

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Crisp Breezes and Corn Mazes

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# Go Above and Beyond for a Safe Harvest



**Matt Hotzler**  
Manager

Modern farming often relies on data and equipment with GPS and auto-guidance systems. However, even with these modern conveniences, farm workers must remain vigilant. That's because farming is considered one of the most dangerous jobs.

Massive machinery is indispensable to farming, but its impressive size, height, and extensions make it particularly vulnerable to contacting power lines. That's why staying alert, focused, and knowledgeable about potential hazards and safety procedures is crucial.

During a busy harvest season, the familiar sights around the farm can easily fade into the background, and farm workers can overlook the power lines overhead and underground power boxes. However, failing to notice them can lead to deadly accidents.

## 360 Awareness

Awareness of your surroundings, around, above, and below, and planning safe equipment routes can significantly reduce the risk of accidents. Even with GPS and auto-steering, farm workers must keep a close eye on the equipment's location and are ready to take action if necessary.

Exposed underground powerlines, defective wiring in farm buildings, and extension cords are also hazards. Grain bins can pose a potential danger as well. The National Electrical Safety Code requires power lines to be at least 18 feet above the highest point on any grain bin where portable augers or other portable filling equipment are used. If you plan to install new grain bins or are concerned about power lines' proximity to existing grain bins, contact H-D Electric Cooperative.

## Smart Harvest Safety Tips

To ensure a safer harvest season, SafeElectricity.org recommends the following tips to avoid electrical accidents on the farm:

- **Exercise caution near power lines.** Be careful when raising augers or the bed of grain trucks around power lines.
- **Use spotters when operating large machinery near power lines.** Ensure the spotters do not touch the machinery while it is moving near power lines.
- **Lower equipment extensions, portable augers, or elevators before moving or transporting equipment.** Do not raise equipment like ladders, poles, or rods into power lines. Remember that non-metallic materials like lumber, tree limbs, ropes, and hay can conduct electricity, especially when damp, dusty, or dirty.
- **Never attempt to raise or move power lines to clear a path.** Doing so could result in electric shock or death.
- **Avoid using metal poles inside bins.** Don't use metal poles to break up bridged grain inside or around bins.
- **Hire qualified electricians.** Ensure that qualified electricians work on drying equipment and other farm electrical systems.

While rare, the only reason to exit equipment that has come into contact with overhead lines is if the equipment is on fire. However, if it happens, jump off the equipment with your feet together and without touching the machinery and the ground simultaneously. Then, still keeping your feet together, hop to safety as you leave the area.

Overall, I hope you find these tips as good reminders to keep you and everyone working on the farm safe. Ultimately, a safe season is a successful season! I also want to remind everyone that August is when most of our local schools start-up for the year, so be aware and careful of the extra traffic and school buses out on the roads. Have a safe month!

## 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  
Kevin Holida – Lead Lineworker  
Joe Raml – Lead Lineworker  
Cody Scarrott – Lineworker  
Derek Bille – Lineworker  
Eric Page – Lineworker  
Joseph Jordan Jr. – Apprentice Lineworker  
Matt Miller – Lead Equipment Operator/  
Mechanic  
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:**

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Design assistance by SDREA.

## THAT DARN SQUIRREL

It is estimated that **11 percent\***  
**of all power outages** are caused  
by our furry friend, the squirrel.



Safe  
Electricity.org



\* Industry estimate based on outage data

## We are closed!



Have a safe and fun holiday!

**H-D Electric  
Cooperative  
will be closed  
Monday,  
Sept. 2, 2024.**

## Operating Statistics

	June 2023	June 2024
Customers .....	3,792	3,845
Amount Collected.....	\$1,069,347	\$1,030,995
Average Bill .....	\$282.00	\$268.14
Average Kilowatt-Hour .....	2,464	2,366
Kilowatt-Hours Purchased.....	10,021,671	9,569,303
Kilowatt-Hours Sold .....	9,341,617	9,096,697

# WHEN THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS

Each year in the United States, there are about 25 million cloud-to-ground lightning flashes and about 300 people struck by lightning. Of those struck, about 30 people are killed and others suffer lifelong disabilities. Most of these tragedies can be prevented. When thunderstorms threaten, get inside a building with plumbing and electricity, or a hard-topped metal vehicle!

