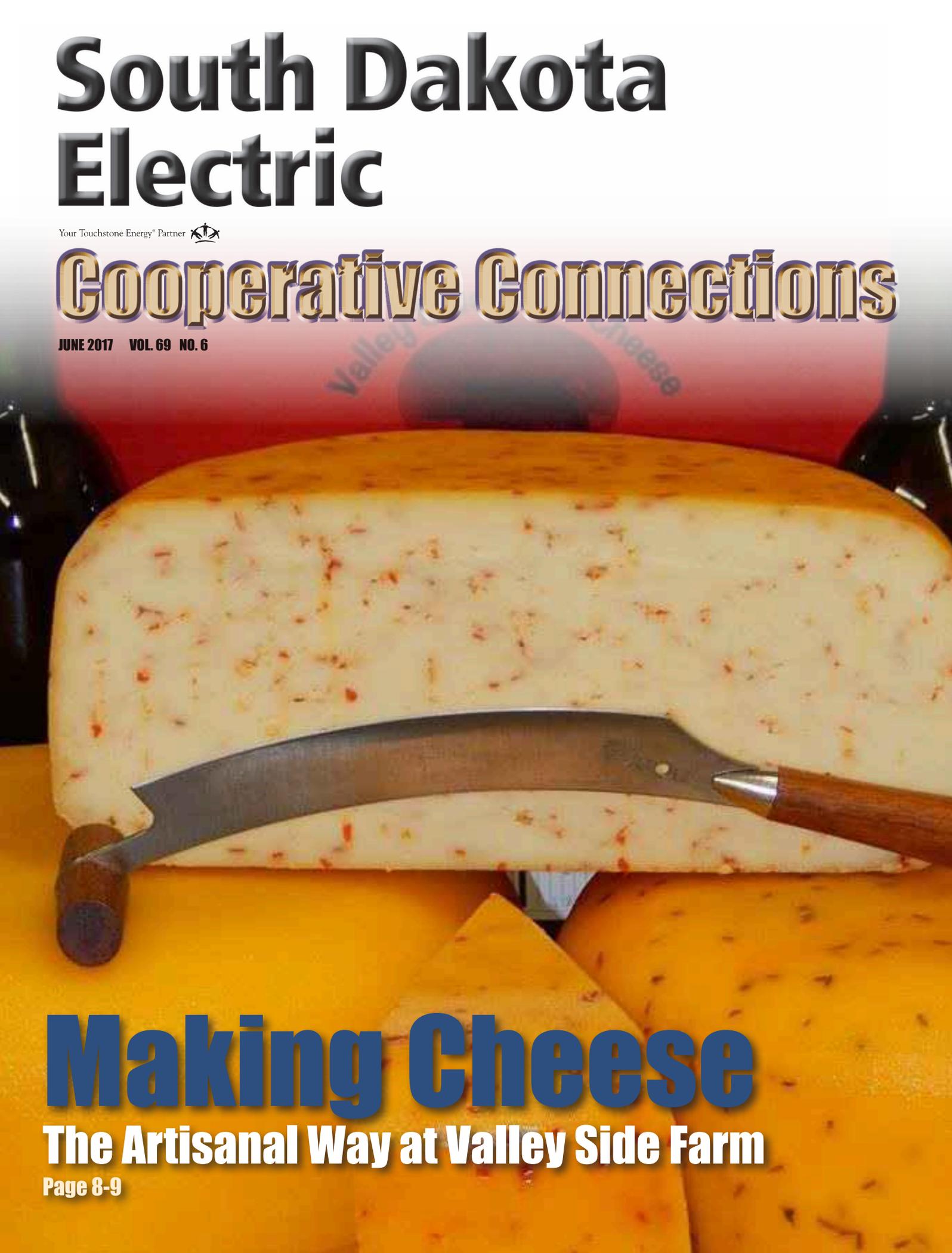


# South Dakota Electric

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

## Cooperative Connections

JUNE 2017 VOL. 69 NO. 6



# Making Cheese

The Artisanal Way at Valley Side Farm

Page 8-9

# Be the light.

No matter the time of day, we work to ensure our members have reliable, affordable power. We bring light to the dark. It's the assurance that when you make a promise, you can keep it.



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Lyon-Lincoln Electric, Tyler, Minn.  
Moreau-Grand Electric, Timber Lake, S.D.  
Northern Electric, Bath, S.D.  
Oahe Electric, Blunt, S.D.  
Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, Danube, Minn.  
Rosebud Electric, Gregory, S.D.  
Rushmore Electric, Rapid City, S.D.  
Sioux Valley Energy, Colman, S.D.  
Southeastern Electric, Marion, S.D.  
Traverse Electric, Wheaton, Minn.  
Union County Electric, Elk Point, S.D.  
West Central Electric, Murdo, S.D.  
West River Electric, Wall, S.D.  
Whetstone Valley Electric, Milbank, S.D.  
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**Brenda Kleinjan, Editor**  
**Dawn Trapp, Communications Specialist**

# Advocating for Co-ops



**Ed Anderson**  
General Manager, South Dakota  
Rural Electric Association

**Powering and empowering** rural and suburban South Dakota is job No. 1 for South Dakota's electric cooperatives. Some ways that we carry out this mission are as obvious as sending a line worker up a utility pole to repair a damaged transformer. But equally important to continuing this mission is ensuring that our elected leaders keep the cooperative in mind when crafting laws and regulations that impact us.

