

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Wings of Valor

**A Veteran's Hunting
Retreat**

Pages 8-9

**Celebrating American
Indian Heritage**

Pages 12-13



The FEM Board of Directors meet with staff at the September meeting.

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on September 19, 2023, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Gary Bachman called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Gary Bachman, Paula Petersen, Kelly Melius, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe. General Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Line Superintendent Rob Vetch, and Ryan Holien were present.

Gary Bachman welcomed guest employee Josh Weigel.

Changes to the agenda: 7-E Member Account

Changes/Additions to Minutes from August 22, 2023, meeting: none

Next Meeting Date: After a review of calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve manager and staff reports.

Discussion was held on sealing of parking lot and approved payment.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to enter executive session 9:49 a.m.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to leave executive session at 10:22 a.m.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve 2024 wage proposal as presented including Manager/CEO compensation.

Resolutions, Contracts, and Nominations:

Board acknowledged review of Policy 106 Director Per Diem suggestions/request for changes were made about travel expenses Per Diem will stay as is.

Motion By Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach to follow rate increase set by FEM's power provider set in Policy 313 Special Electric Heat Rate. Beginning November 1, 2023 Electric Heat Rate will go from \$.055 to \$.056

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve

revisions to Policy 407 Holidays, Policy 413 Insurance and Pension Benefits, Policy 419 Maternity Leave and Policy 433 Employee On-Call.

The board acknowledged review of 2024 Nominating Committee Fees and left as is \$50.00 plus IRS mileage rate.

The board acknowledged receiving the August Cyber Security report.

Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

Disconnects: Gary Gisi, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Glenn Jakober, Aberdeen, SD, Pasture Pump; James & Cynthia Schumacher, Eureka, SD, Active Farm; Leslie & Donna Simon, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Willard Goeschel, Long Lake, SD, Active Farm

Reconnects: LDL Cattle Co., Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Charles Jakober, Aberdeen, SD, Pasture Pump; Sam Schumacher, Eureka, SD, Active Farm; Crawford & Brittany Brixey, Aberdeen, SD, Active Farm; Will Goeschel, Leola, SD, Active Farm

Contracts: Jim & Kristen Schauer, Leola, SD, Drain Tile Pump Station; Evergreen Colony, Faulkton, SD, Sand Blast Service and Rail Crane Service; Cody & Jade Shultz, Miller, SD, Storage Building; Jerry Martchinske, Faulkton, SD, Shop

Capital Credits:

Estates – September 2023 – two = \$1,490.95

73 & Older – September 2023 – two = \$1,578.00

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to withhold \$1006.80 from Capital Credits from member account due to bad debt.

Continued on pg 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

(USPS 189-720)

Board of Directors

Gary Bachman, President
Tom Thorpe, Vice President
Eric Odenbach, Secretary
Paula Petersen, Treasurer
Kelly Melius, Asst. Sec./
Treasurer
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore
info@femelectric.coop

Management Staff

Rob Vetch
Line Superintendent
Rhonda Tuscherer
Director of Finance and
Benefits

Editor's e-mail:

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FEM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is the monthly publication for the members of FEM Electric Association, Inc., 800 5th Ave., Ipswich, SD 57451. FEM Electric Cooperative Connections' purpose is to provide reliable, helpful information to members on electric cooperative matters and better living.

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opportunity provider and
employer.**



Scott Moore
General Manager/CEO

As I write this article October 2nd, bean harvest is just getting a good start. It looks like we'll be busy for the next four to six weeks as I'm sure corn harvest is here, or not far behind. I just returned from a regional meeting where the electric cooperatives insurance provider reported the public contacts have increased from a year ago. Disappointing news, but not surprising when we live in a world of multi-tasking and distractions when we need to focus. If you find yourself working around powerlines, both above or below ground, remain focused and be safe. Use proper shields and locks when working on power takeoffs and hydraulic lifts. Drive for you, the person in front or behind you. One never knows what distraction can cause an accident. As with anything, one lapse in judgement can result in a trip to the emergency room. Please slow down, stay focused, and let your phone go to voicemail. We need to have a safe and bountiful harvest.