The National Weather Service collects information on weather-related deaths to learn how to prevent these tragedies. Many lightning victims say they were “caught” outside in the storm and couldn’t get to a safe place. Other victims simply waited too long before seeking shelter. With proper planning, similar tragedies can be avoided.

Some people were struck because they went back outside too soon. Stay inside a safe building or vehicle for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last thunder. While 30 minutes may seem like a long time, it is necessary to be safe.

Finally, some victims were struck inside homes or buildings while they were using electrical equipment or corded phones. Others were in contact with plumbing, outside doors, or window frames. Avoid contact with these electrical conductors when a thunderstorm is nearby.

## AVOID THE LIGHTNING THREAT

- **Have a lightning safety plan.** Know where you’ll go for safety and ensure you’ll have enough time to get there.
- **Postpone activities.** Consider postponing activities if thunderstorms are forecasted.
- **Monitor the weather.** Once outside, look for signs of a developing or approaching thunderstorm such as towering clouds, darkening skies, or flashes of lightning.

- **Get to a safe place.** If you hear thunder, even a distant rumble, seek safety immediately. Fully enclosed buildings with wiring and plumbing are best. A hard-topped metal vehicle with the windows closed is also safe. Stay inside until 30 minutes after the last rumble of thunder. Sheds, picnic shelters, tents or covered porches do NOT protect you from lightning.
- **If you hear thunder, don’t use a corded phone except in an emergency.** Cordless phones and cell phones are safe to use.
- **Keep away from electrical equipment and plumbing.** Lightning can travel through the wiring and plumbing if your building is struck. Don’t take a bath or shower, or wash dishes during a storm.

*Source: National Weather Service*



### Power Line Safety “Don’t Fly Kites Close to Power Lines”

#### Lillee Pannell, Age 11

Lillee Pannell cautions kite flyers to be careful around power lines. Great advice, Lillee! Hobie’s parents are Scottie and Kimberly Pannell, members of Southeastern 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.



# Summertime SWEETS

## SUMMER FRUIT TART

### Ingredients:

1 refrigerated pie crust  
1 egg white, lightly beaten  
1/3 cup sugar  
2 tbsps. cornstarch  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1/4 tsp. ginger  
2 cups sliced peeled peaches,  
(about 3 peaches)  
1 cup blueberries  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

### Method

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Prepare crust as directed on package. Place on foil-lined 12-inch pizza pan. If necessary, press out any folds or creases. Brush crust with about 1/2 of the beaten egg white. Mix sugar, cornstarch, cinnamon and ginger in medium bowl. Add fruit and vanilla; toss gently. Spoon into center of crust, spreading to within 2 inches of edges. Fold 2-inch edge of crust up over fruit, pleating or folding crust as needed. Brush crust with remaining egg white. Bake 20 minutes or until crust is golden brown. Cool slightly before serving.

McCormick

## RHUBARB PIE

### Crust

1-2 cups flour  
1/2 stick butter or margarine  
1/4 cup water

Add ingredients and knead to complete a pie crust. Amounts will vary due to humidity. Knead dough into pie pan and poke holes into the bottom as needed. You may make creative edges as you wish, however it is not necessary.

### Pie

3 tbsps. butter or margarine  
1 cup sugar  
3 eggs, separated  
2 tbsps. flour  
1/8 tsp. salt  
2 1/2 cups rhubarb  
Smucker's Caramel Sundae Syrup

Soften butter or margarine and stir together with the sugar, egg yolks, flour and salt. Beat egg whites until stiff. Add rhubarb and fold in the egg whites. Add the filling to the 8-inch unbaked pie crust. You may add a drizzle of Smucker's sundae syrup for additional flavoring before baking. Bake in oven set at 400 degrees until golden brown. You may also add more Caramel syrup to pie after baking for ultimate effect.

Lisa Soukup (Kummer)  
Tea, S.D.

## PEACH DELIGHT

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup butter, melted  
1 3/4 cups flour  
Pinch of salt  
2 tbsps. sugar  
2 cups water  
2 cups sugar  
4 tbsps. cornstarch  
3 oz. package peach jello  
1 tbsp. butter  
10 fresh peaches

### Method

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Combine butter, flour, salt and 2 tbsps. sugar. Mix and pat in 9x13 inch pan which has been sprayed with Pam. Bake for 15 minutes. Let cool when done baking. Combine 2 cups sugar and 2 cups water. Whisk in 4 tbsps. cornstarch until smooth. Cook until thickened in the microwave – stirring often. Remove from microwave and add 1 tbsp. butter and package of peach jello (do not add any water). Stir until dissolved and let cool. While cooling, dip fresh peaches in hot water and plunge in cold water bath. Remove skins and pits. Place back in cold water until all peaches are peeled. Drain peaches, slice into bite size pieces and mix into cooled peach glaze. Carefully pour the glaze over the crust and chill until firmly set. May be served with whip cream. You can substitute strawberry jello and sliced strawberries in place of the peaches. This makes a delicious cool summer dessert.