No one knows the needs of rural America better than America's electric cooperatives – the not-for-profit utilities that power and empower more than

60 percent of the nation. As ambassadors of the rural communities they serve, electric co-ops offer policymakers a unique window into rural America and its critical needs.

That's why more than 50 South Dakotans were among some 2,000 electric co-op leaders across the country in Washington, D.C., in late April to discuss our common interests and our priorities. Though no two co-ops are exactly alike, there's plenty we have in common, including a deep commitment to the communities we serve. We want to ensure that our leaders in Washington understand what matters the most to our cooperatives, to our communities and to rural America.

**We want to ensure that our leaders in Washington understand what matters the most to our cooperatives, to our communities, and to rural America.**

While in Washington, we joined our co-op colleagues educating policymakers on the unique benefits of the locally controlled, consumer-owned, cooperative business

structure. As consumer-owned utilities, co-ops are uniquely positioned to respond to member interests. That local control gives co-ops the flexibility to pursue innovation and adapt to meet tomorrow's energy needs. This is true whether a co-op is making a decision about the need for new electric generation or launching a new energy efficiency program.

We also used our visit to call on Congress to support investments in rural infrastructure and reduce barriers to maintenance and expansion. Existing regulations, for example, can jeopardize reliable electricity by delaying or interfering with co-op efforts to maintain and improve equipment. Such regulations should be revisited.

Rural America spoke up loudly in the 2016 elections and sent a message to Washington about the need to avoid overlooking rural America. The electric co-op gathering in Washington continues that important conversation.

For all of us, and most certainly for South Dakota's electric cooperatives, advocating on behalf of our members doesn't stop at the edge of our service territories.

# Know How You Can Stay Safe and Get Through Until Power Gets Restored to You

**Severe storms are devastating** to homes, properties and lives. These storms can also take down power lines – creating a dangerous situation for all of us, including the linemen and linewomen working hard to get your power turned back on.

How long it takes to get your power restored depends on the extent of the storm's destruction, the number of outages and when it becomes safe for utility personnel to get to the damaged areas. There are many steps in the assessment and restoration process – clearing downed power lines; ensuring public health and safety facilities are operational; checking power stations and transformers; repairing transmission lines, substations, and distribution lines; and getting power restored to customers within the various damaged areas.

Be sure to contact your electric utility immediately to report the outage.

## Safe Electricity recommends taking the following safety precautions:

- Just because power lines are damaged does not mean they are dead. Every downed power line is potentially energized and dangerous until utility crews arrive on the scene to ensure

power has been cut off. Downed power lines, stray wires and debris in contact with them all have the potential to deliver a fatal shock. Stay far away and keep others away from downed power lines.

- Never enter a flooded basement if electrical outlets are submerged. The water could be energized.
- Do not turn power off if you must stand in water to do so. Call your electric utility and have them turn off power at the meter.
- Before entering storm-damaged buildings, make sure electricity and gas are turned off.
- Do not use water-damaged electronics before properly restoring them. Electric motors in appliances should be cleaned and reconditioned before use. It may be necessary to replace some of your appliances and electronics. Have your water-damaged items inspected and approved by a professional before using them.
- If you clean-up outdoors after a storm, do not use electronic equipment in wet conditions.
- If you are driving and come along a downed power line, stay away and keep others away. Contact emergency personnel or your utility company to address the downed power line.
- If you do come in contact with a downed power line, do not leave the car. Wait for utility and emergency professionals to make sure the power line is de-energized before exiting the car.

During an outage, Safe Electricity recommends turning off electrical appliances and unplugging major electronics, including computers and televisions. Power sometimes comes back in surges, which can damage electronics. Your circuits could overload when power returns if all your electronics are still plugged in and on. Leave one light on to indicate that power has been restored. Wait a few minutes and then turn on other appliances and equipment – one at a time.

If you use a standby generator, it is critical that proper safety precautions be taken. Always read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions. There should be nothing plugged into the generator when you turn it on. This prevents a surge from damaging your generator and appliances. Operate generators in well-ventilated, outdoor, dry areas. Never attach a temporary generator to a circuit breaker, fuse or outlet. Permanent generators should be wired into a house by a qualified electrician using a transfer switch in order to prevent feeding electricity back into overhead lines, which can be deadly for linemen.

To help you get through, have a storm kit prepared. Keep the kit in a cool, dry place, and make sure all members of the family know where it is.

For information on when to save and when to throw out refrigerated food after a power outage, go to [FoodSafety.gov](http://FoodSafety.gov).

Source: [safeelectricity.org](http://safeelectricity.org)

## Kids' Corner Safety Poster

**"Call first or you might hit underground cable."**



**Seth Lippert, 9 years old**

*Seth is the son of Dean Lippert, Blomkest, Minn. He is a member of Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, Danube, Minn.*

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.

