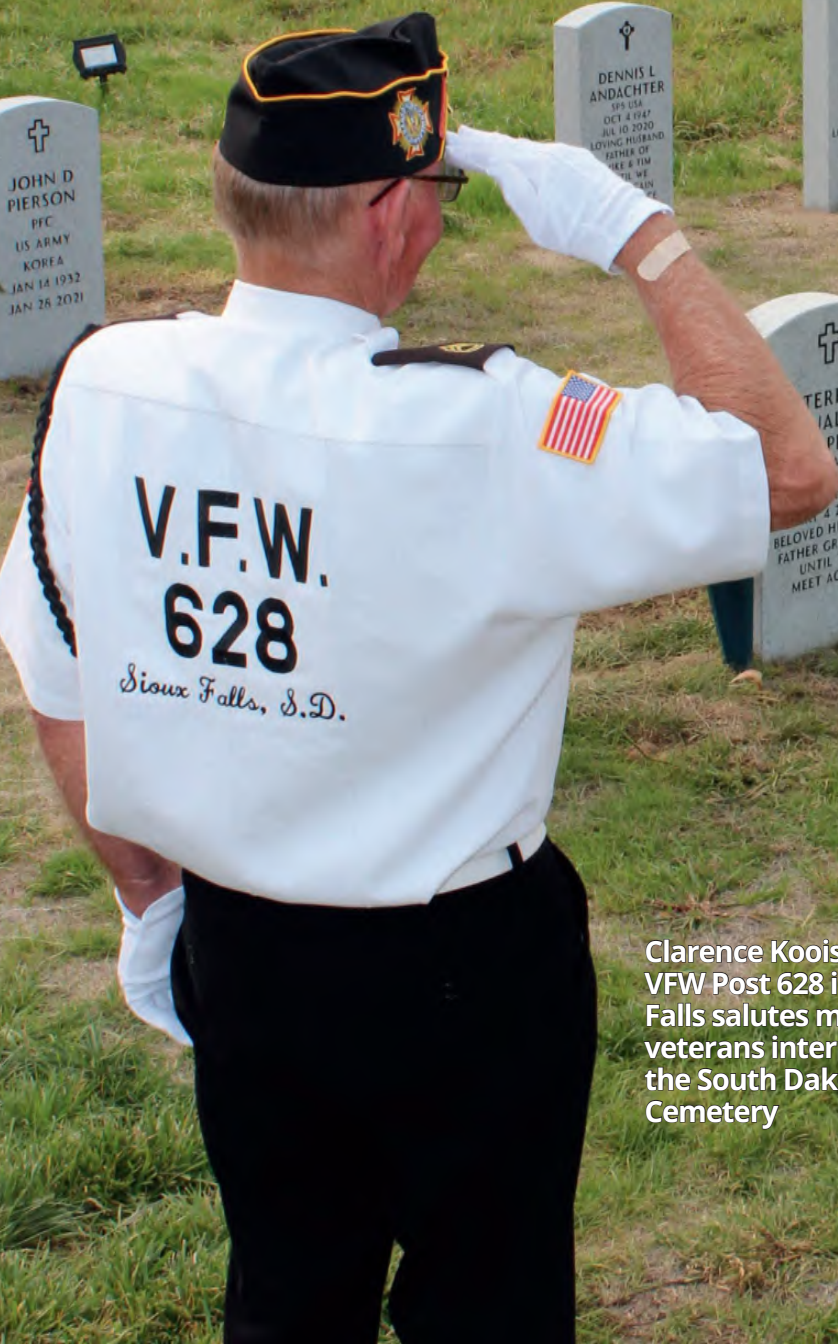


COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Clarence Kooistra of VFW Post 628 in Sioux Falls salutes military veterans interred at the South Dakota State Cemetery

Honoring our Veterans

A new resting place for fallen soldiers
Pages 8-9

First responders in rural South Dakota
Page 12

Education, Training and Information



Walker Witt - CEO
wwitt@bhec.coop

The education of our children is a cornerstone for this country's continued and future success. Education and training are also crucial for your employees' success to meet your cooperative's mission of providing great and reliable electric service. Education, Training, and Information is the fifth principle of the Seven Cooperative Principles.

The apprenticeship standards to become a journeyman lineman were developed by your co-op in association with the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and approved by the U.S. Department of Labor.

As with many careers, completing the formal part of education is only the beginning of learning, which is very true of your linemen.

