

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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# Grow Your Summer Energy Savings

## H-D Electric Cooperative can help you save money.



**Matt Hotzler**  
Manager

First, thank you to all who attended the H-D Electric Annual meeting on Tuesday, March 19, at the Hamlin Education Center. We had a nice crowd, with 151 members registered and 230 in attendance. Besides hearing about the happenings at your Cooperative, each registered membership got a \$20 bill credit and a chance to win one of the bill credit door prizes.

When the annual meeting is completed, it signals to me that Spring and summer are coming soon. While I was teased by the very mild mid-March weather, the last week of March reminded us that winter can still appear. But I still know Spring won't be far away, and with late Spring comes the planting season. It's impressive how seeds, fertilizer, and water can become a bounty in the field or garden.

When I think about energy efficiency, I think about that bounty of food and how you can use less electricity with just a few simple actions and reap the rewards of energy savings.

You don't need to be a farmer or botanist to know that plants need water – just like you don't have to be a lineworker or engineer to know that adjusting the thermostat or turning off lights can reduce your monthly electric bill. If you follow us on Facebook, you know there are many things you can do at home to save electricity and money.

Summer months can bring higher energy bills of the year. But why? Cooling your home accounts for a large portion of your monthly energy use, and the hotter it gets, the harder (and longer) your air conditioner works to keep you cool.

But I'd also like to share a few ways we're here to help you save – not only during the dog days of summer but throughout the year.

One of the great things about being part of H-D Electric Cooperative is that you, our members, own it locally. So, instead of making profits, we can focus on helping our community. That's why we've developed incentives and programs to help you keep your money in your wallet.

Save money with these easy incentives:

- **Rebates** – H-D Electric Cooperative offers several ways to give you money back for efficient equipment you purchase, like heat pumps, irrigation restart systems, and water heaters. Find a list of all our rebates at [www.h-delectric.coop/rebates-loans-other-incentives](http://www.h-delectric.coop/rebates-loans-other-incentives). Call the office with any questions and they will help you.
- **Recycle** – If you have an old refrigerator or freezer that's running but is not used much, it's costing you. Determine if your getting what's it worth, many old appliances aren't as energy efficient as today's.
- **Energy Audits** – Our energy advisors can determine the overall efficiency of your home and help you find ways to improve it. If you want to do it yourself, we can help with that, too.
- **Take Control of Your Use** – Use SmartHub to track your energy use.
- **Ways to Pay** – If you're having a difficult time paying the higher bills that come with increased use in the summer, contact us to learn about our budget billing program.

Most people don't know everything about electricity, so we're here to help. There are no investors making profits here. Just knowledgeable people with local jobs, working for our neighbors to ensure electricity is available when you need it. Contact us, and we can work with you to find more ways to save energy – and money.





## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### H-D ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-905)

#### General Manager: Matt Hotzler

#### Headquarters Employees:

Annie Aberle – Finance and  
Administration Manager  
Michelle Prins – Billing Clerk  
Heidi Brewer-Grimlie – Accounting Clerk  
Jami Bolden – Receptionist/Cashier  
Roger Cutshaw – Engineer  
Darren Matthies – Building Property  
Worker

#### Operations:

Troy Kwasniewski – Operations Manager  
Todd Sprang – Line Foreman

#### Line Crew:

Pat Kirby – Operations Support  
Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker  
Cody Scarrott – Lineworker  
Derek Bille – Lineworker  
Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker  
Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/  
Mechanic  
Joseph Jordan Jr. – Apprentice Lineworker  
Eric Page – Apprentice Lineworker  
Brady Mellendorf – Equipment Operator/  
Mechanic

#### Member Services:

Tom Lundberg – Member Services  
Manager  
Noah Reichling – Electrician Foreman  
Jim Thompson – Lead Electrician  
Deaven Boots – Apprentice Electrician

#### Board of Directors:

President Bert Rognes – Astoria  
Vice President Terry Strohhus – Hazel  
Secretary Roxanne Bass – Castlewood  
Treasurer Steven Hansen – Clear Lake  
Dale Williams – Estelline  
Casper Niemann – Lake Norden  
Kevin DeBoer – Clear Lake  
Calvin Musch – Revillo  
Todd Moritz – Clear Lake

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Design assistance by SDREA.

# H-D Electric's Newest Employee Bio

Please Help Us Welcome Deaven Boots to the Member Service Department!

Deaven started working as an Apprentice Electrician in March 2024. He attended Minnesota State Community and Technical College for one year.

Deaven's hometown is Big Stone City, S.D., where he likes to hunt, play baseball, and spend time with his nieces and nephews. He volunteers with the youth wrestling group in Ortonville, Minn.



## Congratulations Kathy Monnens

Winner of the \$100 Bill Credit in the Paperless Bill Drawing

#### Benefits of Paperless Bill Statements:

- Receive your bill quicker with Email Notification and avoid frustration over postal delays.
- View or print your electric bill anytime with 24/7 secure access to your online account.
- Helps H-D Electric reduce operating costs of printing, paper and postage which saves you, the Member, money and helps the environment.