# Dairy Delicious



## Blues Buster Smoothie

- 1 (6-oz.) container low-fat blueberry-flavored yogurt
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 2/3 cup fresh or frozen blueberries
- 3 to 4 ice cubes

Combine all ingredients in a blender; blend until smooth and creamy.

**Cortney Reedy, Tea**

## Easy Creamy Chicken Enchiladas

- 3 small chicken breasts or 2 large chicken breasts
- 2 (10.5 oz.) cans cream of chicken soup
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 (7 oz.) can chopped green chilies
- 1 small can sliced olives
- 2 cups shredded or grated Cheddar cheese
- 1 pkg. flour tortillas

Cook chicken breasts in crockpot until tender. Shred. Mix together cream of chicken soup, sour cream and milk; set aside. Prepare 9x13-inch pan. To the chicken, add chopped green chilies, olives and half of the soup mixture. Roll up chicken mixture in tortillas; 8 to 10 usually fit in a 9x13-inch pan. Spread remainder of soup mixture over all and top with Cheddar cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 35 to 40 minutes. If prepared in advance and refrigerated, bake for 50 to 55 minutes. Serve with sour cream and salsa, if desired.

**Jane Ham, Rapid City**

## Coconut Cream Cheesecake Bars

- 84 Nilla wafers, divided
- 6 T. butter, melted
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 (8 oz.) container Cool Whip, thawed, divided
- 2 T. sugar
- 2 (3.4 oz) pkg. vanilla instant pudding
- 2-1/2 cups cold milk
- 1-1/2 cups coconut, toasted, divided

Reserve 24 wafers. Crush remaining wafers and then mix with butter. Press onto bottom of 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate while preparing filling. Beat cream cheese and sugar with mixer until well blended. Whisk in 1 cup Cool Whip. Carefully spread over crust. Stand reserved wafers around edges. Beat pudding mix and milk with whisk in medium bowl for 2 minutes. Stir in 1 cup Cool Whip and 3/4 cup coconut; spread over cream cheese layer. Top with remaining Cool Whip and coconut. Refrigerate 5 hours.

**Gail Lee, Brookings**

## No Bake Cookie Dough Ice Cream Sandwich

- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1/3 cup butter, softened
- 2/3 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1/3 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 tsp. McCormick® Pure Vanilla Extract
- 1-1/4 cups vanilla wafer crumbs (about 35 vanilla wafers)
- 1 cup miniature chocolate chips
- 4 cups vanilla ice cream, softened

Mix peanut butter and butter in large bowl until well blended. Add sugars and vanilla; stir until blended and smooth. Stir in vanilla wafer crumbs and chocolate chips. Line a 8-inch square pan with foil, with ends of foil extending over sides of pan. Press 1/2 of the dough into an even layer. Pat remaining dough on parchment or wax paper into 8-inch square. Gently spread ice cream over layer in pan. Flip 8-inch square layer onto top of ice cream. Peel back parchment paper. Cover with foil. Freeze 3 hours or until firm. Let stand at room temperature 2 to 3 minutes to allow ice cream to soften slightly. Cut into 16 bars. Wrap each in plastic wrap. Store in freezer.

*Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 305, Total Fat 17g, Sodium 118mg, Cholesterol 21mg, Carbohydrates 33g, Dietary Fiber 2g, Protein 5g*

**Pictured, Cooperative Connections**

## Spam Hotdish

- 2 cups macaroni, cooked
- 2-1/2 cups milk
- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 4 eggs, well beaten
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/2 green pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1/4 lb. Velveeta, cubed
- 1 can Spam, cubed

Combine macaroni, milk, butter, bread crumbs, eggs and cream of mushroom soup. Add green pepper, onion, cheese and Spam. Pour into casserole dish. Bake at 350°F. for about 1 hour or until bubbly. If time is of the essence, casserole can be heated thoroughly in microwave before putting in the oven and then cut baking time in half.

**Leann Fredrickson, Aberdeen**

## Crab Dip

- 1 (16 oz.) container sour cream
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 pkg. ranch dressing mix
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 pkg. slivered almonds
- 1 pkg. imitation crab, chopped
- 2 cups shredded cheese

Mix together sour cream, cream cheese and ranch dressing mix. Add remaining ingredients. Chill. Serve with assorted chips or crackers.

**Pam Hofer, Carpenter**

*Please send your favorite dessert, salad or garden produce 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 2017. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.*

# Energy Efficiency Considerations for Homebuyers



**Patrick Keegan**  
Collaborative Efficiency

**Dear Pat:** I recently became a real estate agent and several of my clients have been asking about the energy efficiency of the homes I show them. Do you have any suggestions about energy-related questions I should help my clients consider before they purchase a home? – Sharon

**Dear Sharon:** It's great to hear that you want to help

inform your clients. Many homebuyers do not consider energy costs (such as electricity, gas and propane), which are significant, ongoing expenses for any home. The average home costs approximately \$2,500 in energy expenses per year. Think about how much money that is over the life of the home!

Your clients' preferences for the kind of new home they want to buy can have a strong influence on energy performance. For example, the size of a home is one of the most important factors that will determine energy costs. As square footage increases, lighting requirements increase and more importantly, the burden on heating and cooling equipment increases.