Shirley Fletcher  
Rapid City, S.D.

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.

# Federal Tax Credits, Incentives and Rebates for Efficiency Upgrades



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** How do I use federal tax credits and rebates to upgrade my home?

**A:** Tax credits and rebates can help bridge the affordability gap to higher efficiency equipment for your home, allowing you to complete energy efficiency upgrades that can lower your energy use and save you money in years to come.

First, knowing the difference between a tax credit and rebate is important. A rebate is a payment for purchasing or installing a qualified product or home improvement. Depending on how the rebate program is set up, it may be provided at the time of purchase or applied for and received after installation. Check with your electric cooperative to see if they offer rebates. Typically, the rebate is applied as a credit on your electric bill. In some cases, the rebate is provided a cash payment to those who complete eligible projects.

A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar amount that taxpayers can report on their tax documents to reduce the amount of taxes owed. You apply for a tax credit when you file your tax documents, so it typically takes longer to reap the benefits than it does with a rebate.

According to ENERGY STAR®, homeowners can qualify for up to \$3,200 annually in federal tax credits for energy efficiency upgrades. Federal tax credits are available for heating and cooling system upgrades, including heat pumps, furnaces, central air conditioners, boilers and geothermal heat pumps. Tax credits for ENERGY STAR®-rated heat pump water heaters cover 30% of the project cost, up to \$2,000. You can also improve your home's envelope – the portion of the home that separates the inside from the outside – with tax credits for insulation, windows and skylights.

If an energy efficiency upgrade requires improving the electrical panel in your home, there's a tax credit for that, too. You can receive 30% of the cost of the

panel upgrade, up to \$600.

These federal tax credits are available through 2032. You must own the home you're upgrading, and it must be your primary residence. Federal tax credits only apply to existing homes in the United States, not new construction.

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 expanded available funding for many home upgrades. The act allocated \$8.8 million for home rebate programs to be implemented at the state level, and this funding is offered in two different programs. The HOMES program allows up to \$8,000 per home for standard-income households. Higher rebates are available for low- to moderate-income households. The HEAR program offers rebates of up to \$14,000 per home for qualified, efficient electric equipment for low- to moderate-income households.

These programs are designed to bolster existing programs and should be available in late 2024 or early 2025. Check with your electric cooperative or state office to find out if they are being offered in your state.

Additional energy efficiency rebates might also be available. More than half of U.S. states require energy efficiency programs for residents, according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. These programs can help people save money on their electric bills and help states meet climate goals, reduce system costs and improve the electric grid.

I have had the privilege of working in energy efficiency rebate programs for many years and have seen the benefits of these programs firsthand. Tax credit and rebate programs can make upgrades more affordable – helping people save money and improve the overall comfort of their homes.

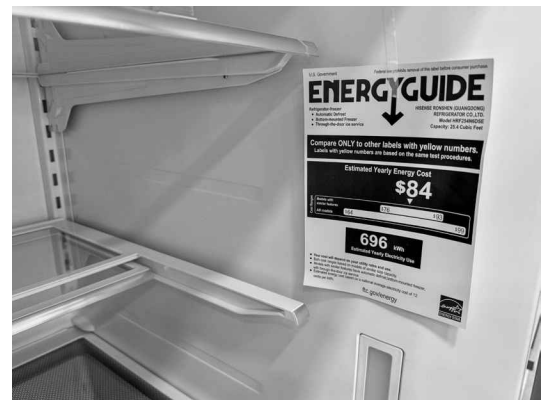




Photo credit: Jackie Jensen

# LISA LOCKHART

## Winning at What She Loves While Enjoying a Beloved American Pastime

Jocelyn Johnson

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It's been her hustle and passion since she was six years old, and it's made her one of the best competitors in the world. South Dakota's Lisa Lockhart is an elite barrel racer from Oelrichs, S.D., and in her own words, "There is no off-season."