#### Signing up is easy as 1-2-3:

##### Website:

- ⇒ Visit <https://hdelectric.smarthub.coop/> and login using your Email Address and Password.
- ⇒ If not registered, create a new SmartHub account by clicking on 'New User? Sign up to access our self-service site'.
- ⇒ Once logged in to SmartHub:
  1. Click on 'My Profile'
  2. Choose 'Update My Paperless Settings'
  3. Click button to turn 'ON' paperless billing

##### Mobile App:

- ⇒ Download our free, secure SmartHub mobile app from the Apple or Google Play Store:
- ⇒ Provider is H-D Electric
- 1. Click on Menu    2. Go to 'Settings'    3. 'Activate Paperless Billing', click the slider to enable paperless

## Operating Statistics

	February 2023	February 2024
Customers .....	3,778	3,831
Amount Collected.....	\$1,089,865	\$1,067,238
Average Bill .....	\$288.48	\$278.58
Average Kilowatt-Hour .....	2,904	2,704
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased.....	11,615,808	11,095,068
Kilowatt-Hours Sold .....	10,972,793	10,357,173

# Your Safety Matters

## Prevent home electrical fires

Eight out of 10 fire-related deaths occur at home – the place that embodies comfort and security. That's why it's important to take steps to keep everyone safe.

Faulty or deteriorating electrical cords are a top cause of fires at home. Cords that become frayed or cracked can send sparks to flammable surfaces. Check your cords to ensure that they are in good shape, and replace any that are worn.

In addition, make sure you are not overloading circuits. If you've been in your home for more than 10 years, have your circuit breaker box inspected by a licensed electrician to tighten loose connections and check for overloaded circuits.



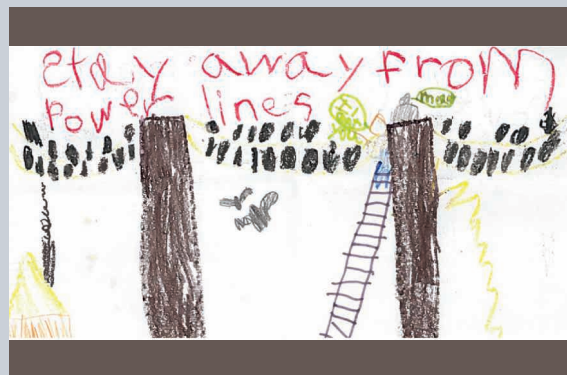
Homes with copper wiring need to be inspected every 20 years, and homes with aluminum wiring should be inspected every five years.

Check all Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets several times each year by pushing the test/reset button to be sure they are working properly.

If breakers are continually tripping or if fuses are blowing frequently, that's a sign of potential trouble. The cause could be old wiring unable to handle the load demand of today's modern appliances. If needed, ask a licensed electrician to install additional circuits for safety.

Use surge protectors and power bars to help prevent overloading an electrical outlet, plugging no more than three cords into the strip.

May is National Electrical Safety Month. We urge you to take the time and steps needed to lower the risks of electrical fires. Keep your family safe.



### Stay Away from Power Lines

#### Weston Koistinen, Age 6

Weston Koistinen warns readers to be safe by staying away from power lines. Weston's parents are Dion and Stephanie Koistinen, members of H-D Electric Cooperative.

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.



# SUMMER CASSEROLES

## BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 5 oz. package croutons,  
any flavor  
2 cup sharp Cheddar cheese,  
shredded  
1 lb. sausage, fried and  
drained  
9 eggs  
1 can evaporated milk  
1 tbsp. mustard

### Method

Spray 9x13 pan with vegetable oil. Arrange croutons on bottom. Sprinkle cheese over croutons and put sausage over cheese. Combine eggs, milk and mustard. Beat to blend and pour into pan. Bake covered at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Janet Ochsner  
Box Elder, S.D.

## CHICKEN CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 package Chicken Stove Top  
Stuffing mix  
3 cups cooked cut up  
chicken  
1 can cream of mushroom  
soup  
2/3 cup milk  
1 can cream of chicken soup  
2 eggs, beaten  
2 cups chicken broth

### Method

Grease a 9x13 pan and put 1/2 of the stuffing mix in the pan. Cover with chicken. Combine soups and milk and spoon over chicken. Spread other 1/2 of stuffing over the top. Pour 2 cups of chicken broth over all and spread with beaten eggs. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Gail Lee  
Brookings, S.D.

## TACO CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 lbs. ground beef  
1 package taco seasoning  
mix  
1 can (16 oz.) pinto beans,  
drained and rinsed  
1 can (15 oz.) tomato sauce  
1 can (11 oz.) whole kernel  
corn, drained  
1 cup shredded Cheddar  
cheese  
1 cup coarsely crushed  
tortilla chips

### Method

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brown meat in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Stir in seasoning mix, beans, tomato sauce and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Spoon into 2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and tortilla chips. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with assorted toppings, if desired.

McCormick

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Why Solar is Not Free



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** I often hear claims you'll never pay an electric bill again if you go solar. Is that true?