In general, newer homes have better energy performance due to advancements in building codes, but buying a new home does not guarantee efficiency. Building codes are not always enforced and a minimum-code home is not nearly as efficient as homes built to a higher standard. For example, if energy efficiency or green features are a high priority for your clients, look for homes that have ENERGY STAR®, Built Green or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certifications.

Newer manufactured homes are typically much more efficient than older manufactured homes but do not have to meet the same energy code requirements of site-built homes. Residents of manufactured homes spend about 70 percent more on energy per square foot of living space as residents of site-built homes. If your clients are considering a manufactured home, those built after 1994 or that have an ENERGY STAR label have superior energy performance.

Once your clients are interested in a specific home, one of

the first factors they should consider is how the energy performance of that home compares to similar homes. Although you may request electricity, natural gas or propane bills from the sellers so that your clients can estimate how much it will cost to heat and cool the home annually, this is not a precise measure of home energy performance. The Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Index is like a "miles per gallon" rating for a home that allows consumers to comparison-shop based on energy performance, similar to the way they can comparison-shop for cars. A certified Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) Home Energy Rater will need to inspect the home and develop a HERS rating. This rating can be done during the inspection process or you may request a HERS rating from the seller.

Although many homebuyers focus on energy features that have the strongest impact on the aesthetics of the home, such as windows and lighting fixtures, it's the hidden systems like appliances that have the most impact on energy performance. Heating and cooling systems consume about half of a home's energy use and are costly to replace. Here are a couple questions homebuyers should consider about heating and cooling:

- How old is the heating system? If the home's heating system is more than 10 years old, it may be necessary to replace it in the near-term.
- What is the seasonal energy efficiency rating (SEER)? Find out the SEER for the home's air conditioning system. If the air conditioner has a SEER of less than 8, you will likely want to replace it.

A home's building envelope insulates the home's interior from the outdoor environment and includes features like doors, walls and the roof. If the quality of the building envelope is compromised, it can contribute to higher heating and cooling costs. R-Value is the thermal resistance measurement used for insulation, indicating its resistance to heat flow. You may want to learn about the recommended R-value for homes in your region so you will have a general sense about the quality of a home's building envelope.

If your clients determine energy investments are necessary in a home they are considering, it can be helpful to call your local electric cooperative. Many electric co-ops can assist with energy audits and offer incentives for energy efficient heating and cooling equipment.

This column was co-written by Pat Keegan of Collaborative Efficiency. For more information on how to consider energy efficiency when purchasing a home, please visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

## Speech Contest Winners Named

The 56th Annual State Finals of the Resource Conservation Speech Contest were held at the Capitol Lake Visitor Center in Pierre on Saturday, April 22, 2017. The theme of this year's contest was "Soil Health: What Will You Leave?"

Grace Brose was the event's top finisher in a field of seven contestants and received a \$1,100 scholarship from South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives. Contestants in 2017 included Shelby Belmore, Brose, Danika Gordon, Raina Grimsley, Madison Hetland, Kadon Leddy and Lauren Wilkinson.

To compete at the state event, the students had to first win at one of seven local contests.

Grimsley earned a \$750 scholarship for her second-place finish while Gordon won a \$450 scholarship for finishing third.



Ken Gillaspie of Pierre, representing South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, presents Grace Brose a plaque.

## Touchstone Energy® Scholars of the Week Recognized

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota honored some of the area's most impressive high school seniors Saturday, April 29, during the 15th Annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year banquet and recognition on the campus of Dakota State University in Madison, S.D.

The event honored the 34 high school students who were chosen each week throughout the school year as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week. It's a program which recognizes students for academic achievement, co-curricular involvement and community service. The students are featured in weekly segments which air on KSFY Television and each student receives a \$100 scholarship for being chosen as the Scholar of the Week.



Ben Pond, a senior at Ipswich High School within FEM Electric Association's service territory, was selected during the banquet as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year. Pond, who plans to attend South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D., in the fall, received a \$1,000 scholarship. Trevor Sik, a senior at Elkton High School within Tyler, Minn.-based Lyon-Lincoln Electric's service territory, and Tory Arbach, a senior at Marion High School within Marion, S.D.-based Southeastern Electric's service territory, were both chosen to receive \$500 scholarships. The names were drawn from among the attendees.

Dakota State University's President Dr. José-Marie Griffiths was the keynote speaker for the Scholar of the Year banquet. KSFY News anchor Brian Allen served as the master of ceremonies.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota provide safe and reliable electricity to more than 113,000 homes and businesses. The cooperatives have sponsored the Scholar of the Week program since 2002. In that time, Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have awarded more than \$75,000 in scholarships as part of the Scholar of the Week program.

## Future Lineworkers Win Scholarships

Future line workers enrolled at Mitchell (S.D.) Technical Institute, were awarded scholarships by the South Dakota Rural Electric Line Superintendents Association. Students Nick Jackson, Milbank; Carter Jondahl, Groton; Michael Plaggemeyer, Sturgis; Gage Neuschwander, Rapid City; and Alex Caba, Tabor, were awarded scholarships totaling \$2,500 from the group. Additionally, Sean Kafka of Gregory was awarded the Mark and Kathy Hofer Scholarship and Plaggemeyer also received the Larry Brink Memorial Scholarship.