Dandy was the little Shetland pony that gave Lockhart her start on her family farm in Montana. She recounted her memories of racing him around her parent's yard and signing up for local rodeo events with him.

"I was definitely a horse-crazy little girl from the get-go," Lockhart said. "My pony was my babysitter in the

front yard."

Even though opportunities were limited in the early '70s when she started rodeo, Lockhart became a success story through dedication, lots of practice and the help of her family. She credits her sisters, Debbie and Angela, for being the pioneers of barrel racing in her own family as well as her husband, Grady, for his ongoing support.

"We enjoy it as a family," Lockhart said. "Grady was a calf roper, and we actually met at a rodeo. We're best friends and have like interests...it takes a village, and I am thankful for the village. It's definitely a team effort. I couldn't do it by myself."

Along with their kids – Alyssa,

Thane and Cade – the Lockharts have enjoyed rodeo and bonded over the experiences, conversations and goals they share.

Lockhart trains and buys her competitive horses but explains that having history and longevity with a horse impacts the level of success she has with them. She noted that having a personal bond with each horse not only impacts their performance but is also something she enjoys.

"They are such unique individuals, just like humans are," Lockhart explained. "Being able to tap into that personal relationship with each horse has an impact on our level of success. I love these equine athletes."

She's pocketed a handful of reserve world championships, three American Rodeo championships and more than \$3.1 million in career earnings; but Lockhart's current goal is to make it to her 18th consecutive National Finals Rodeo.

"I have a passion for the horses and am a competitive person by nature," Lockhart noted. "Your horsepower dictates where you go and how successful you may be. I'm always going to ride horses and I'm always going to train horses – I love it, but the level of competition I can attain depends on my horsepower. Sometimes, you got to go through a lot of horses to try and find the next champion."

Lockhart expounded that success is earned through training and passion. The horse matters, but the dedication of the racer will dictate how far they go.

When asked what her advice would be to young racers, Lockhart stated: "I think there is a lot of opportunity out there for people to learn – with technology. Educate yourself and spend the time practicing it. Knowledge is at your fingertips. Just like everything in life, if you want it, you have to work for it. It's not handed to you."





# CRISP BREEZES AND CORN MAZES

A broken-down 1950s-style Chevrolet pickup welcomes visitors to the Back Forty Beef corn maze. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*

## Celebrating Autumn on the Family Farm

**Frank Turner**

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The first signs of autumn sweep across the plains as daylight dwindles and treetops wither into amber. For some, the nostalgia of fall is evoked by the first crisp breeze at a football game or the taste of a freshly picked apple from the orchard. But for Clint and Kelly Brandlee, Lake Region Electric members living in rural Pierpont, the magic of the harvest season begins with the opening of their family-owned corn maze.

The Brandlee family homesteaded their land in 1886 on the western edge of the Coteau Hills, an area characterized by rolling hills, fertile ground and native pastures. With deep roots extending through five generations of ranching and farming, Clint and Kelly's daughters, Jaycee

and Kylie, represent the sixth generation on the farm.

Over the years, the family has maintained their commitment to traditional farming values while embracing innovation. In 2020, Clint and Kelly

transformed their operation into a direct-to-consumer agriculture business, launching Back Forty Beef, LLC. Their new venture allowed them to provide locally raised beef at a fair price while giving customers the opportunity to see



Back Forty Beef hosts a number of family-friendly events including duck races. *Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.*



how their animals and crops are raised, from farm to table.

“During the pandemic, people were looking for a direct source for their beef, and we wanted to provide that,” Kelly said.

Through Back Forty Beef, Clint and Kelly supplied their area with local beef and discovered new ways to engage their community. Just last year, the two started an annual tradition by planting a 12-acre, agriculture-themed corn maze as a way to bring something new to their part of the state. In just a year, the maze has become a hub for families to come together and celebrate agriculture and the harvest season.

“We wanted to do something really fun and get families outside in northeastern South Dakota during the fall, and what better way to do that than through a corn maze?” Kelly said. “It’s a way for us to share our passion for agriculture and our story. As a population, we are getting two to three generations removed from the farm. There is less of a connection to rural life, so any time we can provide people an opportunity to get out onto the farm and learn something, that benefits the whole of agriculture.”