The apprentice standards at BHEC include four years of on-the-job training with a ratio of 1:1 (apprentice to journeyman lineman), which results in 8,000 hours of documented training in 14 separate job disciplines. In addition to the 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, our apprentice linemen must successfully complete a four-year educational self-study curriculum of the Northwest Lineman College Apprenticeship Program. The apprenticeship program is fully accredited and includes coursework for approximately 144 hours per year, resulting in 576 hours of curriculum scheduled coursework prior to an apprentice sitting for their final exam. Currently, your co-op has ten journeyman linemen and one in the apprenticeship program.

As with many careers, completing the formal part of education is only the beginning of learning, which is very true of your linemen. All of our operations and engineering employees participate in monthly safety meetings and trainings. Each year, SDREA sponsors a hot line rubber gloving course. This course is hosted by Mitchell Technical Institute and focuses on working on energized lines. Each year the Joint Utility Training School (JUTS) puts on a training program to focus on current trends. The JUTS program is designed by rural electric co-ops, investor-owned utilities, and municipal electric utilities. Our linemen attend these trainings on a rotating basis.

Four of your linemen are certified to use explosives, which is necessary for line construction in some of our service territory. This certification is through the state of Wyoming in conjunction with Wyoming Community College and meets the U.S. Department of Labor Mine Safety and Health Administration requirements. The certification must be renewed every five years and consists of 24 hours of in-class instruction and successfully passing an exam.

Education and training is a priority at your co-op. Training, education, and experience is necessary and crucial for keeping our employees and the public safe and keeping your lights on.

Enjoy the fall and have a Happy Halloween!

DAYLIGHT SAVING REMINDERS

- SET CLOCKS BACK NOVEMBER 7TH
- CHECK BATTERIES IN SMOKE DETECTORS
- CHECK CLOCK ON DEMAND CONTROLLER

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

BLACK HILLS ELECTRIC

(ISSN No. 1531-104X)

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VETERANS DAY

WE WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER THE GREAT DEEDS YOU'VE DONE FOR OUR COUNTRY.

Our office will be closed Thursday, November 11th.

★ HONORING ALL WHO SERVED ★

<p>Marine Corps 1991-1993</p>  <p>Thad Wasson Board Director</p>	<p>SD Army National Guard 1966-1972</p>  <p>Gary Kluthe Board Treasurer</p>	<p>Marine Corps 2005-2009</p>  <p>Carlos Rodriguez Right-of-Way Technician</p>
<p>Navy 1972-1979</p>  <p>Don Andersen Board Secretary</p>	<p>Army 1973-2003</p>  <p>Jim Preston Board Vice President</p>	

A house full of Thanksgiving safety

Nearly every household uses extra electricity during the holidays - for cooking, decorating and heating. Take extra care to use electricity safely and to ask family members and house-guests to do the same. Here are some tips:

- Stay in the kitchen when broiling or doing any stovetop cooking.
- Keep children well away from cooking appliances while the appliances are in use.
- Keep towels, potholders and curtains away from hot surfaces in your kitchen.
- One of the riskiest holiday behaviors is overloading your electrical outlets. You will overload your wall outlets if you string strand after strand of holiday lights together and plug them into an extension cord that you plug into an outlet.
- Plugging multiple strands of cords into a power strip does not add any juice to the electrical circuit that powers the outlet you plug the strip into.
- Check decorative lights for damaged cords, plugs and sockets. Replace anything that's frayed, cracked or broken. Buy cords that are certified by UL; look for the UL symbol on the package.
- Don't run extension cords under rugs, carpets or baseboards, or anywhere they can be a tripping hazard.
- Only use decorations and cords outdoors that are properly rated for outdoor use.
- When you put up outdoor decorations, do not string lights in trees near power lines. Fasten outdoor lights carefully and securely with clips, never nails or tacks.
- Keep electric lights away from decorative metal trees.
- Keep all light strings and other decorations away from pets so they don't get tangled in them or chew the wires.
- Keep all decorations - and everything else - at least three feet away from heat sources such as fireplaces and space heaters.
- Always turn off your decorations when you leave home and when you're sleeping.
- Make sure smoke detectors are present and working properly.
- Use space heaters properly and safely. Keep them out of high-traffic areas and at least three feet from anything that can burn.
- Do not leave a space heater running unattended. Turn off space heaters and unplug them when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- Never leave an open flame, including your fireplace or a candle, unattended.