Line superintendents and the scholarship recipients are, from left, Dakota Energy Operations Manager Lynn Kruse, Cherry-Todd Electric Operations Manager Randy Borer, Nick Jackson, Whetstone Valley Electric Operations Manager Jon Christensen, Carter Jondahl, Codington-Clark Distribution System Manager Jared Terhark, Michael Plaggemeyer, Northern Electric Operations Manager Mike Kelly, Gage Neuschwander and Black Hills Electric Operations Manager Bill Brisk. Not pictured are Alex Caba and Sean Kafka.



# Valley Side Farm Makes Cheese an Artform

Jocelyn Romey

**F**RESH, NATURAL, ARTISAN CHEESE – IT CAN ONLY get better by being locally made. And, it is. Kris Swanson and her husband, Scott, own and operate Valley Side Farm Cheese, LLC in Crooks, S.D., a rural town north of Sioux Falls. The business began in 2012 on the Swanson's eighth-generation family farm, where an old barn built in 1899 serves as the identifying logo for the cheese.

Kris Swanson studied how to make artisan cheese in Vermont at the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese (VIAC). From there, she took her knowledge and experience to start her own business. She notes she is the only artisan cheese maker in South Dakota. However, making this cheese by hand can be hard work and a time-consuming endeavor.

"It's more labor intensive than I bargained for," Swanson said. "I give a lot of credit to people who

make artisan cheese."

She carefully described the lengthy process of pasteurizing, culturing, cooking, cutting, weighing and pressing the cheese that was displayed in a refrigerated storage room. In all, the process of preparing the cheese took two to three days before it could be placed on the shelf.

Swanson said, "My favorite part in this process is seeing the finished product – the smell, the taste. When you cut into a wheel of cheese, it's so pretty. The satisfaction you get from making a product like that is so cool."

Swanson provides her local customers with a variety of Cheddar cheeses, mozzarella and even string cheese. Some of her current flavors include garlic, bacon, dill, red wine and beer.

Unlike other store-bought cheeses, Swanson's



PHOTOS BY JOCELYN ROMEY/SDREA



University in Brookings where they conduct antibiotic testing on the milk before delivering it. While explaining this process, Swanson smiled and said, “Did you know, it takes 10 pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese.”

Inspired by her love of cheese, Swanson said, “I like trying new things.”

She wanted to try something new and something she loved doing. Now, she has steady business and returning customers who are mostly local. Swanson has also been providing tours of her shop

cheese is made with natural and fresh ingredients. Swanson does not use additives such as color or preservatives like many other providers.

“Most cheese is yellow because dye is put into it,” Swanson said. “People always say my cheese tastes so clean. That’s because no preservatives are in it.”

Swanson buys ingredients locally, including the milk, which she buys from South Dakota State

to interested groups such as the Red Hat Society, homeschoolers, FFA chapters, culinary classes and more.

Even though it’s a new business, maybe Swanson always had it in her to make cheese. While talking about her business, she smirked and said, “I was a dairy princess in high school.”

So, the former dairy princess from Cottonwood County in Minnesota is now South Dakota’s artisan cheese maker.

For more information on Valley Side Farm Cheese, visit their Facebook page @ValleySideFarm-Cheese. Swanson’s cheese can be found in select stores and restaurants in the Sioux Falls area.



**Left:** Rows of cheese wheels with varying flavors sit on shelves at the Valley Side Farm Cheese Shop, ready for customers.  
**Above:** The iconic 1899 barn serves as the identifying logo for the Valley Side Farm Cheese brand of Crooks, S.D.  
**Top:** Valley Side Farm Cheese owner Kris Swanson stands with her 300-gallon cheese vat that she ordered from the Netherlands.  
**Cover:** Multiple cheese samples are produced and displayed at Valley Side Farm Cheese.  
COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF KRIS SWANSON/VALLEY SIDE FARM CHEESE

# Delivering the Co-op Message to the Hill

**R**EPRESENTATIVES FROM 20 SOUTH DAKOTA electric cooperatives traveled to Washington D.C., in late April to meet with South Dakota's congressional delegation and learn more about issues affecting cooperatives at the federal level.

The 50 South Dakotans included directors, customer service representatives, line workers, electricians, managers and members who joined more than 2,000 other electric co-op leaders in Washington, D.C., as part of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Legislative Conference. While at the conference, co-op leaders discussed priority issues with members of Congress and administration officials.

"The nation's more than 900 electric cooperatives play an important role in the communities they serve and we're all committed to the same fundamental mission – powering and empowering our consumers," said Ed Anderson, general manager of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association in Pierre, S.D. "Advocating for our members doesn't stop at the edge of our service territory. It's critical that our

elected officials in Washington hear from us as they make decisions that impact our ability to continue that mission."

South Dakota's electric cooperatives joined others in educating policymakers on the unique benefits of the locally controlled, consumer-owned, cooperative business structure.