This fall, Clint and Kelly are again inviting their surrounding communities to visit their homestead and explore this year’s newly designed maze. The maze is set to be open to the public every weekend after



A bird's-eye view of last year's Back Forty Beef corn maze. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

Labor Day to the last week of October. The theme is pollinators, featuring images of a corn cob, flower, bee and barn. Several twists and turns will be embellished with fun facts about pollinators and crop production in South Dakota, making it an educational experience for all ages.

Along with the corn maze, Back Forty Beef is planning to incorporate other family-friendly activities, including duck races, farm animal exhibits, farm basketball, a straw mountain slide and more. Back Forty Beef will also host a farm store where customers can buy everything from local pumpkins to their homegrown beef.

Other local businesses are also joining

in the fun. A different local food truck is scheduled to attend each weekend during the open season, and local businesses are offering small discounts and deals for participants who complete the maze.

“There are checkpoints in the maze, and each checkpoint is equipped with a fun fact and a partnered local business,” said Kelly. “For example, Dairy Queen is offering a buy one, get one free offer for those who hole punch their card at their checkpoint and read the fun fact about pollinators and production agriculture.”

Clint and Kelly’s efforts to engage the community have resulted in a community that engages with their business. Like many other direct-to-consumer operations, Back Forty Beef has its own website and online shop for its brand of beef, dairy products, merchandise and even hand-poured tallow candles. The Brandlee family has also found success through their beef subscription club where boxes are regularly delivered to the doorsteps of customers every month. Whether it’s through the corn maze or the subscription beef boxes, Kelly said the local community has fully embraced Back Forty Beef.

“We had a lot of people who attended that had never done a corn maze before, so a lot of people were excited to do something new and different,” said Kelly. “We had a great turnout to our maze last year, and that’s why we decided to do it again.”



Owner-operators of Back Forty Beef, Kelly and Clint Brandlee and their two daughters, Jaycee and Kylie. Photo submitted by Back Forty Beef.

# BEYOND OPENING THE BOX

## Take Steps to Operate a Generator Safely

When the electricity goes out, your initial thought might be to run to the local hardware or big box store and buy a generator. However, using a generator should not be taken lightly, since it can be dangerous and even life-threatening if used incorrectly. There are several steps you should take before ever starting one up.

### But First, Homework

Before purchasing a generator, the first step is to research the best option for your home and budget. The second, and more important step, is to educate yourself on how to use one safely.

Homeowners can choose from two types of generators: standby and portable. Standby generators are installed directly into the home's electrical system and are typically powered by natural gas or propane. These generators start automatically when the power goes out.

A portable generator is usually gas powered and is, well, portable. You can power appliances by plugging them into it. Your generator should have more output than the wattage of the electronics plugged into it. This way, the generator can create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure

there is nothing plugged into the generator when turning it on.

### Safety Tips

When you refuel a portable generator, make sure the engine is cool. Keep children and pets away from the generator, as it could burn them.

Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated during inclement weather. Use a generator only when necessary during wet conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form

puddles or drain under it.

### Generators Can be Deadly

Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on the generator can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors at least 20 feet from your home.

Misusing a portable generator or using a standby generator that is not installed correctly (and does not meet the electrical code) can cause backfeed, which puts others in danger. Backfeed happens when a generator feeds electricity back through a home's electrical system and meter into the

power lines. To prevent this dangerous scenario, standby generators should have a transfer switch installed by a licensed professional. Do not plug a portable generator directly into a home outlet or electrical system. Instead, use a properly rated extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator for power.

### When Not in Use

Operate your generator once a month for 10 minutes to ensure it is running properly. Keep your generator well maintained and follow all manufacturer's instructions. Have a standby generator installed in an easily accessible, weatherproof area.

For more electrical safety information, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org).

## WHAT IS backfeed?

Avoid deadly backfeed and help keep lineworkers safe.

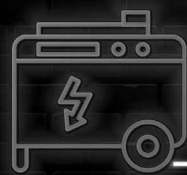
Backfeed happens when a person connects their portable generator to a wall outlet, which allows power to flow in reverse – that is, the alternate power source feeds energy back through their home's electrical system, their meter and back into the power lines.

Potentially deadly backfeed can also happen with permanently installed generators that are not used or installed correctly. They should be wired into your home by a qualified electrician, who will install either an automatic or manual transfer switch, depending on the generator. The job of this switch is to transfer a power source safely from its primary source to a backup source.