The FEM Electric board and management

are always looking to the future. FEM Electric's operations manager, Rob Vetch, announced he plans to retire January 5, 2024. Plans were put in place for his replacement. Starting November 1st, 2023, Sean Christiansen will start to take over the duties of operations manager.

Through the past several strategic planning meetings with our members and board, it is evident that both wanted to secure and grow our electrical department. The electrical department has been successful for FEM Electric members. Ryan Holien will assume the duties of Electrical manager and will oversee bidding and other day-to-day departmental duties. The FEM Electric board has allowed employees to participate in educational classes, including supervisor training. With this training and years of on-the-job training, we will be doing some reorganization and spreading of duties.

Justin Larson will continue as the operations foreman. I believe this three-person leadership team has the knowledge and capability to lead and move our operations into a strong future.

Earlier this summer we had one journeyman lineman leave, and with Rob Vetch retiring, we have hired three new apprentice linemen who will be cross trained as linemen and they will hold apprentice electrician cards. These individuals will work in both the operations and electrical departments. Logan Gruenstein from Aberdeen started

Continued on pg 10

Statement Mailing Dates

October 31, 2023 for October's energy

November 29, 2023 for November's energy

Regardless of the statement mail out date, payments are due in the office by the 9th of the following month.

Drowsy Driving

Drowsy Driving Prevention Week (Nov. 5-11, 2023), held every year during the first full week of November, is a good time to remember that drowsy driving is impaired driving.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 25 adult drivers report having fallen asleep while driving in the previous 30 days, and many more admit to driving when they were sleep-deprived.

These startling figures show how prevalent drowsy driving is. What drivers may not realize is how much drowsy driving puts themselves – and others – at risk. In fact, an estimated 6,400 people died annually in crashes involving drowsy driving, according to the National Sleep Foundation.

Impact of Drowsiness on Driving

Driving while drowsy is similar to driving under influence of alcohol.

- Drivers' reaction times, awareness of hazards and ability to sustain attention all worsen the drowsier the driver.
- Driving after going more than 20 hours without sleep is the equivalent of driving with a blood-alcohol concentration of 0.08% – the U.S. legal limit.
- You are three times more likely to be in a car crash if you are fatigued.

A driver might not even know when he or she is fatigued because signs of fatigue are hard to identify. Some people may also experience micro-sleep – short, involuntary periods of inattention. In the 4 or 5 seconds a driver experiences micro-sleep, at highway speed, the vehicle will travel the length of a football field.

Prevalence of Drowsy Driving Crashes

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that every year about 100,000 police-reported, drowsy-driving crashes result in nearly 800 fatalities and about 50,000 injuries. The real number may be much higher, however, as it is difficult to determine whether a driver was drowsy at the time of a crash.

A study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety estimated that 328,000 drowsy driving crashes occur annually. That's more than three times the police-reported number. The same study found that 109,000 of those drowsy driving crashes resulted in an injury and about 6,400 were fatal. The researchers suggest the prevalence of drowsy driving fatalities is more than 350% greater than reported.

Beyond the human toll is the economic one. NHTSA estimates fatigue-related crashes resulting in injury or death cost society \$109 billion annually, not including property damage.

Interventions for Drowsy Driving

Drowsy driving affects everyone, including adolescents and teens, who are not getting enough sleep (according to the CDC, it is recommended that teens get 8-10 hours of sleep each night). That means interventions focusing on this age group can help reduce drowsy

driving. One such intervention is for parents to incorporate discussions and rules on drowsy driving while completing their parent-teen driving agreements.

Other ways to reduce drowsy driving include:

- **Crash avoidance technologies:** New and existing safety technologies, such as drowsiness alert and lane departure warnings, can detect common drowsy driving patterns and warn drivers to stay in their lane or take a break
- **University interventions:** College students receive less than average sleep, with some estimates at less than six hours a night; education programs aimed at college students may help curb drowsy driving and instill healthier behaviors that can last into adulthood
- **Getting more sleep:** According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the Sleep Research Society, adults should get seven or more hours of sleep each night
- **Medication labels:** An article by Consumer Reports found that side-effect warnings are not always clear; new labeling guidelines may help drivers understand when to drive or not drive after taking these medications
- **Employers:** Workplaces with strong off-the-job safety and health programs can include key information on getting sufficient sleep and refraining from driving drowsy

Source: National Safety Council



Don't Fly Kites Near Power Lines!