Topics addressed with the South Dakota congressional delegation included: utility access easements across federal land, a workable Clean Power Plan (CPP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), protecting funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Electric Loan Program investments in secure, reliable electric utility infrastructure, power marketing administrations and the federal power program, improving federal land management policies to strengthen grid reliability, support of modernization and reform of the Endangered Species Act and electric cooperative energy tax priorities.

**Brenda Kleinjan**





**Left:** Sen. John Thune listens as Tom Brunner, a director at Butte Electric Cooperative in Newell, S.D., explains an issue related to the U.S. Forest Service.

**Below left:** Sen. Mike Rounds speaks with South Dakota electric cooperative leaders attending the NRECA Legislative Conference in April 2017.

**Below:** Veteran political reporter Chuck Raasch, who is originally from Castlewood, S.D., discusses the state of U.S. politics from his viewpoint. Raasch, who has been covering politics for more than three decades, writes for the *St. Louis Press Dispatch*.



PHOTOS BY JOCELYN ROMNEY/SDREA



**Left:** U.S. Department of Energy Secretary Rick Perry addressed the 2,000 attendees of the NRECA Legislative Conference. **Above:** Former S. D. Sen. Tom Daschle shared his insights into the current state of politics. **Opposite Page:** Rep. Kristi Noem discusses topics presented by South Dakota electric cooperative leaders.

# Who Will Answer The Call?

*Approximately 1 percent of all South Dakotans volunteer on their local fire departments.*

**W**HEN THE SIRENS BLARE IN SMALL TOWNS AND rural areas across South Dakota and western Minnesota, those responding to the emergencies are often volunteers.

“Volunteer fire departments serve a vital role to us here in South Dakota. Often times they are the only ones available to meet public safety needs in rural areas of the state,” said South Dakota Fire Marshal Paul Merriman.

In South Dakota, a majority of the state’s 8,500 firefighters are volunteers. According to statistics avail-

able from Merriman’s office, only five of the state’s 337 fire departments are career paid departments, employing 443 firefighters. The remaining 332 departments are staffed by volunteers (seven departments have a combination of paid and volunteer firefighters).

But, when an emergency arises, it doesn’t distinguish whether the people responding are volunteers or paid professionals.

“To become a certified volunteer firefighter in the state, a recruit has to undergo approximately 150 hours of instruction and hands-on training. Training

**Brenda Kleinjan**



requirements have greatly increased over time out of necessity. Volunteer fire departments serve the community by responding to a wide variety of situations, from emergencies that immediately threaten life or property, to routine citizen requests for information and assistance,” Merriman said.

“Fire department staffing and firefighter recruitment and retention issues continue to present big challenges to volunteer fire departments. Time demands, increasing call volume, changes in the ‘nature of the business’ of firefighting, aging communities and other factors have contributed to reductions in the number of men and women joining and remaining in the volunteer fire service. The demand or need for volunteers continues to increase as the list of their duties continues to grow,” Merriman said.

In early June, firefighters from across the state will gather at Mitchell Technical Institute in Mitchell, S.D., for the State Fire School. While there, they will train in nearly 30 different areas.

There will be courses one expects: live fire training, firefighter survival, structure live burn and structural firefighting essentials. And there will be courses related to department operations such as junior firefighter programs, honor guards, grant writing, small engine maintenance and fire investigation.

And then there are the courses that cover the gamut of emergencies a fire department might encounter: mass triage, responding to an active shooter event, auto extrication, bus extrication, trench rescue, water rescue, grain bin rescue, hazardous materials awareness and the list goes on.

But, a firefighter’s training doesn’t stop at the conclusion of the State Fire School.

“Training requirements over and above the certified firefighter endorsement are established locally and vary from department to department, depending upon the type of incidents they typically respond to,” Merriman said.

In addition to training, fire department funding and fire department staffing (recruitment and retention) are some of the biggest challenges faced by volunteer fire departments across the state and the U.S., Merriman said.

“Becoming a volunteer firefighter takes a tremendous amount of time, and is a very demanding and sometimes dangerous job. The personal satisfaction that comes from helping others is the No. 1 reason people give why they choose to serve in the fire service. Being a volunteer is a rewarding experience and one of the best ways you can make a difference in your community. The skills and experience gained as a volunteer firefighter are invaluable and can have a positive and lasting effect on your life and the lives of those around you,” Merriman said.

“We take firefighters and local fire departments for granted. Until we need them, we don’t realize how important they are. No matter how big your community department is, support them. Show them that they matter.”

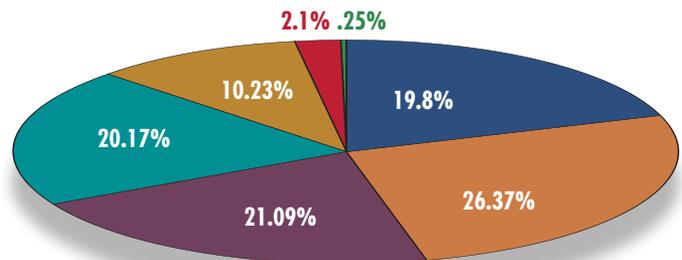
*For information on becoming a volunteer firefighter, contact your local fire department.*