**A:** The ability to generate your own renewable energy at home is an amazing thing. It's pretty cool that the technology is accessible to home and property owners across the country. The concept of free energy from the sun is appealing, but solar power isn't actually free. There are costs associated with capturing that energy for use in your home.

Installing a residential solar system doesn't equate to \$0 energy bills. Prices for the solar system and installation vary, but adding solar typically comes with a five-figure price tag. Solar systems only provide power when the sun is shining. You still rely on your electric utility for power at night and when the skies are cloudy. Most electric utility rate structures include a set monthly service fee. Unless you plan to disconnect from local electric service completely, you will still have a monthly electric bill.

Solar might be a good investment for you, or it might not. Several factors impact how well the investment pencils out, including where you live, home orientation and shading, electric bill rate structure and cost, available incentives and tax credits, your budget and credit rating.

If you are considering solar on your home, I suggest taking these three steps:

First, make your home as energy efficient as possible. It wouldn't make sense to put a new motor on a boat with holes in it, so why would you put a solar system on an energy-wasting home? Invest in reducing wasted energy before investing in creating new energy. The efficiency updates I recommend before installing solar include insulating and air sealing your home and upgrading to efficient appliances – especially the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

If your HVAC system is older than 10 years or malfunctioning, make sure replacing it is in the budget. Remember, energy efficiency upgrades might have a better return on investment than installing solar.

A more efficient home means a smaller – and lower-cost – solar energy system. Solar systems are typically designed to produce the amount of energy a home uses in a year, so if you complete energy efficiency improvements before installing a solar system, make sure the solar contractor accounts for those energy savings.

Second, check with your electric utility about the requirements to install solar and how it will impact your bill. If you decide to install solar panels, working with your utility will be essential, as you will need to take important steps, such as signing an interconnection agreement to ensure the system is properly connected to the electric grid.

Third, get at least three quotes to compare each contractor's recommended system design, equipment and cost. It's a significant investment, so you want to know your options.

There are several ways to pay for a solar system and installation. It can be bought outright with cash or financed by a loan. This allows you to own the system immediately or at the end of the loan term. State and federal tax incentives can help offset the costs.

There is also the option to install a solar system through a lease or power purchase agreement. In this structure, a third party – usually the solar installer – owns the system. They install the system on your property and then sell you the energy produced at a predetermined rate. They are responsible for maintaining the system and own it at the end of the agreement term.

Loans, leases and power purchase agreements can impact the sale of a home. Although a solar system may increase the value of your home, some buyers – or their lenders – are not interested in taking on leases or power purchase agreements.

Investing in solar is one way to support the transition to renewable energy. Before you make the leap, improve your home's energy efficiency and empower yourself by thoroughly weighing the costs and benefits.

# Wish Upon a Crawdad

## Curtis Condon's children's literature illuminates electric cooperative history

Frank Turner

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What happens when you blend the rich history of electric cooperatives with the picturesque landscapes of rural America and the magic of fiction storytelling? Curtis W. Condon, a former writer and editor for electric cooperative magazines, finds the answer in his vibrant children's novel, "Wish Upon a Crawdad." This coming-of-age story combines these unlikely elements through the eyes of the main character, 12-year-old Ruby Mae Ryan, during the late Great Depression years in rural Oregon.

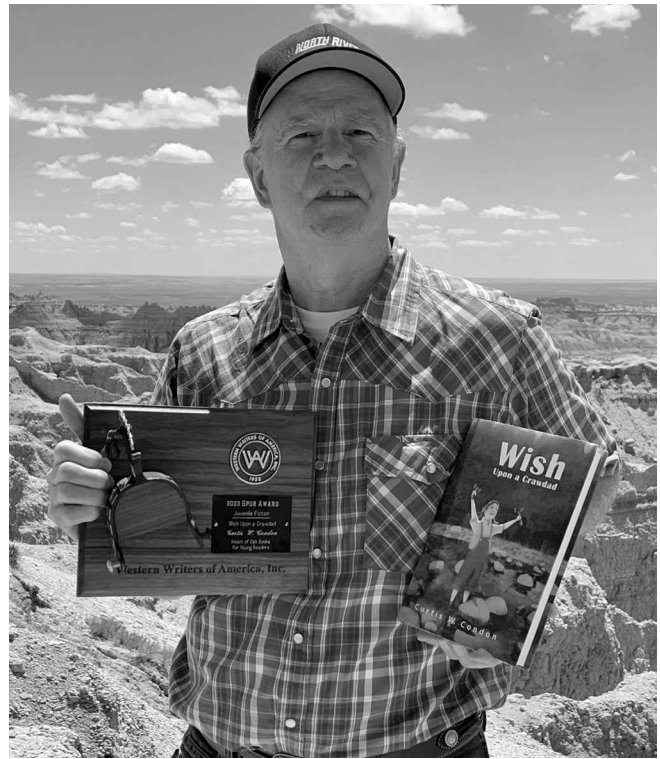
The book, highlighting Ruby's outdoor adventures, explores personal growth while giving testimony to rural electrification in American history. Before writing children's literature, Condon spent more than 27 years in the electric co-op industry as an editor and writer for *Ruralite*, a magazine for electric cooperatives and their members in the Northwest. His time there, conducting interviews and writing, familiarized Condon with the history of rural electrification in the U.S.