GOVERNOR'S STUDENT ART COMPETITION



The Governor's Office and the South Dakota Arts Council invite students to participate in the Governor's Student Art Competition.

Students in K-12 will compete in four age divisions. Winning entries will be exhibited in the State Capitol from January through September 2022. Submission deadline is Nov. 12, 2021. All artwork is to be submitted electronically as a high-resolution jpeg image, along with the Artwork Submission Form and the Authorization Release Form. Competition guidelines, instructions and all necessary forms are accessible at https://artscouncil.sd.gov/events/student_art_Main.aspx. Contact Rebecca.cruse@state.sd.us or call 605-773-3301 for details.



Don't plant trees by power lines

Jazzlyn Magera

Jazzlyn shares good advice to avoid planting trees near power lines. Jazzlyn attends Brandon Elementary School and is the daughter of Rachel Schettler. They are members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.

SLOW COOKING BRINGS OUT FLAVORS OF FALL

BABY BACK RIBS

Ingredients:

2-1/2 lbs. pork baby back ribs, cut into eight pieces
 5 cups water
 1 med. onion, sliced
 2 celery ribs, cut in half
 2 tsps. minced garlic, divided
 1 tsp. whole peppercorns
 1/2 cup barbecue sauce
 1/4 cup plum sauce (Asian section of grocery store)
 Dash of hot pepper sauce

METHOD

Place ribs in a 5-qt. slow cooker. Add water, onion, celery, 1 tsp. garlic and peppercorns. Cover and cook on low for six hours or until meat is tender. In a small saucepan, combine the barbecue sauce, plum sauce, hot pepper sauce and remaining garlic. Cook and stir over medium heat for five minutes or until heated through. Remove ribs. Discard cooking juices and vegetables. Coat grill rack with nonstick cooking spray before starting grill. Brush ribs with sauce. Grill, uncovered, over medium low heat for 8-10 minutes or until browned, turning occasionally and brushing with remaining sauce. Can also be finished in the oven using the broil setting.

Melissa Roerig, Sioux Falls

CHILI BEEF AND PASTA

Ingredients:

2 lbs. lean ground beef
 2 packages McCormick® Chili Seasoning Mix
 1 can (14.5 oz.) diced tomatoes
 2 cans (8 oz. each) tomato sauce
 1 cup coarsely chopped bell pepper
 1 cup frozen or canned whole kernel corn
 1 cup elbow macaroni, cooked and drained (about 2.25 cups)
 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

METHOD

Cook ground beef in large skillet on medium-high heat until no longer pink; drain. Place in slow cooker. Stir in Seasoning Mix, tomatoes, tomato sauce, bell pepper and corn until well blended. Cover. Cook six hours on low or three hours on high. Stir in cheese and cooked macaroni during the last 10 minutes of cooking.

mccormick.com

WHITE PHEASANT CHILI

Ingredients:

3 boneless pheasants cooked and shredded
 1 large onion chopped
 4 Tbsps. butter
 1/4 cup flour
 3/4 cup chicken broth
 2 cups half and half
 2 cans Navy beans
 1 tsp. Tabasco sauce
 1-1/2 tsp. chili powder
 1 tsp. cumin
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1/2 tsp. pepper
 1-2 jalapeno peppers
 1-1/2 cups Monterrey jack cheese
 1/2 cup sour cream

METHOD

Cook and shred pheasant. Set aside. Cook onion with 2 Tbsps. butter until soft, add flour and remaining butter, whisking constantly. Add broth and half and half while whisking. Bring to boil for 5 minutes, or until onions are tender. Put in crockpot and add remaining ingredients. Put on high heat for one hour then reduce to low heat for one to two hours.

Alice DeHaai, Keystone

Please send your favorite holiday 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 December 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Dear Pat: I read your recent article about electric trucks and SUVs, and I'm excited that some electric vehicle options are now better suited to rural areas. Can you tell me more about how the battery system and charging works in an electric vehicle? – Ava

Dear Ava: We've been hearing more buzz about electric vehicles (EVs) in rural America, so it's a good time to know more about EV batteries and charging options.

Batteries, like the vehicles they power, come in different sizes that provide different mileage ranges. Most people charge their EVs at home, but if you take a cross-country trip, you can charge your EV at one of the rapidly growing number of charging stations around the country. The Department of Energy estimates there are currently 50,000 EV charging sites in the U.S.

