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## NEWS RELEASE

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### Leaders, Cooperatives Honored at Annual Meeting

PIERRE – During the 77th South Dakota Rural Electric Association annual meeting Jan. 10 and 11, numerous South Dakotans were recognized for their dedication to the electric cooperative program in the state.

SDREA's 28 electric cooperative distribution systems and three generation and transmission electric cooperatives serve 325,000 people across 90 percent of South Dakota's land mass. These systems are member-owned utilities established to provide at-cost electric service to more than 120,000 farms, homes, schools, churches, businesses and other establishments across the state.

SDREA is the service association of the state's electric cooperatives and is devoted to unifying, promoting and protecting the interests of member electric cooperatives in South Dakota by providing leadership, training, communication, legislative representation and other member services. Each of the 31 SDREA member cooperatives selects a director from their local board, which is elected by the cooperative's membership, to represent the cooperative on the SDREA board of directors.

### Legacy of Leadership Awards Presented

Two men were recognized Friday at the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's annual meeting Jan. 11 in Pierre, S.D., for their contributions to electric cooperatives in South Dakota and the nation. Loren Noess, former general manager of Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell and Brad Schardin, general manager of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Marion, were each presented the SDREA Legacy of Leadership Award. The award recognizes co-op leaders whose talents, dedication and commitment to their co-op, their communities and the larger co-op family stand out among many. This is the sixth year the award has been presented.

**Loren Noess** had a 46-year career with electric cooperatives, retiring in 2015 from Central Electric Cooperative. He started his at Sioux Valley Energy and in 1979 was hired by Intercounty Electric Association in Mitchell. He became InterCounty's general manager in 1990. In 1998, Loren co-managed InterCounty and neighboring Tri County Electric Cooperative in Plankinton until the two cooperatives consolidated in 2000 to form Central Electric Cooperative. Loren is a past member of the national Touchstone Energy Cooperatives Board of Directors and is on the South Dakota State Fair Board.

**Brad Schardin's** electric cooperative career has spanned more than 35 years at multiple cooperatives in southeastern South Dakota. He started as general manager of Douglas Electric Cooperative in 1983 before moving to Marion to take over what was then known as Turner-Hutchinson Electric in 1990. Seven years later, he was hired as shared manager of Turner-Hutchinson and Lincoln-Union Electric Company in Alcester. The two cooperatives would consolidate in 2000 to form Southeastern Electric. Three years later, a shared management agreement was entered with McCook Electric and the two cooperatives merged in January 2006.

Schardin, a native of DeSmet and an alum of Black Hills State University, is currently a director for the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Cooperative board.

### Years of Service Recognition

Fifty-two cooperative directors and employees were recognized for 25 or more years of service to the state's electric cooperatives. Those recognized, along with their years of service and the cooperative they are affiliated with, include:

**25 years:** Gary Kluthe and Stephanie Zacher, Black Hills; Ken Carda, Bon Homme Yankton; Lori Rueb, Clay-Union; Dave Eide, Codington-Clark; Troy Ziebart, Douglas; Larry Bowar and Scott Moore, FEM; John Long, Grand; Simon Carroll, Kingsbury; Wendy Shupick, Moreau-Grand; Garry Wetzler, Rosebud; Kimberly Hansen and Jim Kuypers, Sioux Valley Energy; Bob Kalda and Leslie Mehlhaff, Southeastern.

**30 years:** Mike Chase, Black Hills; Dean Whitney, Black Hills; Adam Zvorak, Butte; Scott Artz, Cam Wal; John Vetch, Central; James Ryken, Clay-Union; Neil Duxbury, Dakota Energy; Michael Lemburg, Grand; Steve Hanson and Pat Kirby, H-D; Tom Schlack, Lacreek; Russ Hohn, Oahe; Lyle Haney and Dean Holmberg, Rosebud; Dena Tveidt-Scott, SDREA; Lynell Hofer, Southeastern; and Howard Knappe, West River.

**35 years:** Russell Gall and Michael J. Whalen, Charles Mix; Mike Kruse, Clay-Union; David Appel and Jerry Weber, Northern; Robert Shaffer, Rosebud; and Brad Schardin, Southeastern.

**40 years:** Tim Johnson, Central; Craig Biever, Dakota Energy; Merl Bechen, East River; Kenny Kocer and Colle Nash, Grand; Rodney Haag, Oahe; Ken Cerny, Goldie Warnkvist and Delbert Wendell, Rosebud; Susan Wilts, Traverse; and Tom Cummins, Kingsbury.

**50 years:** Phyllis Hrdlicka, Douglas.

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### **Director Training Recognized**

Three cooperative directors were recognized for achieving the top level of training offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. NRECA's Director Certificate Programs are specifically designed to help electric cooperative directors, at every stage of their service, understand their roles and responsibilities, stay up-to-date on the key issues and trends in the industry and prepare them to meet the challenges facing electric cooperatives now and in the future. They are offered in three parts, taken in progression from fundamental to advanced. The Director Gold Program recognizes directors who have earned their Credentialed Cooperative Director training and Board Leadership Course credentials and are committed to continuing their education throughout their service on the board.

The three directors recognized for achieving Director Gold level were: **Henning Hansen**, *Elkton – Sioux Valley Energy*, **Richard Olsen**, *Southeastern Electric* and **D.J. Mertens**, *West Central Electric*

### **Safety Recognized**

Three cooperatives were recognized for their 2018 safety accomplishments during the SDREA annual meeting.

Bon Homme Yankton Electric in Tabor; Butte Electric in Newell; Central Electric Cooperative in Mitchell; Dakota Energy Cooperative in Huron; East River Electric in Madison; Grand Electric in Bison; H-D Electric in Clear Lake; and Sioux Valley Energy in Colman; each completed its three-year enhanced assessment process in 2018 as part of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program.

Other South Dakota cooperatives participating in RESAP include: Black Hills Electric Cooperative, Custer; Charles Mix Electric Association, Lake Andes; Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative, Mission; Clay-Union Electric Corporation, Vermillion; Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative, Watertown; FEM Electric Association, Ipswich; Kingsbury Electric Cooperative, De Smet; Lacreek Electric Association, Martin; Lake Region Electric Association, Webster; Northern Electric Cooperative, Bath; Oahe Electric Cooperative, Blunt; South Dakota Rural Electric Association, Pierre; Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Marion; West Central Electric Cooperative, Murdo; West River Electric Association, Wall; and Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Milbank

The mission of the Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program is “to establish and promote the highest quality safety standards, best practices, and behaviors of a high performing safety culture.”

### **Safety Trainer Earns National Certification**

Travis Denison, Loss Control Professional for the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, was presented with his Certified Loss Control Professional certificate. Co-sponsored by NRECA and the National Utility Training and Safety Education Association (NUTSEA), the Certified Loss Control Professional (CLCP) credential is awarded to individuals who complete the requirements of the [Loss Control Internship \(LCI\)](#). The CLCP credential serves as a benchmark of competency and commitment to safety in the industry.