Jason Willman, Age 9

Jason Willman advises people it's not safe to fly kites around power lines. Jason is the son of Dave and April Willman from Yankton, S.D., members of Clay-Union Electric Corporation.

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.

EASY CROCKPOT CREATIONS

MOM'S ROAST

Ingredients:

3-5 lbs. beef roast
1 can beefy mushroom soup
1 pkg. au jus (dry)

Method

Place roast in crock pot at bedtime. Mix au jus and soup together and pour over the roast. Cook on low. Roast will be ready to serve in its own gravy for dinner tomorrow.

Elaine Rieck
Harrisburg, S.D.

CREAMY GARDEN ROTINI

Ingredients:

1 lb. cooked and drained sausage or beef
1 large can (26 oz.) cream of chicken soup
1 soup can of milk
1 can (14.5 oz.) chicken broth soup
1 tbsp. Italian seasoning
1 cup fresh mushrooms
6 cups fresh spinach
1 pkg. Garden Rotini

Method

Add ingredients in the order given to the instant pot. Pressure cook on high for 20 minutes. Allow pressure to reduce to normal for 10 minutes, then serve! You will need an instant pot for this recipe!

Jean Cave
Sioux Falls, S.D.

CROCKPOT CASHEW CHICKEN

Ingredients:

1 pkg. slow cookers limited edition cashew chicken seasoning
2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cubed
1 cup frozen chopped onion and pepper blend
1/3 cup water
3 tbsps. soy sauce
2 tbsps. ketchup
1 cup cashew pieces
2 green onions, finely chopped

Method

Place chicken and vegetables in slow cooker. Mix seasoning, water, soy sauce, and ketchup in bowl until well blended. Pour over chicken and vegetables; stir to coat. Cover. Cook eight hours on low or four hours on high. Stir in cashews. Sprinkle with green onions. Serve over cooked rice, if desired. If cooking on low, decrease water to 1/4 cup.

McCormick.com

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

Continued from pg 2

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: The check register for the month of August 2023 contained information on checks #33706 through #33777 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for August 2023 totaling \$373,846.50.

August Financials were reviewed.

The board reviewed funds received from the sale of REC's (Renewable Energy Credits).

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

Legal Update: None

Meeting Report:

East River board update was given by Gary Bachman.
East River Annual Meeting report was given by Gary Bachman and Tom Thorpe.
NRECA Region 6 report was given by Eric Odenbach and Tom Thorpe.

Safety meeting minutes for August 14, 2023, July 12 and 13th, 2023, and June 28th, 2023 were acknowledged.

Safety committee meeting minutes for August 21st, 2023, were acknowledged.

Board acknowledged receiving August 11, 2023 employee Rate Committee meeting minutes.

Adjourn: President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



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FEM DONATES WATER TO SCHOOLS

In mid and late September, FEM Electric received a shipment of water to the headquarters in Ipswich. The water came shortly after school had begun, and FEM staff were ready to deliver. There are six schools in FEM's territory, and each school receives 60 cases of water.



FEM's water is special in a number of ways. The bottles are custom labeled with four different electrical or power line safety messages. It's also a great way for the schools to raise funds by selling water at sports games or other events.

In January, a packet was sent to each school, tasking 5th graders to come up with designs that had to use the theme of electrical safety. Four winners were chosen from all of the 5th graders at each of the six schools in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties. Each label was designed by a student

who took the design contest to heart. These students will see their designs on bottles for the next two years.



The goal of FEM's water donation

program is to not only provide a fundraising opportunity for schools, but to spread awareness about electrical safety. Hopefully each bottle that's placed in the hands of students, parents or educators will continue to make people think about electrical and power line safety more frequently.



Palettes of water waiting to be delivered to area schools.





Veterans enjoying their stay at Wings of Valor.

WINGS OF VALOR

A Veteran's Retreat

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Wings of Valor Lodge isn't just a hunting retreat offering veterans a good time and a free pheasant hunt, it's a place for them to come home.