Electric vehicles will tell you how many miles are remaining before a charge is needed, and many models offer in-car navigation to the next charger. For EVs without this feature, there are many smart phone apps available to help you navigate to the next charging site.

We often refer to three levels of electric vehicle charging. A new EV comes equipped for Level 1 (L1) charging, which simply plugs into a regular electrical outlet. This is the slowest option for charging, but if you don't travel many miles per day or your EV is a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) with a small battery, L1 charging will likely meet your needs. L1 requires less than 1.5 kilowatts, which is about the same as a hair dryer, and will give the battery three to five miles of range per hour of charging. If you drive your car 40 miles or less during the day and can charge it for 10 hours every night, this method should work for your daily driving needs. But if you have an all-electric EV with a 60-kWh battery, it would take more than 40 hours to fully charge with L1.

Level 2 (L2) is the most common type

of charging because it operates on 240-volt power, which nearly every home has. L2 can supply roughly 6 to 19 kW of power, depending on what your vehicle can accept and your electric circuit's amperage. L2 can provide 100 miles of charge in several hours, and fully charge a large battery in eight to 10 hours. You may need to install a new circuit if there isn't a 240-volt circuit near the area you park. L2 is the most common type of charging at public sites, like grocery stores, libraries and workplaces.

Level 3 (L3) chargers, often called DC Fast Chargers (DCFC), require much more current and are not installed in homes. L3 chargers are typically seen at specific EV charging sites and some gas stations. These chargers have power levels from 50 kW to 350 kW, depending on the charging station. Some new EVs can accept 250 kW or more and charge a battery from 10 percent to 80 percent in less than 20 minutes. Some older EV models may take an hour or more to achieve 80 percent at 50 kW. When selecting an EV, the charge time from 10 to 80 percent can be an important factor if you regularly head out on road trips.

"Vehicle to home" is an exciting new technology that enables EVs to power a home or shop during a power outage. Ford's upcoming F-150 Lightning Pro (2022), Hyundai's Ioniq5 and Kia's EV6 crossovers, and the 2022 Volkswagens are slated to offer this option.

Another important decision is when to charge your EV. Your local electric co-op may offer special rates if you charge your EV at night when energy demand is lower, which can help keep electricity costs down. Electric co-ops around the country are working on programs to prepare for more EV home charging, so reach out to your co-op if you have questions about EVs, charging or specific programs and rates.

EV charging infrastructure is currently being built across the country, including the Upper Midwest. You may not see them in your area yet, but they're coming, so get charged up about electric vehicles.



Pat Keegan
Collaborative
Efficiency



Brad Thiessen
Collaborative
Efficiency



A volunteer distributes food to the needy at the Feeding South Dakota facility in Pierre.

FEEDING SOUTH DAKOTA

Hunger relief program takes on the task of making sure families have food on the table

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Putting an end to hunger in the state of South Dakota is a very tall order. But it's one that leaves Lori Dykstra decidedly undaunted.

Dykstra is CEO of Feeding South Dakota, a non-profit hunger relief organization with outposts all across the state dedicated to providing access to nutritious meals for those in need.

She and her team are driven not only to deliver quality meals to the young and old alike but in a broader sense to contribute to the economic, social and emotional health of families and the communities they call home.

Each week, Feeding South Dakota uses its network of agencies and partners to distribute roughly 200,000 meals, including 5,000 packages of food provided to children through the organization's BackPack program and 2,700 food boxes for seniors.

While it may not be readily apparent to some, Dykstra points out that South Dakota has four of the 10 poorest

counties in the country, and the rural nature of the state causes the creation of food deserts where grocery stores, markets and other resources can be separated by many miles. Nearly 15 percent of the population lives at or below the poverty line and more than 40 percent of school-aged children qualify for free and reduced meals.

Dykstra believes no family should face the decision of buying food or buying medication or paying rent.

"I'm excited to work toward meeting the needs of those who face hunger in South Dakota and grateful for the opportunity to share my passion for community service," she said.

The program began in 1975 when the Sioux Falls Ministerial Association formed a community food pantry. Eight years later, the Black Hills Regional Food Bank, Inc., was created.

Eventually, in 2004 an inevitable joining of forces took place when the two separate organizations merged and became the Community Food Banks of South Dakota, Inc., bringing together 45 years of experience in



Lori Dykstra

providing hunger relief.