**Grand Electric Cooperative in Bison, S.D., assisted the Lemmon, S.D., Volunteer Fire Department with a training scenario involving a car and a power pole. Throughout South Dakota, more than 8,000 people serve on one of the state’s 332 volunteer fire departments.**

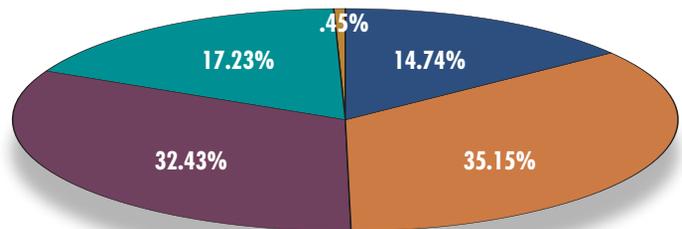
PHOTO COURTESY GRAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

## S.D. FIREFIGHTER AGE DEMOGRAPHICS

### S.D. Volunteer Fire Departments



### Paid Fire Departments



■ Under 29 ■ 30-39 ■ 40-49 ■ 50-59 ■ 60-69 ■ 70-79 ■ 80-plus

Statistics as of July 1, 2016. Information on age demographics as reported by fire departments to the South Dakota Fire Marshal’s office. The average age of a South Dakota volunteer firefighter is 42.48 years old compared to 39.73 for a paid firefighter.

Source: [https://dps.sd.gov/emergency\\_services/state\\_fire\\_marshall/images/age\\_of\\_firefighters\\_2016.pdf](https://dps.sd.gov/emergency_services/state_fire_marshall/images/age_of_firefighters_2016.pdf)

## DID YOU KNOW?

- As of July 1, 2016, there were 8,560 firefighters at South Dakota’s 337 fire departments.
- When compared to the state’s size of 77,121 square miles, this equates to one firefighter per nine square miles. (On average, each fire department covers 228 square miles.)
- Of South Dakota’s state population\* of 865,454, less than 1 percent of all South Dakotans are a firefighter.
- Minnesota has 20,921 firefighters at 757 active fire departments, the majority of which are volunteer or paid on-call departments.
- When compared to the state’s size of 86,943 square miles, this equates to about one firefighter per four square miles. (On average, each department covers 115 square miles.)
- Of Minnesota’s state population\* of 5,519,952 people, less than 0.3 percent of all Minnesotans are a firefighter.

(\*Based on the U.S. Census Estimate for July 1, 2016)

# Co-ops Energize Safety Message

**T**HE HUM OF ELECTRICITY SURGING THROUGH THE high voltage demonstration trailer used by South Dakota's electric cooperatives to teach about electrical safety is often the only sound one hears when the demonstration is being conducted.

The crowd is usually silent as the person narrating the presentation pauses, allowing the audience to focus on what is before them.

They watch as a grapefruit glows, burning from the inside out and giving off a strong burnt citrus odor that lingers in the demonstration area. When cut in half, those watching the demonstration are able to view the damage done as electricity coursed through the fruit.

Whether used to inform producers attending the Sioux Empire Fair's Ag Appreciation Day in August or local fire departments in their training for scenarios that may involve power lines or to give

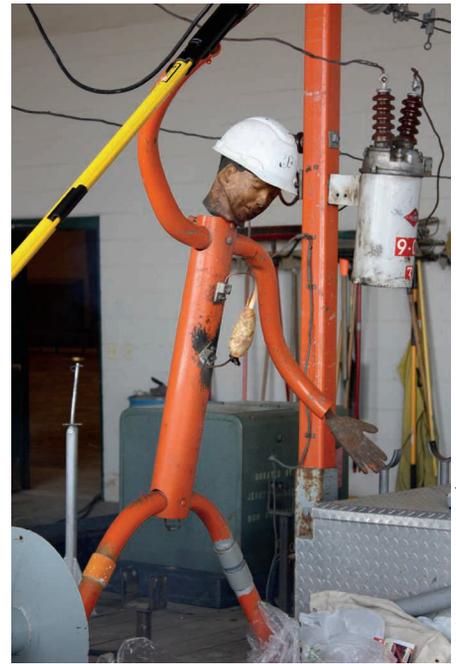
future line workers a compelling look at the need for keeping safety in mind when working around electricity, the high voltage demonstration trailer leaves an impression.

For the hundreds of children who watch the presentation each year, it's hard to compete with their wide-eyed reactions as they see the fruit sizzle or a brat wurst fry. The demonstrations help reinforce the importance of staying away from downed power lines, avoiding climbing trees near power lines and, in general, being safe around electricity.

During the demonstration, the equipment used by line workers – from insulated gloves that are tested every 30 days to hot sticks of insulated fiberglass – is explained and demonstrated. Also explained are the other items of personal protective equipment used by linemen – from hard hats to safety glasses and fire resistant clothing.