"I fell in love with the concept of the electric co-op. Electric co-ops have such a fantastic history and a wonderful story to tell, and I wanted to tell that in this book," said Condon.

This history began with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's determination to lead America out of the Great Depression. Deciding that electrification would play a central role in the process, the president established the Rural Electrification Administration through an executive order in the face of strong dismay from private utility companies. The president's order set the stage for the current network of member-owned electric cooperatives we recognize today, which bring electricity to rural homes that would otherwise be powerless.

However, "Wish Upon a Crawdad" doesn't tell the story of presidents and executive orders. Instead, the book focuses on the very real impact rural electrification had on Ruby, her family, and her community.

"It's about a girl who grows up without electricity until she is 12 years old, and she likes to wish upon crawdads the way that people wish upon stars," Condon explained. "One of the wishes is to get electricity, and that dream comes true because her mom



Curtis W. Condon, author of "Wish Upon a Crawdad," accepts the 2023 Western Writers of America Spur Award, an award presented to Condon in Rapid City, S.D.

and dad get together with their neighbors and create an electric co-op."

Condon's own upbringing in Oregon inspires the book's setting, filled with his memories of crawdad-filled pools, temperate forests and rural dirt roads. While set in the 1940s, many of Ruby's experiences reflect those of Condon's own family.

"My grandmother remembered when electricity was first introduced to her community. She considered electricity to be one of the greatest wonders of the world," said Condon.

Together, Condon's childhood and passion for electric cooperative history set the stage for "Wish Upon a Crawdad," his first children's book, fulfilling a dream he had held onto for years.

"Since I was twelve years old, I knew I wanted to be a children's book writer. It took me 30 years of doing a different kind of writing, but I finally got there," said Condon.

Fulfilling a childhood dream, Condon's book was published in 2022, and his passions and life history began connecting with readers. Although the target audience of the book is children ages 9 to 12, Condon said readers of all ages are enjoying Ruby's story.

Since publication, "Wish Upon a Crawdad" has won the 2023 Western Writers of America Spur Award, an award presented to Condon in Rapid City, S.D. Other awards include the 2023 Will Rogers Medallion Award, the 2023 First Horizon Award, and the 2023 Eric Hoffer Book Award. The book has a presence in libraries across 37 states, including South Dakota.





Patsy Besson helps package fresh cuts of meat at the Wall Meat Processing plant.  
Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel

## Wall Meats Revives Local Meatcutting in South Dakota Through New Underwood Expansion

**Shannon Marvel**

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A local meat processing plant is expanding its footprint in Pennington County in a way that will put more locally produced protein on dinner tables and bolster the local meat processing workforce throughout South Dakota.

The man behind this plan is local business owner Ken Charfauros, who owns Wall Meat Processing, which has locations in Wall and Rapid City.

Charfauros is currently raising funds through a capital drive campaign to finance the construction of a 30,000 square foot meat processing facility in New Underwood. The new facility will help train the next generation of meat processors through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City.

“We are at \$2.8 million in our drive. We also have the \$3.3 million USDA Rural Development grant, which is a meat and poultry expansion plan grant. We are about \$200,000 short of our goal,” Charfauros said.

He added that the New Underwood processing plant will also use funding from the Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP), which according to the USDA’s website “provides grant funding to intermediary lenders who finance – or plan to finance – the start-up, expansion, or operation of slaughter, or other processing of meat and poultry. The objective of the MPILP is to strengthen the financing capacity for independent meat processors, and to create a more resilient, diverse, and secure U.S. food supply chain.”

Charfauros said he’s still meeting with potential investors and has a financial team focused on creating relationships with local ag producers.

“After we get our capital drive, the plan itself will be about \$21 million,” he added. “And then we start the project. The groundbreaking is going to happen in about a year and the facility will begin operations six months after that.”

Charfauros said he expects to purchase the property to site the new plant this spring.

### Returning to a Passion

Wall Meats Processing opened for business 57 years ago, but



Charfauros took ownership over the facility in 2017. His passion for meat cutting began when he was a teenager while working for a local meat plant in Delaware.

“It was my high school job and I loved it. After I graduated high school, I felt that my country needed me, so I joined the Air Force and did 30 years. But I always missed that part of my life,” Charfauros recalled.

“A guy that taught me how to cut was like my second dad, and I always wanted to come back to it. My son had just graduated from South Dakota State University, and I had retired from the Air Force. That’s when we decided to buy a plant.”

His son manages the store in Rapid City while Ken’s three nephews help run the family’s businesses in Wall, which include Wall Meats and the Red Rock restaurant.

### Supporting Local Producers

Building the new facility has been a challenging venture that’s been years in the making.