The program is continuing to look for new ways to meet its mission. In July, Feeding South Dakota launched Heroes for the Hungry: A Campaign for Monthly Giving, as an effort to re-energize the spirit of giving after the height of the pandemic and encourage regular monthly donations.

The United Methodist Church Dakotas Conference pitched in with a Miracle Offering in which the first 120 monthly donations would be matched up to a total of \$12,000.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to strengthen our foundation of sustaining gifts that allow us to do our important work," Dykstra said.

A PLACE TO REST



The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery located northeast of Sioux Falls provides a new resting place for U.S. military veterans and their families. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

State Veterans Cemetery in Sioux Falls opens new options for military families

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

A dozen distraught family members surrounded the casket conspicuously draped with a bright, crisp American flag. The brilliant hues of red, white and blue stood in stark contrast to the slate gray sky hanging overhead and the slight chill that filled the air.

As the gathered mourners paid their last respects and turned back toward the administration building at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery, the clouds suddenly burst open and a heavy rain began to fall.

“Well, your daddy was a rancher,” the grieving widow said to her son as they made their way down the hillside. “A good rain is exactly what he would have wanted. This would have made him smile.”

Erin Brown is director of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery (SDVC) located northeast of Sioux Falls and she often hears stories that family members share about their loved ones who arrive at their final resting

place there. A military veteran herself, Brown said those stories bring added meaning and significance to her work.

“The veterans – and their families – are very important to us,” she said. “When I hear those kinds of stories and hear them describe a lifetime of memories and all the good times they had together, it reinforces the idea that there’s real value in what we’re doing here at the cemetery.”

The SDVC is the first federally funded, state-owned and operated veterans cemetery in the state, although there is no residency requirement for military veterans to be interred there. The Black Hills National Cemetery is located a few miles east of Sturgis.

The facility is located on 60 acres donated by the City of Sioux Falls and ultimately will have enough space for over 28,000 casket grave sites, cremation grave sites, a columbarium for cremated remains and a scattering garden. More than 600 in-ground crypts have already been installed. The facility was made possible by more

than \$7 million in federal money, state funds and private donations.

Since the ribbon-cutting ceremony last Memorial Day, the cemetery has seen a steady stream of burials. There were four on a recent Friday.

SDVC staff works with the families to arrange details of the burial services which typically include a final pre-service consultation with the families, a processional to the committal shelter, a 15-20 minute service, folding and presentation of the flag, and a rifle salute and Taps presented by local military-related volunteer organizations.





Members of the grounds crew are all veterans and can relate to military families in their time of grief.

Clarence Kooistra is one of those volunteers who donates his time to make sure veterans receive a proper burial and their families receive the proper respect. He's a member of the VFW Post 628 Honor Guard based in Sioux Falls.

"I just feel it's very important that these men and women are treated with the respect they deserve for the sacrifices they've made to preserve our freedoms and democracy in our country," Kooistra said. "It's a privilege for me to come out here and do this for the families."

While construction commenced on the cemetery two years ago, it took several years to bring the project to fruition. At the time the first federal grant application was submitted in 2017, Brown was serving as a veterans program manager in the State Department of Veteran's Affairs helping veterans navigate through the federal bureaucracy to receive their rightful benefits. She often found, however, that some of the former soldiers would balk at the benefits "so that someone they felt needed it more than them could get it."

When the cemetery director position opened up, she jumped at the chance to find another way to help veterans.

In performing her job, Brown

calls on her own military experience, which includes joining the Minnesota National Guard in high school and receiving advanced individual training at Fort Lee in Virginia. She returned and attended college for three years before getting deployed to Iraq for nearly two years.

She worked in supply management at a Marine base between Ramadi and Fallujah and eventually left the service as an E-5.

When she and her staff are interacting with veterans and their families, they have little difficulty relating to them on a personal basis.

"The military is the kind of experience that you don't know you want or need until you have it," she said. "All of those experiences have put me into one of the most rewarding jobs I've been able to do. Without it, I wouldn't be able to relate to the families and get the help they need and have earned. Once they realize I'm also a veteran, things change and they see me differently."

Brown and her staff - all of whom are veterans themselves - have

developed personal relationships with the families whose loved ones are interred at the facility. During their visits to the cemetery, family members often express their gratitude to the staff for their work in keeping the facility well maintained and give updates on how the family is faring and if they have any further needs.