By Brenda Kleinjan





PHOTOS BY ED ANDERSON/SDREA

**Above:** Using a brat wurst to depict human muscle, the high voltage demonstration trailer gives a very visual representation of what damage electricity can do to the human body. **Below right:** Students attending the 2014 Sioux Empire Fair Ag Appreciation Day examine the damage caused by electricity to a brat wurst and grapefruit. **Bottom right:** Sioux Valley Energy

line worker Bob Johnson uses a branch to show the hazards of climbing a tree near a power line. **Opposite Page:** A mainstay of the Black Hills Stock Show for more than a decade, the high voltage demonstration trailer has been used to deliver electrical safety messages to those attending the show. This year, the trailer was used before the Sheep Dog Trials. *File Photo*

The demonstration also covers the importance keeping antennas, farm equipment and other tall items out of power lines. The need for proper installation of back up generators is also discussed as is avoiding flying kites or fishing near power lines.

The high voltage demonstration trailer will be making appearances across the state this summer. It is scheduled to be in the Armour area in late May, Ipswich area on June 1 and then to Fort Pierre June 3 for an appearance in conjunction with the Casey Tibbs Match of Champions Rodeo.

In July it is scheduled for the Aberdeen area and then the Sioux Empire Fair's Ag Appreciation Day in early August followed by a visit to the Timber Lake area.

Contact your local electric cooperative for more information about when electrical safety demonstrations are being conducted in your area.

#### **A review of some ways to play it safe with overhead electric lines:**

- Fly kites away from overhead power lines. Wet string is a conductor of electricity.
- Do not try to remove a kite, fishing line or any other lost object from an overhead power line.
- Do not use electric insulators on overhead lines for target practice. A broken insulator is a serious hazard.
- Do not climb in trees that are in contact with overhead power lines. A green branch is a good conductor of electricity.
- Stay away from fallen power lines and warn others of the danger. Call your local utility company and report the location.
- If a power line falls on your car, stay inside the car. The rubber tires will act as an insulator.
- When handling a long metal pole or antenna, moving grain augers or elevators, look up to avoid accidental contact with an overhead electric wire.
- Treat all electric power lines and electric wires as serious potential hazards.



PRSRT STD  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 PERMIT #238  
 ABERDEEN, SD

## Regional Dateline

### May 19

Tesla Car Rally, Custer, SD  
 605-673-2244

### May 19-20

Sioux Empire Film Festival  
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

### May 19-21

State Parks Open House and  
 Free Fishing Weekend  
 Pierre, SD, 605-773-3391

### May 20

Turkey Days, Huron, SD  
 605-352-0000

### May 20-21, 28-29

Pari-Mutuel Horse Racing,  
 Aberdeen, SD, 605-715-9580

### May 26-27

State Track Meet  
 Sioux Falls, SD, 605-224-9261

### May 26-28

South Dakota Kayak Challenge  
 Yankton, SD, 605-864-9011

### May 27-28

Annual SDRA Foothills Rodeo  
 Wessington Springs, SD  
 605-770-4370

### May 30

26th Annual Kids Art Fest  
 Yankton, SD, 605-665-9754

### June 2-3

Rockin' Ribfest, Yankton, SD  
 605-665-2263

### June 2-3

Senior Games, Sioux Falls, SD  
 Contact Scott Junke at  
 605-367-8222



PHOTO COURTESY OF NAJA SHRINE CIRCUS

## Events of Special Note

### July 1

Naja Shrine Circus  
 Deadwood, SD, 605-342-3402

### July 2

Naja Shrine Circus  
 Phillip, SD, 605-342-3402

### July 3

Naja Shrine Circus  
 Lemmon, SD, 605-342-3402

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.

### June 2-4

Fort Sisseton Historical Festival  
 Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

### June 2-4

Annual Black Hills Quilt Show  
 and Sale, Rapid City, SD  
 605-394-4115

### June 2-4

Wheel Jam, Huron, SD  
 605-353-7340

### June 2-4

Fish Days, Lake Andes, SD  
 pattironfeldt@hcinet.net

### June 3

Dairy Fest, Brookings, SD  
 605-692-7539

### June 9-10

Senior Games, Spearfish, SD  
 Contact Brett Rauterkus  
 at 605-722-1430

### June 17-18

Coin and Stamp Show  
 Sturgis, SD, 605-381-4625

### June 17-18

South Dakota Peach Festival  
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
 Sioux Falls, SD

### June 23

148th Annual Midsummer  
 Festival, Dalesburg Lutheran  
 Church, Vermillion, SD  
 605-253-2575

### June 23-24

Senior Games, Mitchell, SD  
 Contact Howard Bich at  
 605-275-6891

### June 30

Naja Shrine Circus  
 Bowman, ND, 605-342-3402

### July 7-8

Senior Games, Madison, SD  
 Bernie Schuurmans at  
 605-270-3327

### July 14-15

Senior Games, Aberdeen, SD  
 Contact Gene Morsching at  
 605-216-2822

### July 19-22

Senior Games, Rapid City, SD  
 Contact Kristi Lintz at  
 605-394-4168

### July 21-22

Senior Games, Brookings, SD  
 Contact Traci Saugstad at  
 605-692-4492

### July 22

Holy Smoke Car Show  
 O'Gorman High School  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 www.holysmokecarshow.org

### August 11-12

Senior Games, Huron, SD  
 Contact LaRon Clock at  
 605-353-8533 or Howard Bich  
 at 605-275-6891

### August 24-26

Senior Games, Watertown, SD  
 Contact Jeremy Herrboldt at  
 605-882-6260