The non-profit organization offers all U.S. military veterans an all-expense paid hunt in the heart of pheasant country, about five miles south of Parker, South Dakota.

The organization runs almost entirely on volunteers, donations and sponsorships and has already served more than 500 veterans from over 40 states since it began operations in 2019.

Sean Adams, the organization's president and co-founder, said the idea to open a hunting lodge came after discussions with the organization's now-CEO Bruce Weller back in 2018.

Weller owned a private hunting lodge called Birds, Bucks and Berries, and was host to Adams and other veterans during his annual veterans' hunt.

"Bruce was saying how the veterans' hunt was always the best day of the year, so I said, we can make every day the best day of the year if you want," said Adams.

Adams, who was grievously injured while serving in Afghanistan resulting in a double amputation of his legs in 2012, said he was well-versed in the non-profit community by the time he and Weller began discussing opening a hunting lodge that served veterans.

"I know pretty much how it works. If you do what you say, do it on time, do it well, serve veterans with a level of professionalism, and have a little faith, people will come," Adams said.

"From that conversation to Nov. 1, 2019, we worked on build site plans that I designed with one of the volunteers. We took a pavilion area that (Weller) used for weddings and put chalk lines everywhere, which is how we mapped out a building plan."

Adams said he rolled his wheelchair around each room, and if he hit a chalk line, he'd remark the line to ensure it was handicap accessible. That was in



Above: CPL USMC (RET) Sean Adams

Right: Sean Adams recovers in a hospital after suffering serious injuries in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in 2011.



January of 2019. Eleven months later, the lodge had been built and a group of veterans came to hunt under the newly established Wings of Valor Lodge.

Adams said a premise of Wings of Valor Lodge is to welcome veterans' home to something that's not chaotic, a place where they can find purpose and peace.

There's no religious angle, nor any requirements other than having taken the oath to serve our country for a veteran to have their travel expenses and entire hunting trip paid for by the non-profit.

"My generation fought in a war that was religious based," Adams explained. "We do have a spiritual setting, but we don't press anything. We never want a veteran to feel that they are oppressed by any sort of a faith."

Whether a veteran is religious, Christian, Muslim, atheist, or simply spiritual, they will be amongst others who understand what they've been through.

"No veteran is broken, they just need to come home," Adams said.

"God did not call the qualified, he called the unqualified that were willing to do

whatever was asked. Don't think because you did something overseas that your any worse than the pastor in the pulpit. We're all sinners on this earth."

Nature is also a powerful tool that Adams believes helps mend the mind, body and spirit. It's peaceful, which he said is the type of environment veterans need.

"You need all those to regroup yourself back in society. It's really hard to come out of a war, or wars, and describe that to the average human being," Adams said.

The lodge has hosted veterans of World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam to

veterans who have served in the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Operation Desert Storm.

Many of the veterans that have come to the lodge have never had a chance to heal or "come home", Adams said.

Some of those

men were Marines that Adams served with directly a decade ago.

"They saw me in an IED blast. They didn't have time to heal. They were able to see that I was okay and it was time for them to start healing. They had given enough to the country. It was time to start the healing process," Adams said.

"We also had a veteran talk about

Vietnam. He hadn't talked about it since 1968," Adams said.

Combat veterans, regardless of where they served or experienced warfare, establish a connection with one another at the lodge.

Older veterans find purpose in helping their younger counterparts. Adams said the connection can be overwhelming at times for the Vietnam veterans because of the newfound sense of purpose they find in these interactions.

Adams said raising kids and having companionship with your wife or husband is meaningful to veterans, but they often go without the relationships they had with their fellow soldiers they had beside them in the heat of battle.

"Giving someone millions of dollars, houses, or trip – that's great. But that's only mending the problem. Giving someone a sense of purpose is something we have to do," Adams said.

"When the Vietnam veterans tell my generation 'I get it, and it won't last forever', it gives the Vietnam guys a sense of purpose. The longer you hold it in the deeper it gets. That's something we realized at Walter Reed. We started getting off our medications the more we talked about what happened."

Adams said any veteran who wants to come and hunt at the Wings of Valor Lodge need only apply.

Individual applications come to the lodge free of charge. That means the organization will cover the cost of travel and any other expenses incurred to ensure the veteran doesn't pay a dime out of their own pocket.