“We started building this plan about four years ago, then COVID hit and got in our way. Then, we were lucky enough to get those grant awards last year, and ever since we have been working diligently to get the format right,” Charfauros said.

“I have drawings. I have an equipment list all put together — everything is ready to go except for this capital drive that we are undergoing.”

Charfauros said he has been meeting with both potential and locked-in investors daily over the last year to produce the required financing.

“We have met with over 600 people with 99 percent of those people being producers, because this is all for them. This plant offers them premium pricing above the market rates,” Charfauros said.

While the cattle market is high now, Charfauros remains realistic that the market can change for the worse.

While he hopes the market remains high enough for producers to survive, his partnership with producers will serve as

added security. That means the partnership must be tightknit.

He knows he cannot do it alone.

### Reviving a Dying Art

“Meat cutting is a dying art, and we teach meat processing at our store in Rapid City to bring that art back. We’re trying to fight for that industry as it is,” he said.

Three meat processing students are currently being taught at the Rapid City facility through a partnership with Western Dakota Tech, which recently began offering the two-year program.

Pam Stillman-Rokusek, director of communications and marketing at Western Dakota Tech, said three students are currently enrolled in the Meat Processing program. Of those three, two will graduate in May.

But the college is still working on more outreach.

“Enrollment has been a bit low in the program, so the plan is for a hiatus this fall. They’ll revamp the curriculum. Then, we will certainly do additional outreach. We have done advertising, gone to the schools. We have reached out to 4-H

groups and done some traveling, but we need to turn it up a notch to produce more students in the program. That is our goal,” Stillman-Rokusek said.

Despite the Meat Processing program being put on hiatus, the school will still ensure that the remaining student completes the program while actively working on developing the program and outreach methods.

“There’s such a high need for meat processors and we’re looking at different ways to fill that gap. It’s something we’re committed to doing,” she added.

The goal is to enroll at least five students in the following school years when the program restarts.

The learning center that will be built within the New Underwood facility will also teach producers, in addition to students, the art of meat cutting.

“We are trying to bring that industry back to what it should be—regionally processed protein,” Charfauros said.

“That means we must build the environment to spark that passion. In anything you do, you need to learn how to do it the right way.”



Wall Meat Processing plant, established in 1957. Photo Credit: Shannon Marvel



# ANNUAL MEETING

## Pictures, Prizes and Fun!

Several display tables, with H-D employees, were on hand. Popular displays included the LED all night yard light, the Water Heater Display.

The business meeting started with Board President Bert Rogness announcing a quorum and called the meeting to order. Manager Matt Hotzler, Board President Bert Rogness and Treasurer Steve Hansen presented a review of 2023 and insight on what 2024 will bring.

After a chance for questions on old or new business the meeting

was adjourned. To finish up the night there were two drawings for \$500 bill credit and ten \$100 bill credits drawn from everyone that was present. The two \$500 bill credits went out to Sarah Smith and Mike Reichling. The ten \$100 bill credits went out to Nathan Popham, Myron Kuhlman, Davin or Cheryl Hansen, Tim or Sandy Wolf, Paul or Cecelia Leiseth, Dale Rieck, Jeff Tekrony or Jared Brouwer, Mark or Donna Prouty,

Emily Reitman, and Don or Carolyn Hofland. Merle Niemann won an electrical lunch box that was donated from East River Electric.

Thanks again to all who attended. Plan to attend next year's annual meeting that will be held at H-D Electric headquarters in Clear Lake, S.D.



## H-D Electric Basin Tour

For more than 30 years, H-D Electric Cooperative has offered H-D members a trip to North Dakota to tour Basin Electric's Coteau Freedom Mine, Antelope Valley Station Power Plant and Great Plains Synfuels Plant.

H-D Electric and Codington-Clark Electric will be joining together again this year for a two-day, one-night educational and fun getaway at the end of August.

Watch for more details to come and registration!



# 2024 Student Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the 2024 Scholarship recipients. These awards are offered as part of our commitment to developing and educating future leaders. This scholarship program is open to dependents of H-D Electric members.

**Joyce Andringa**, a senior at Deuel High School, is the 2024 recipient of H-D Electric/Basin Electric Power Cooperative's \$1,000 scholarship. Joyce is the daughter of Jogchum and Martje Andringa. She plans to attend SDSU in Brookings to pursue a degree in Nursing.



Joyce Andringa

**The 2024 recipients of H-D Electric \$500 scholarships are:**

Brooklyn Kindopp, a senior at Canby High School, Kelly Goens, a senior at Castlewood High School, and Daniel Gums, Homeschooled.

**Brooklyn Kindopp** is the daughter of Justin and Lynn Kindopp. She plans to attend San Diego State



Brooklyn Kindopp



Daniel Gums

University in San Diego, Calif., to pursue a degree in Biology (Pre-Med).

**Kelly Goens** is the daughter of Craig and Becky Goens. She plans to attend the University of South Dakota in Vermillion to pursue a degree in Biology with pre-medical course of study.



Kelly Goens

**Daniel Gums** is the son of Dave and Kathy Gums. He plans to attend Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa to pursue a degree in Pastoral Studies.