Brown said she is looking toward the future with optimism for the



The Committal Shelter is the site of many outdoor funeral services for veterans.

cemetery and its mission, especially after the South Dakota Veterans Council last summer announced a \$2.1 million donation from philanthropist T. Denny Sanford, PREMIER Bankcard CEO Miles Beacom and his wife Lisa.

For more information, visit <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranscemetery/>.

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I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).





Happy Thanksgiving!
 Our office will be closed November 25th - 26th.

State High School Short Go Winners

Black Hills Electric Cooperative and South Dakota's Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives are proud supporters of the South Dakota High School Rodeo Association. High school competitors participated in the 2021 High School Rodeo Finals in June located in Ft. Pierre. These local students received a short go shirt for their qualifications. Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives nationwide are committed to the core values of innovation, integrity, accountability, and commitment to community. Congratulations!



Ryan Koupal from Edgemont
Saddle Bronc



Kaitlin Gerard from Edgemont
Breakaway Roping



Jessica Woodward from Custer
Goat Tying

Not Pictured

Gabe Glines: Bull Riding, Steer Wrestling & Tiedown

Garrett Glines: Reined Cow Horse, Tiedown & Team Roping

Jestyn Woodward: Bull Riding

THE FIRST TO ACT



The state's emergency medical services workforce declined 30 percent last year, though some are still eager to serve.

Though rural South Dakota is experiencing a shortage of first responders, some are still eager to bear the responsibility

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The early morning fog had already settled in heavy and thick as a damp blanket when Joey Denison pulled out of his driveway in Lake Norden. He was headed to Lake Preston for his job as an electric lineman and just happened to be fresh off earning his paramedic license in his spare time.

Within just a few minutes of driving along Hwy. 81, the blurry image of a wrecked semi came into view through the haze. The rig was overturned and rested across the roadway. At first blush, the scene appeared to be a one-vehicle accident, but Denison soon saw the small pickup that was crushed beneath the trailer.

When he got close enough to peer inside the vehicle, he saw a young woman who had clearly sustained severe damage to her skull. His four years of training through EMT and paramedic school kicked into high gear.

"There were cars still running into the semi from the other side so I positioned

my truck where no one could run into her car," Denison recalled. "Then I pulled her car out from underneath the trailer with my truck. I could see her head was shattered and someone had already called 911 to report that she was dead. Eventually, we were able to get her out with the Jaws of Life and transport her to the hospital in Madison."

The young lady made a full recovery and she and Denison still stay in contact three years later.

Denison doesn't characterize his actions as heroic; he sees his response as something that neighbors and citizens simply do for one another. Spurred on by his passion for helping others, Denison began his EMT training seven years ago and now volunteers his services in Lake Norden and the surrounding area.

"I always kind of regretted not going into the military, so this is my way of being a community servant," he said.

These days he teaches classes in emergency training and notes a shortage of qualified volunteers to staff rural first responder operations.

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, over the past year the active EMS workforce has declined 30 percent.

Denison said assumptions sometimes depart from reality when it comes to EMS work, and he encourages those who have a penchant for serving others to consider first responder training.



Joey Denison says emergency response work is both challenging and rewarding.

"The physical act of rendering first aid is a lot of repetitive training and muscle memory, but people think it's too complex. If you can catch a baseball, you can put your hand over a cut. It's not that hard," he said. "We can't be afraid to help someone in need in an emergency situation. Someday it could be you who needs the help."

A LIFETIME OF CO-OP SERVICE TO MEMBERS

Co-op leaders recognized at SDAC Hall of Fame banquet

Billy Gibson

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Harry Thomas still remembers turning on the “power switch” for the first time at his home when he was a youngster.

That was made possible by his local electric cooperative, and for Thomas it was a life lesson about the great things that can happen through co-op organizations. He went on to serve for nearly four decades on the board of Venture Communications and was one of four recent inductees into the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives Hall of Fame.

Thomas and Paul Symens were recognized as 2021 inductees at the ceremony held in Watertown Sept. 22, while Chuck Birkholt and Dan Lindblom were honored as 2020 inductees. Last year’s banquet was canceled due to the pandemic.

“I’ve been around cooperative systems all my life,” Thomas said. “I remember when the co-op brought power to the farm and when Sully Buttes built the first telephone line out there. Those things would not have happened if not for cooperatives. The Bell companies built in the towns, but they had no



Inducted into the South Dakota Association of Cooperatives Hall of Fame were Harry Thomas, Chuck Birkholt and Paul Symens. Not shown is Dan Lindblom, who was unable to attend the induction ceremony in Watertown.

interest in going into the country.”