To keep utility crews safe, never plug a portable generator directly into a wall outlet or electrical system, and ensure transfer switches are professionally installed and working properly. Electric lineworkers thank you in advance.

Learn more at:

[SafeElectricity.org](https://SafeElectricity.org)





## Padmount Transformers Not a Blank Canvas

Do you have a metal, box-shaped transformer near your yard? While it may be tempting to paint it to match your home or to enhance it with artistic flair, do not decorate, paint or landscape near the box, called a padmount transformer or pad-mounted transformer.

The neighborhood metal transformer covers are assigned a specific color (usually green, sometimes grey) so that utility workers can easily identify them. Also, hampering with the box by painting it could impair the lock, the equipment itself or cover the warning signs. For safety, the padmount transformer should always be locked and the warning signs visible.

Padmount transformers, which are typically installed on easements, are an essential part of the supply chain that provides power to neighborhoods with underground utilities. Their purpose is to step down high-voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for the underground wires that supply power to the lights and appliances in homes. We must be able to access them at all times in case of a power outage or to perform routine maintenance. In other words, they are very important and due to their high voltage and function, they should be revered.

By respecting all utility equipment, including neighborhood transformers, you can help keep the power on and your local utility workers safe. Also alert children that they should not sit on, open, or play around the green boxes.

### Other Safety Tips Include:

- Do not plant shrubs and trees too close to transformers, especially on the side that is padlocked. Limiting or restricting access to the box could delay restoration work during an outage and create a serious safety hazard. Most utilities need at least 10 feet of clearance in front of the transformer (the side that is padlocked), as well as four feet clearance on the other three sides. Contact us with questions about landscaping around or installing fencing near a padmount transformer (or any other changes) to learn what is allowable.
- Contact us if the transformer becomes unlocked or if it appears to be damaged.
- Call 8-1-1 prior to digging around a transformer (or anywhere in your yard) and respect the clearance requirements. If you dig in the area surrounding the transformer (even if it is beyond the clearance requirements), you could inadvertently hit an underground cable.
- Keep a clear path to the transformer. Even though the transformer seems like it's in "your yard," it is technically on an easement, and utility company workers need clear access to it.
- Contact us with any questions or concerns about padmount transformers.

For more information, contact us 605-874-2171. For more about electrical safety, visit [safeelectricity.org](https://safeelectricity.org).

## Youth Excursion 2024

A group of twenty students representing 11 electric cooperatives from across South Dakota embarked on a three-day trip to Bismarck, N.D., in July to go behind the scenes and learn about electricity production. Sponsored by their local electric cooperatives, students toured the energy infrastructure that generates and transmits electricity into residential homes and commercial buildings, learning firsthand from industry experts.

The group kicked off the tour by visiting the Coteau Properties Co. Freedom Mine, where they watched large equipment in action and coal being mined in real time. The group followed the coal to Antelope Valley Station, a coal-fired power plant, where the coal is burned to create energy. Covering generation, the group then toured the one-of-a-kind Great Plains Synfuels Plant where they learned about coal byproducts, including the production of natural gas, liquid carbon dioxide, fertilizers, fuels, and more. Lastly, the group concluded their tour at Basin Electric Headquarters where most of the energy production is facilitated and managed.

H-D Electric sent Elizabeth DeBoer from Castlewood on this Youth Excursion.

As cooperatives, we value our communities and our youth. They are the future, and we are proud to support them.



# RODEO CHAMPIONS

## Short Go Finalists Win Touchstone Energy Shirts During the State Competition in Ft. Pierre

**Jocelyn Johnson**

[jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop](mailto:jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop)

South Dakota's electric cooperatives united in celebrating rodeo on June 15 during the state high school competition in Ft. Pierre, S.D. Cowboys and cowgirls competed in events that mimic the daily chores of a typical rancher, racing to place in the Short Go.

Short Go state finalists earned the coveted Touchstone Energy shirts that mark them as the top competitors of a beloved rural pastime. After a season of competing, the visual representation of wearing this shirt is

more than a fashion statement.

"These shirts are almost like a trophy," said Kylee Ellerton, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D. "It's something you can keep and look back on to remember."

Ellerton earned the Short Go shirt, sponsored by Touchstone Energy electric cooperatives. She won 10th place in goat tying at state.

"My grandpa and dad grew up rodeoing," Ellerton said. "So, I got started in rodeo pretty young."