## Announcing Youth Excursion 2024 to Bismarck, N.D.

Calling all high school freshmen, sophomores, and juniors! Is your parent or guardian an active member-owner of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc? If so, you're eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience: Youth Excursion 2024!

If chosen, you will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 22-24, participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from.

Once participants arrive on the campus, they can look forward to building friendships, taking in the sights of North Dakota's capitol and learning "The Story Behind the Switch." During their stay, students

will get to hear from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. Students will be given the opportunity to tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, visit local attractions and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers.

To be eligible for Youth Excursion, students must be in high school, and their parent or guardian must be an active member-owner of H-D Electric Cooperative, Inc.

To apply for the Youth Excursion, applications are available with your School Counselor or visit our website at [www.h-delectric.coop](http://www.h-delectric.coop), applications are available under the 'Community' section.

Please contact H-D Electric for more information at 605-874-2171 or 1-800-358-7233.

**Application deadline is May 24, 2024.**



# CYBERSECURITY ON THE GRID

**Frank Turner**

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Imagine sitting at your desk on a typical Monday morning. You have logged into your computer with coffee in hand, ready to tackle the day. But as you begin, your computer displays an ominous message: “Your files have been encrypted. Pay a ransom to regain access.” It’s not just your computer; your co-workers have received the same message. Overnight, the entire office has fallen victim

to a ransomware attack that has locked away critical data. Your office computers will remain unusable until a payment is made.

This scenario, among others, has become a primary concern for workplaces everywhere, including electric cooperatives. As a result, local co-ops are taking action in the cybersecurity space to prevent bad actors from disrupting the critical goal of delivering power that is safe, affordable and reliable to their members. Electric co-ops are focused

on enhancing cybersecurity resilience and readiness to defend against potential cyber threats.

Co-ops are routinely monitoring and managing cyber risks, working with federal and local law enforcement agencies and the North American Electric Reliability Corp. to protect critical infrastructure. By working as a network, co-ops are enhancing grid resilience, ensuring reliable electricity for their members.

According to an FBI Internet Crime Report, the U.S. reported more than \$12.5 billion in annual losses in 2023 due to cyberattacks like the one described. A significant number of these attacks target the elderly and vulnerable. When breaking down the losses by age group, individuals aged



20 to 29 accounted for \$360.7 million of the total losses, while those 60 and older incurred losses of \$3.4 billion in 2023 alone.

And it's not just about the money. These attacks also have the potential to undermine the stability of entire systems, including the electrical grid. This year, directors of the FBI, NSA, and CISA testified before Congress about Chinese Communist Party hacking groups that had gained access to the electric grid and other critical infrastructure to "wreak havoc and cause real-world harm to American citizens and communities."

"Many cyberattacks are conducted by criminals trying to steal money or collect a ransom," explains Chief Security and Compliance Officer Daniel Graham of Basin Electric Power Cooperative. "Nation-states

target electric utilities for different reasons. Some nation-states want to steal intellectual property. Others want to be able to disrupt our electric grid."

So how is it done? To execute their schemes, bad actors employ a long list of complex strategies and techniques, such as phishing, data breaches and malware to adversely impact their targets. Business email compromise, one of the most common techniques, occurs when an impostor poses as a legitimate business contact, seeking to steal sensitive information such as credit card numbers, bank account information or login credentials.