To apply for a hunt or learn more about Wings of Valor Lodge, go to www.wingsofvalorlodge.org.



A handicap accessible bedroom at Wings of Valor lodge

Continued from pg 3

in May as a temporary Apprentice and went full time July 1, 2023. Will Olson from Rutland started October 8th and Tommy Determan from Gregory, starts November 1, 2023. We would like to welcome all three and wish them a long and safe career with FEM Electric.

It is never too early for us plan so if you are planning or even just considering adding electrical load in 2024, please call Ryan Holien or Sean Christiansen at 605-426-6891.



REMEMBER:

Day light savings is the perfect time to check your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Change the batteries and test them to make sure they're working properly.


FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMElectric on 

@fem_electric on 




@FEMelectric on 

We'll post outage updates, safety tips, news and more to keep our members informed on all the latest from FEM Electric.




DON'T LET POWER LINES become part of the landscape

3 Types of Overhead Lines


-  Transmission Lines
-  Distribution Lines
-  Service Drop Lines

Regardless of the type or voltage, any power line can kill if the path of the electrical current is disrupted.







Always look up and look out for power lines when working outdoors.

Be careful any time you go up, whether it be on a ladder, scissor lift or in a cherry picker.



Also look for power lines when:

-  Operating a crane, concrete pump truck
-  Raising a truck bed
-  Using any long tool or equipment that extends

Learn more at: 

HELP US BY KEEPING YOUR METER... NEAT(ER)

Winter weather is on the way and that means a chance of heavy snow or ice. Please help FEM Electric by keeping your electric meter easily accessible and free from snow, ice or debris. We need to access your meter from time to time to service or inspect it, and in some cases, to read it, depending on the type of meter.

Accumulated ice and snow not only make it difficult for utility crews to access meters, but the added weight can also strain them. Snow and ice buildup can also be dangerous since it could cause a gas leak.

Clearing Meters

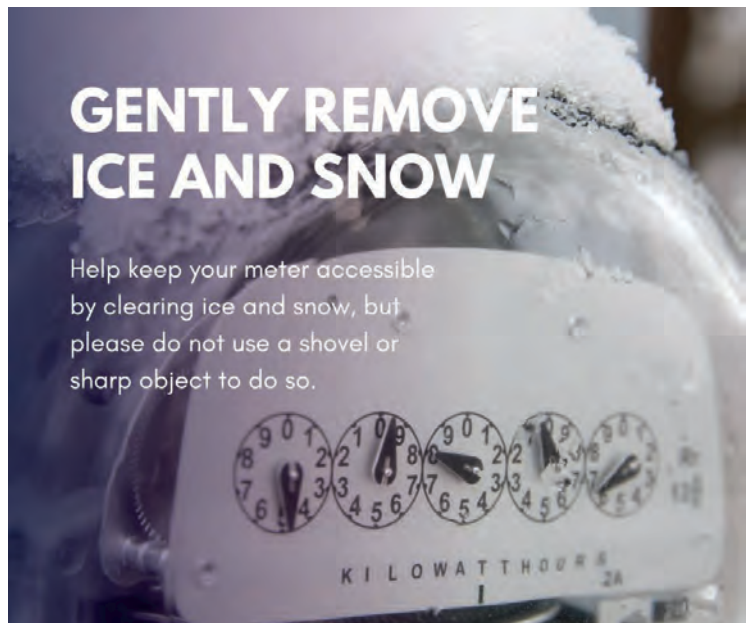
Heavy snow and icicles are not a meter's friend.

After you have finished shoveling or snow-blowing your driveway and sidewalk, take a broom or use your hands to gently brush the snow from your electric and gas meters. If there is thick ice on your meter that will not easily come off with a brush or your hands, please do not try to kick off the ice or chisel it with a snow shovel or sharp object since this could damage the meter.