High school rodeo events began in 1949, and by 1951, South Dakota was among five states that established the National High School Rodeo

Mataya Ward keeps her eyes on a goat she tied during the Short Go.  
*Photo credit: Charles Minor*

Association.

It's a shared heritage for many in the state, and electric cooperatives have a 22-year history of celebrating rodeo by sponsoring the Touchstone Energy Short Go Shirt program. More than \$150,000 has been given to this program since 2002, and these funds are used to honor the contestants who make it to the Short Go round



*Photo credit: Charles Minor*





Kailey Deknikker rounds a Touchstone Energy barrel during the state Short Go in barrel racing.  
Photo credit: 4-C Photography

of the state finals competition in their respective events.

Kailey Deknikker, member of Southeastern Electric Cooperative in Lennox, S.D., has a passion for rodeo and wishes to go as far as she can in the sport. She will be attending Mitchell Technical College this fall for business management and joining

the college rodeo team in barrel racing and pole bending.

"The shirt shows that your hard work paid off," explained Deknikker after placing in the Short Go and winning a Touchstone Energy Short Go shirt. "It shows your accomplishment."

Decknikker placed 7th in barrel

racing after running a time of 18.246 seconds in the 1st Go, 17.802 seconds in the 2nd Go, and 18.078 seconds in the Short Go.

Leighton Sander, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, S.D., won 6th place in the bareback riding Short Go competition. Sander works with his family on a cow/calf operation outside of Custer, S.D.

"There's some pride that goes with wearing that Short Go shirt," said Sander. "You go to a rodeo and see a couple people wearing those shirts outside of the high school season, and you think, 'they must have been good enough to make it to the Short Go – I better watch that guy.'"

Sander explained that his draw to one of the toughest events in the sport of rodeo is the adrenaline rush. He hopes to use his bareback riding skills in future horse training efforts while noting, "being able to stick to a horse is important."

"I don't know how to explain it," Sander said. "It's super scary before you start, but once you climb into that chute and they open up the gate, it's like eating your favorite cake."



Finalists wear Touchstone Energy Short Go shirts. Photo credit: Charles Minor





# FROM FARM TO LODGE

A group of hunters showcase their success after a day of hunting on Larry Schecher's land. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

## Prairie Meadows Lodge Fuels Economy and Conservation

**Frank Turner**

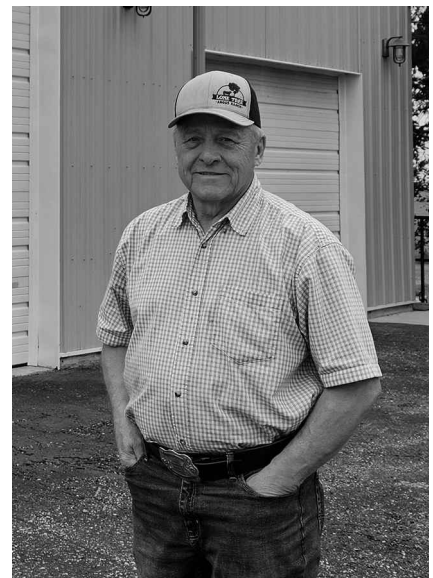
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When a pheasant hunter travels to South Dakota, dons an orange hunting vest and steps out onto one of the state's many acres of pristine hunting land, they are doing more than just participating in local recreation and tradition; they are bolstering one of South Dakota's cornerstone industries. South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks estimates that hunting alone contributes \$683 million to the

state's economy, far exceeding the contributions from fishing and state park visitation.

Many producers across the state are enthusiastically welcoming these outdoor recreationists, including landowner Larry Schecher. Schecher is a fourth-generation, lifelong rancher, farmer and member of Grand Electric in Bison, S.D., who recently made the savvy decision to develop a private hunting lodge and accommodate hunters on his land.

So what prompted the lodge? In 2019, Schecher expanded his



Fourth-generation farmer and rancher Larry Schecher. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.



operation, taking the usual steps to purchase land that he had previously been leasing. The land came with one interesting perk: an outbuilding that the previous owner had used to repair and rebuild classic cars. The outbuilding became the perfect avenue for him to not only expand his operation physically but also add an entirely new revenue stream by transforming the old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge.

“It wasn’t insulated or anything, but it was a nice enough building,” said Schecher. “We just took it to the next level and remodeled the entire interior.”