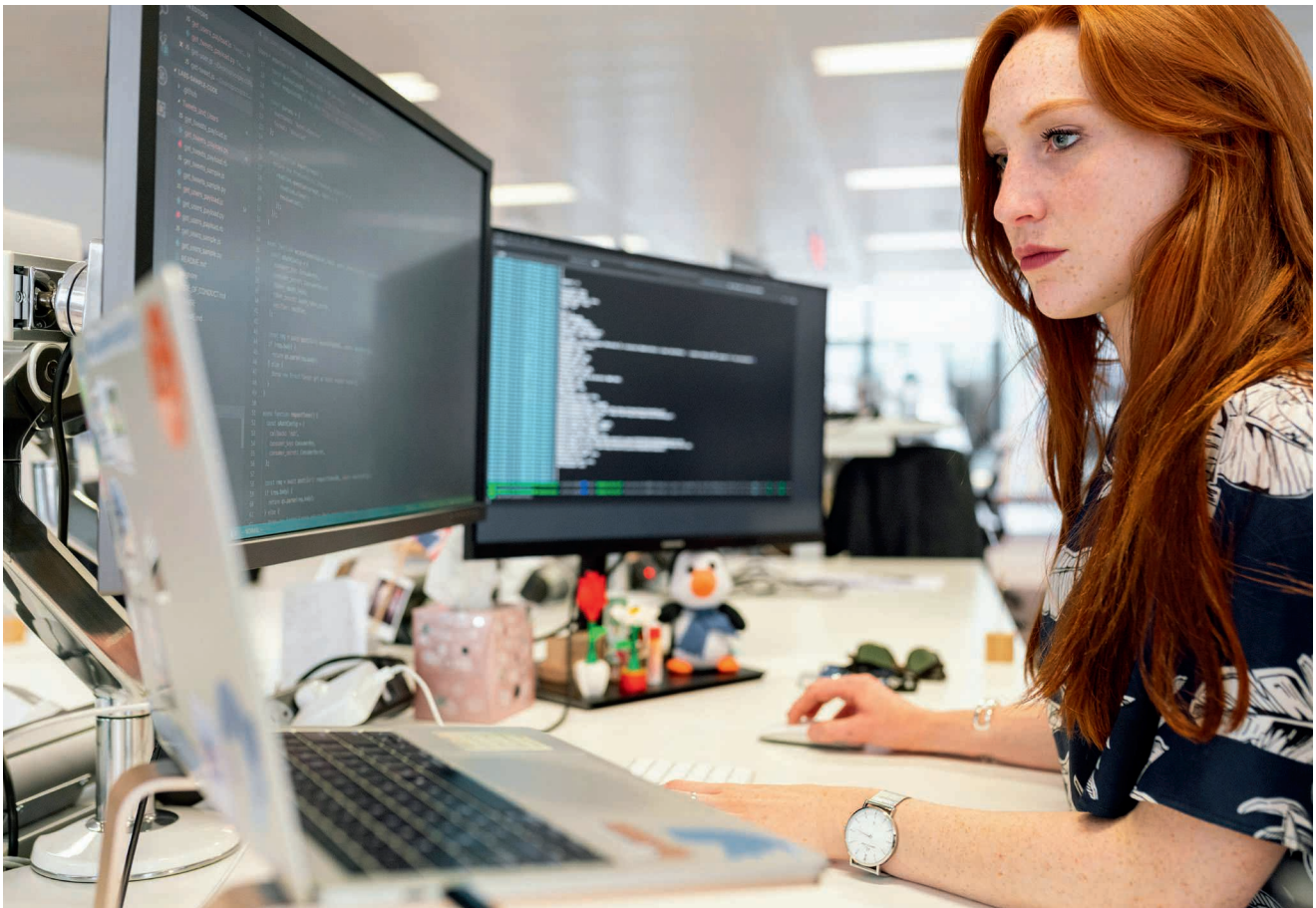
Luckily, co-ops are implementing a variety of tools, policies and training to help mitigate attacks and secure the grid. Programs like NRECA's Co-op Cyber Goals Program help co-ops build fundamental cybersecurity

measures, such as employee training, developing cyber incident response plans, and regular self-assessment. These strategies help co-ops reduce the risk of a successful cyberattack in the ongoing battle against cybercrime.

"Additionally, co-ops can conduct cybersecurity exercises to determine the effectiveness of current defenses and practice responses," Graham says.

Despite these efforts, the threat of a successful cyberattack persists, making vigilance an essential component of effective cybersecurity.

"If you see something suspicious, report it to your cooperative," explains Graham. "Electric co-ops are an essential part of our country's critical infrastructure. We can best protect our electric grid by working with each other."



# Living Prepared

Vivos xPoint owns 575 bunkers. Photo Credit: Vivos xPoint

## South Dakota's survivalist community live in bunkers

Jocelyn Johnson

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It's a semi-underground community of survivalists acting as humanity's last chance.

These survivalists, otherwise known as preppers, have prepared for security and safety within what's touted as the world's largest survival community – in southwest South Dakota.

Vivos xPoint, owned by real-estate mogul Robert Vicino, is located south of the Black Hills, near Edgemont, S.D. It was formally established as the U.S. Army's Black Hills Ordnance Depot – a military base created to store

ammunition and bombs. The base's history began in 1942, just after the United States entered World War II.

Once humming with approximately 6,000 workers and their families, the military base was eventually retired in 1967, leading to its eventual abandonment. The army sold the property to the town of Edgemont, S.D., which in turn, sold it to local cattle ranchers.

"This land was used by landowners to graze cattle, until one of these ranchers sent me an email asking if I would be interested in the bunkers," Vicino said. "It took me about a minute, and I said yes. So, in 2016, I acquired the southern

portion of the base. That portion is about three-fourths the size of Manhattan.

We take people up on a local hill that's about 300-400 feet higher than the rest of the site. From there, you can almost see all the quarters of the property. At a distance, the bunkers are like specs...you can't really tell what you're looking at. That's how big this thing is."

Vicino owns just under 6,000 acres of land where these bunkers sit. Originally, the army built 800 bunkers, but Vivos xPoint owns 575. Today, approximately 200 of these bunkers are being leased for 99 years with an up-front payment of \$55,000. Additionally, the ground lease is \$1,200 per year and utility payments are \$108 per month.

Mark Bowman, a retired tenant at Vivos xPoint, moved from Chicago with his wife to live in one of the bunkers



Photo Credit: Jocelyn Johnson





Each bunker is 2,200 square feet. Photo Credit: Vivos xPoint

seven years ago. Keeping busy by doing odd jobs and helping others get settled, Bowman commented that people from various backgrounds lease these bunkers. Some visit on occasion and some live in them full time.