Symens served on the board at Lake Region Electric in Webster before he was elected to the state Legislature in 1987 and again in 1996. He was a board member for Farmers Union Marketing and Processing for 36 years.

“I’ve put in a lot of time with cooperatives and I know how co-ops work. I was raised in co-ops and it has been a pleasure to be a part of that process. The magic of co-ops is people working together to help each other, and as long as board and management do their jobs, it’s going to be successful.”

Symens said his advice for the younger generation of co-op leaders would be to learn about the history of cooperatives, how they were founded and why they exist.

“Learning from history will teach you a lot and keep you from making mistakes,” he said.

Birkholt started his cooperative career

as a laborer at Cam Wal Electric in Selby. He went to work “digging holes and setting poles” for 85 cents an hour until he discovered he could make more money as a lineman.

He worked at the co-op for 45 years, the last eight as general manager. He went on to serve on the board at Venture Communications for the past 21 years.

“I told my wife I always wanted to see



Hall of Fame inductee Chuck Birkholt addresses the audience at the Watertown Event Center.

what it was like on the other side of the board table,” he said. “But I think she just wanted me out of the house.”

Lindblom, a long-time board member at Black Hills Electric in Custer, was unable to attend the banquet.

HUNTING FOR THE HUNGRY

Sportsmen Against Hunger is nearing one million pounds of game meat donated to food banks across the state since 1993.

South Dakota hunters donate game meat for families in need through Sportsmen Against Hunger program

Billy Gibson

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One million pounds of meat is an awful lot of protein...and a lot of goose burgers.

The organization Sportsmen Against Hunger is closing in on one million pounds of wild game donated to the needy since the program was founded in 1993 by Dr. Jeff Olson and Dr. Tom Kafka.

For nearly three decades, generous hunters throughout the state have given away a variety of game meat including deer, antelope, elk, pheasant, grouse and geese.

According to Olson, the goose meat has been quite a hit.

“Apparently, there are a lot of people who like to eat goose burgers,” he said. “It may not

sound too appetizing when you think about it, but it’s not bad and a lot of the people who receive our donations say it’s great. They’ve developed quite a taste for it.”

Olson recalls that even when he launched the program he was completely oblivious to how many people in the state were going to bed hungry every night.

“We’re reaching one million pounds of meat our hunters and processors have donated over the years, but there are so many who are food insecure in our state that we could use another several million and still not meet the need,” he said.

Olson is accustomed to working around a maze of regulations, restrictions and prohibitions, noting “there’s a new and different hurdle we have to jump every year.”

Presently, the program is facing the challenge of finding enough plants to process the donated animals. Just a few years ago, there were nearly 50 wild game processors on the list of licensed receiving plants. Today there are just 14.

Olson cites pandemic-related problems in the industry and a dearth of available workers. The plants have been forced to take domestic animals for production and push donated wild game to the back of the line.

Ron Fowler has served as field director for the program since 2005 when he retired from South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks as a game management specialist after 35 years. He works out the details of the operation, recruits processors and hunters to participate and sorts through the red tape of state and federal regulations, health precautions, quality control and the program’s certification system.

He explained that when a hunter

SPORTSMEN AGAINST HUNGER



decides to donate a doe deer or antelope, they fill out a certificate and deliver it to any processor in the state that's on the prearranged receiving list. The certificate covers \$75 of the processing fee while the hunter is responsible for any balance, though some facilities will accept the certificate as full payment. In the case of bucks, the hunter is responsible for the entire balance, which could run to more than \$100. Processors collect the certificates



Ron Fowler, left, delivers a shipment of donated venison to a Feeding South Dakota warehouse facility.



Pictured at left, South Dakota fishermen donated 320 pounds of cleaned walleye in 2020. Above, Dr. Jeff Olson presents a plaque to Bruce Anderson, president of the Western Buffalo Company in Rapid City, for participating in the Sportsmen Against Hunger program. Shown far left is SAH Board Member Tom Weaver. Far right is SAH field director Ron Fowler.

and turn them in at the end of the season for payment.

Fowler said the policy is in place to help control and manage the state's deer population. He said some hunters will obtain more than one deer license, keep one for themselves and donate the others.