What started as a car garage quickly became a private hunting lodge on Schecher’s land, equipped with a complete kitchen and living space, two bedrooms with four beds each, an electric fireplace, and even a washer and dryer.

Yet, accommodations are only half the equation. Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts are self-guided, meaning hunters can explore the plentiful food plots, thick shelter belts and acres of brush that adorn Schecher’s land and plan their hunt accordingly. The producer estimates that he owns more than 300 acres of premier hunting land for Prairie Meadows Lodge hunts, scattered across almost 3,000 acres of farm and ranch land. The land, he said, harbors a healthy population of wild pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse and partridge.

Since starting Prairie Meadows Lodge, Schecher said he and his son, Bradley, have begun planting food plots specifically to promote healthy habitat and food sources for the wild birds on their land.

“We planted a few food plots this year with a ‘pheasant mix,’” said Schecher. “The mix includes



Prairie Meadows Lodge welcomes pheasant hunters from across the nation. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

flowering species that attract insects and milo, millet and sunflowers to produce seeds for the birds to eat. We plan to continue adding more food plots in the future to enhance our bird numbers, which have been steadily increasing over the past few years. It’s been great for being in the business of letting people hunt.”

A year after purchasing the outbuilding and preparing the land, Schecher invited hunters to test the newly renovated operation. The launch was a success, and Prairie Meadows Lodge has since hosted hunters from all over the country, including those from surrounding states and as far away as Washington, Texas and Pennsylvania, many of whom are repeat customers.

“Adding wildlife into the equation has just become another facet of being a producer,” said Schecher. “In many ways, it’s like adding another crop to the mix. It gives an incentive to create more habitat and include more conservation techniques into my operation, enhancing the ability of the wildlife to thrive and prosper.”



In 2019, Larry Schecher renovated an old garage into Prairie Meadows Lodge, a private hunting lodge for unguided pheasant hunts. Photo submitted by Prairie Meadows Lodge.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



Photo Credit: SDStateFair

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.

**AUG. 28-SEPT. 2**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
7 a.m.-8 p.m.  
Huron, SD  
[www.SDStateFair.com](http://www.SDStateFair.com)

**SEPT. 1**  
**Studebaker Car Show**  
10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
Custer, SD  
605-673-2244

**SEPT. 2**  
**Hidewood Valley Steam Threshing Show**  
Starts at 1 p.m.  
Clear Lake, SD  
605-881-8405

**SEPT. 6-7**  
**Ribs, Rods & Rock n' Roll**  
Vermillion, SD  
[www.sdbbq.us](http://www.sdbbq.us)

**SEPT. 8**  
**Homesteader Day**  
1-4 p.m.  
Valley Springs, SD  
Beaver Creek Nature Area

**SEPT. 12-15**  
**South Dakota Film Festival**  
Downtown Capitol Theatre  
Aberdeen, SD  
605-226-5494

**SEPT. 13-14**  
**Black Hills Polkapalooza**  
Each Night at 4-10 p.m.  
Palmer Gulch  
Hill City, SD  
605-574-2525

**SEPT. 13-14**  
**Holiday Arts Fall Craft Show**  
Davison County Fairgrounds  
Mitchell, SD  
605-359-2049

**SEPT. 14-15**  
**2024 Kuchen & Harvest Festival**  
Delmont, SD  
605-928-3792

**SEPT. 17**  
**EV Expo**  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Sioux Falls, SD

**SEPT. 20-22**  
**South Dakota Festival of Books**  
Various Locations  
Brookings, SD  
605-688-6113

**SEPT. 27-29**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee and Antique Show**  
Meadow, SD  
605-788-2299

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Run Crazy Horse Marathons**  
Crazy Horse  
605-390-6137  
[www.runcrazyhorse.com](http://www.runcrazyhorse.com)

**OCT. 5-6**  
**Magic Needlers Quilt Show**  
Codington County Extension Complex  
Watertown, SD  
605-881-3273

**OCT. 5-6**  
**The Black Market**  
Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
Sunday 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds  
Expo Building  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-332-6004

**OCT. 6**  
**Giant Pumpkin Festival**  
Bentley Memorial Building  
Bison, SD  
Enter Pumpkins by 11:30 a.m.  
605-244-5475

**OCT. 10-11**  
**Rural Women Conference**  
The Lodge of Deadwood  
Deadwood, SD  
[SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com](http://SouthDakotaWomeninAg.com)

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