“Eventually, we plan to have a health club, meeting hall and store out here too,” Bowman said. “It’s a work in progress.”

Each bunker is 2,200 square feet. It’s relatable to a narrow Quonset fixed underground, measuring 80 feet long and 26 feet wide with 12-foot ceilings. Vivos xPoint boasts 575 bunkers in total. Tenants can access floor plans and choose to have a Vivos xPoint contractor customize their bunker. Currently, there is a one-year backlog for customization services provided by a company contractor.

“It’s cavernous on the inside,” Vicino said. “We can build out a five-bedroom interior with a living room, two bathrooms, laundry room...everything you will need. When we build it, it’s effectively a submarine. The power we get from the local electric cooperative is to run our well pump that pumps water 4,300 feet underground up to a cistern on a hill. From there, it’s distributed to

the bunkers via gravity.”

Vicino noted that one of the most important features to these bunkers is the location. It’s centrally located within the United States and remote – making it an unlikely target in war. The off-grid area is also located at high altitude in a non-seismic area, relatively safe from natural disasters.

“Sometimes, I get asked why would anyone want one of these,” Vicino

commented. “And I say, ‘well, have you ever watched the news?’ Look what’s going on in this country.”

“All of the bunkers have NBC filtration, which is nuclear, biological and chemical filtration,” Vicino explained. “The air that comes in is scrubbed, so it’s breathable on the inside. We’re even adding CO2 scrubbers, which scrub the air you breath out if you had to shut off the air to the outside. You can do that for a week maybe.”

This isn’t a project that Vicino took lightly or stumbled upon in his business ventures. He emphasized it was years in the making.

“When I was 27 years old, I had a vision or an inspiration in my head. I could hear the words of a woman talking to me in total silence. The only thing I could attribute it to was the Holy Spirit. What she said to me was, ‘Robert, you need to build bunkers deep underground to help thousands of people survive what’s coming our way.’ The message was very loud and quick, and so I tucked it away for 30 years, thinking about it occasionally....Then, I got the feeling I didn’t have any more time. It’s either now or never.”



Mark Bowman, right, shows an empty bunker to Calvin Romey, left. Bowman has been a tenant in a neighboring bunker for seven years with his wife. Photo Credit: Jocelyn Johnson



**MAY 11, 2024**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 Falls Park  
 Sioux Falls, 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.

**MAY 4**  
**Groton City Wide Rummage Sale**  
 Groton, SD

**MAY 11-SEPT.28**  
**Malchow Plaza Farmers Market**  
 Saturdays, 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Aberdeen, SD

**MAY 18-28**  
**Free Amish Carriage & Buggy Rides**  
 10 a.m.-4 p.m. every Saturday  
 Buggy & Ag Museums  
 Stockholm, SD

**MAY 18**  
**Prairie Partners Master Gardeners Plant Sale**  
 9 a.m.  
 Brown County Fairgrounds  
 Aberdeen, SD

**MAY 27**  
**Memorial Day Services**  
 12 p.m.  
 Groton Union Cemetary with lunch at Legion Post #391  
 Groton, SD

**JUNE 1**  
**Blessed Sacrament Pastorate-Wide Celebration**  
 3:30 p.m.  
 Aberdeen Civic Center  
 Aberdeen, SD  
 605-216-2081

**JUNE 8**  
**Grace's Gas-Guzzlers Car Show, Carnival & Silent Auction**  
 Grace Lutheran Church  
 Watertown, SD

**JUNE 9**  
**Brookings Car Show**  
 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Pioneer Park  
 Brookings, SD

**JUNE 12-13**  
**Rangeland & Soil Days Contest**  
 Codington County Extension Building  
 Watertown, SD

**JUNE 20**  
**Prairie Partners Master Gardeners Garden Walk**  
 Aberdeen, SD

**JUNE 22-23**  
**"Our Place: 15 Years of Onaka" Photography Exhibit**  
 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sat.  
 12-4p.m. Sunday  
 Onaka Community Hall  
 Onaka, SD

**JUNE 26-29**  
**Crystal Springs Rodeo**  
 Clear Lake, SD  
 605-874-2996

**JULY 13**  
**9th Annual Auto Value Car Show**  
 11 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Hav-A-Rest Campground  
 Redfield, SD

**JULY 14**  
**Lion's Club Summer Fest/ Car Show**  
 9 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Groton City Park  
 Groton, SD

**JULY 20**  
**21st Annual "On the Road to Wishes" Poker Run for Make a Wish**  
 10:30 a.m.  
 Bieglers Motors/CNS Motor Sports  
 Aberdeen, SD

**JULY 25**  
**Groton Summer Downtown Sip & Shop**  
 5-8 p.m.  
 Groton, SD

**JULY 26-28**  
**Clear Lake Days**  
[ClearLakeDays.com](http://ClearLakeDays.com)  
 Clear Lake, SD

**AUG. 8**  
**Family Fun Fest**  
 5:30-7:30 p.m.  
 Groton, SD

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