"When the program started, we had no funds to cover any of the hunter's cost, but then we created a foundation and now we can pay for does, plus we provide the casing for processors and pay for the cost of getting the meat to the food banks where it's distributed to those who need it."

Fowler said these days most donated venison is coming from deer taken within, or close to, city limits. Several larger cities and towns have allowed deer to be taken in close proximity of their borders simply to hold the deer population down and keep them out of yards, gardens and streets. The cost of processing those animals is typically shared with the local government.

Sportsmen Against Hunger is also seeing more anglers getting in on the action. More than 300 lbs. of cleaned walleye has been donated in the past year. At this year's Governor's Cup Walleye Fishing Tournament, for instance, nearly 1,000 fish went to the needy.

Most of the cleaning is done by local volunteers and members of sportsmen clubs.

Thousands of pheasants are also donated each year, often by those who are visiting the state and can't take home their kill.

Fowler maintains a steady drum beat of encouraging hunters to donate their game even though he knows the incentives to do so are diminishing. He notes that in earlier times processors weren't hard to find, but now a hunter may have to drive some distance to the nearest facility.

"It used to be more convenient for hunters when you didn't have to drive across the state to find a processor, but people are still hungry," he said.

Fowler said his work can often be challenging, but he stays motivated by remembering that there's always a need.

"There are so many families in our state that struggle and they need help," he said. "It all comes down to a warm, fuzzy thing for me. The work is a little more than I first anticipated but I can't just ignore it when I see an opportunity to help someone who needs it. We get a lot of positive feedback from our processors and the people we help are very grateful."



Thanksgiving
November 25, 2021

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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

OCTOBER 22-24
American Association of United Women (AAUW) Booksale
Fine Arts Building, Central States Fairground, Rapid City, SD, Please check the Rapid City AAUW Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/AAUWRapidCity>) for more info

OCTOBER 22-24, 28-30
A Little Piece of Heaven
Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, call 605-224-7826 to purchase tickets

OCTOBER 23
Aberdeen Oktoberfest
Aberdeen Civic Arena, Aberdeen, SD, 605-380-8448

OCTOBER 29-30
Deadweird
Various Locations, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

OCTOBER 30
16th Holiday Shopping Extravaganza
Davison County Fairgrounds, Mitchell, SD, call Cindy at 605-999-8563 for more info

OCTOBER 30
Scare in the Square
Main Street Square, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

OCTOBER 30
Yankton's Harvest Halloween
Downtown, Yankton, SD, email mandi@bostonsyankton.com for more info

OCTOBER 31
Halloween Bash Weekend at Mazing Acres Pumpkin Patch
30851 433rd Avenue, Yankton, SD, 605-760-2759

NOVEMBER 4
Chris Young Famous Friends Tour
Summit Arena, Rapid City, SD, 605-394-4115

NOVEMBER 6
Fairburn Community Fall Bazaar, Roast Beef Dinner and Live Auction
Civic Center, Fairburn, SD

NOVEMBER 6
Christmas for Kids Annual Fund Raising Auction
351 Washington Street, Custer, SD, donations accepted, contact Dani at custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com or Jim at 605-673-2663 for more info

NOVEMBER 5-7, 12-14, 19-21
Julius Caesar
Black Hills Playhouse, Rapid City, SD, visit <https://www.bhct.org/> for more info and tickets

NOVEMBER 12-13
Sioux Empire Arts and Crafts Show
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-6000

NOVEMBER 13
Christmas at the Homestead
Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve, North Sioux City, SD, 605-232-0873

NOVEMBER 13
Deadwood's Big Whiskey Fest
Main Street, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

NOVEMBER 13
Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters Holiday Open House Extravaganza
Sisseton, SD, call Beverly at 605-698-7425 for more info

NOVEMBER 19-20
Holiday Arts Christmas Show
Masonic Hall, Mitchell, SD, 605-359-2049

NOVEMBER 20
Little Norge Fest: A Taste of Scandinavia
Canyon Lake Activity Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-342-4226

NOVEMBER 27
Holiday Celebration and Winter Market/Festival of Lights Parade
Downtown, Rapid City, SD, 605-381-4204

DECEMBER 4
Rapid City Garden Club's Wreath & Centerpiece Sale
Central States Fairgrounds, Rapid City, SD, 605-343-0710

DECEMBER 18
Christmas for Kids Annual Event
Custer High School Theater, Custer, SD, donations accepted, contact Dani at custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com or Jim at 605-673-2663 for more info

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