Other Tips

Other meter safety/utility equipment tips include:

- Do not cover meters or pipes with shoveled or blown snow.
- Carefully remove overhead icicles from eaves and gutters so that dripping water does not freeze, fall on or damage meters or pipes.
- Do not use a shovel or a sharp object to remove snow and ice from meters.
- Do not kick your gas meter, as this can cause damage that could cause a gas leak.
- Do not kick your electric meter, as this could cause damage.
- Keeping gas meters and vents clear allows for proper ventilation and can prevent deadly carbon monoxide buildup in your home.
- Never try to remove ice from an overhead power line.
- If there is a downed power line, do not approach it or try to move it; instead, stay away and call 9-1-1 or FEM Electric at 605-426-6891 to report it.
- Be aware that snow, ice and standing water can cover downed power lines.



Pave the Way

In addition, it is always a good idea to clear a path to your meter. Thank you in advance for keeping your meters clear and accessible.

To learn other electrical safety tips, visit [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safepower.org).



Dignity courtesy of Travel South Dakota

DIGNITY

Celebrating American Indian Heritage

Scott Waltman

Rising from the prairie land as it gives way to bluffs on the east side of the Missouri River is a spectacular sculpture commemorating both South Dakota's 125 anniversary and the state's original inhabitants.

Dignity of the Earth and Sky was built by Sturgis-based sculptor Dale Claude Lamphere, who used to be the state's poet laureate.

The sculpture was erected in 2016 after Norm and Eunabel McKie announced it as a gift to South Dakota upon the state's quasiquicentennial in 2014.

Dignity towers 50 feet above the ground, beckoning motorists as they travel along Interstate 90. From the

east, it's the gateway to West River en route to the beautiful Black Hills. From the west, it's a sign to travelers that they are closer to the Minnesota border than the state's most popular playgrounds that range from Wall to Spearfish to Hot Springs.

Ashley Riehle of Sylvania, Ohio, which is on the northwestern outskirts of Toledo and just south of the Michigan

border, said the stretch of I-90 alone makes South Dakota one of the best road trip states in the nation.

She visited South Dakota in 2021, driving from Sioux Falls to the Black Hills and back and twice stopping at the Dignity monument. She planned to visit the sculpture during her drive but said the Chamberlain area also doubled as a logical place to take a break.

As a history buff, Riehle appreciates





Jeremy and Stacey Waltner of Freeman visit the Dignity of Earth and Sky sculpture in 2018.

both the beauty and the significance of Dignity.

"I thought it was great that South Dakota acknowledges the first people that occupied the state," she said.

Many states don't, she said, and she doesn't know of any such significant recognitions in Ohio or Michigan.

Jeremy Waltner of Freeman, South Dakota, also appreciates the sculpture on multiple levels.

"It is as impressive as you can imagine just in terms of both size and impact," he said.

Being a South Dakotan, he knew of Dignity and that he wanted to visit. But he also wanted to make sure his wife Stacey, daughter Ella and son Oliver could share the experience. They stopped during a trip west in summer 2018.

The sculpture pays homage to South Dakota's Native American population, setting it apart from so many other tourist stops in the state, Waltner said.

"It's education as much as it is art," he said, adding that the context behind Dignity is critical.

Three Native American women from Rapid City served as models for the sculpture, which was created east of the town in an isolated area along the Cheyenne River.

Lamphere's other creations include work in the South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre and the Arch of Dreams in Sioux Falls. He's done commissioned portraits of Bob and Dolores Hope, Burl Ives, Walter Annenberg, George and Eleanor McGovern and others, according to his website.

For Dignity, he had a specific goal.

"I wanted something that would really honor the indigenous people of the Great Plains, and I kept that in mind all the time. I made the work reflect the name that it has of Dignity, and I think that's part of what makes it work so well," Lamphere has said of his creation.

Riehle noted that the star quilt Dignity wears has meaning.

It's comprised of more than 100 blue diamonds as Dignity holds it behind her back in her outstretched arms.

In Native American culture, star quilts are a sign of respect and are often given as gifts to honor somebody for a substantial achievement in their life.

Including the quilt was a nice touch that took some planning, Riehle said, because it's a direct tie to the Lakota culture.

While there is a plaque at Dignity that briefly tells the story of the sculpture, Waltner said he's not sure most people realize the history.

In fact, he said, he's not sure if most people set out to visit Dignity or just happen across her as they zip through the heart of the state on the interstate.

"It's South Dakota's greatest conversational piece outside of two gigantic granite carvings in the Black Hills," Waltner said, referring to Mount Rushmore and the Crazy Horse Memorial.

Either way, he said, people who take time to admire the grand piece of art wind up learning a little bit.

When he stopped with his family, he said there was a good crowd of people visiting about the sculpture, smiling as they looked on in awe and waiting in line so they could get their pictures taken

with Dignity.

Waltner said he has stopped to see the sculpture twice on his own.

Riehle met friends from Denver and Chicago in the Black Hills as part of her trip. She had been to South Dakota before but got to see and do much more in 2021. She visited Sioux Falls, Mitchell's Corn Palace, Deadwood, the Badlands, Wall Drug, Spearfish Canyon, Custer State Park, the Chapel in the Hills, Pactola Lake, Palisades State Park and other popular places.

All were fun, but Dignity was special, she said, because it is a reflection of the true foundation of South Dakota's history.

"So much history focuses on when the white settlers got there," Riehle said.

Dignity is deeper.

The McKies donated \$1 million to the Dignity project. Less than a decade later, that investment helps the thousands upon thousands of people who stop just east of Chamberlain each year take a moment to remember and acknowledge the rich history of South Dakota's first citizens.

Additional Facts:

- November is National American Indian Heritage Month. It's a time to remember and celebrate the important contributions of Native people and their cultures, traditions, and histories.
- The first state to declare and celebrate an American Indian Day was New York on the second Saturday in May 1916.
- In 1990, the month of November was approved by a joint resolution and signed by President George H. W. Bush as "National American Indian Heritage Month."
- Central Electric Cooperative proudly powers Dignity and the rest area where thousands of visitors stop each year to celebrate the beauty of the American Indian.



Scott Pudwill, director of the Aberdeen Public School District's A-TEC Academy shows school board members one of three electric vehicles purchased for the academy's automotive class. Photo courtesy of The Aberdeen Insider

The Rise of Career and Technical Education

Scott Waltman

Many high school graduates in South Dakota are veering from the traditional path to college and a four-year degree.

Career and technical education classes continue to grow in popularity with school districts expanding their offerings and academies and seeing more students interested in those classes.

During the 2021-22 school year, there were 25,282 South Dakota public school students taking some type of career or technical training class, according to information from the South Dakota Department of Education. That number includes students who took more than one class.

Those are the most recent complete numbers available from the state.

More and more, those classes get young people prepared for jobs that offer

good wages and benefits. The perception of what, decades ago, was called “tech school” has changed, and the number of students taking classes that focus on agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality and tourism, and architecture and construction continues to rise.

In recent months, the Aberdeen Public School District expanded its A-TEC Academy on the campus of Central High School. The project cost roughly \$3.6 million.

New spaces for agriculture, family and consumer sciences, networking, and broadcast courses were added, though the district offers other career and technical education classes.

The agriculture program is especially popular, said Scott Pudwill, the district's A-TEC Academy director.

Before the expansion, he said, all of the ag classes were in one room. Now, ag

classes have a multipurpose space with tables and sinks and the academy has a new greenhouse.

Students were starting to put plant beds together at the end of September and, Pudwill said, the kids will be able to monitor them during the winter months with the new facility.

He said ag classes average about 105 students per term, which is nine weeks. The automotive program is almost as popular with about 400 students taking classes over the course of a school year, he said.

Career and technical education classes are also popular in the Harrisburg School District, said Breanne Lynch, the district's career and technical education coordinator.

Harrisburg offers classes in 13 of the 16 clusters the state has, she said, and about half of the 1,700 students in grades nine through 12 take career and tech classes.

If you included internships, work-based learning and other options, about 90% of high school students have a career or technical education-related class or experience during their four years, Lynch said.

The district continues to offer more

options. For example, Lynch said, a home builders academy opened in 2019. That first year, students built a full house. Now, they are working on tiny homes that will eventually go to veterans, she said.

In Aberdeen, A-TEC students have built cabins for the city's Wylie Park campground.

Both districts have partnerships with their local home builders associations.

Harrisburg's automotive program teams with Schulte Subaru in town. As is the case with many career and technical education classes, that gives students the chance to get hands-on experience.

Lynch said that when Schulte buys cars at auction, students have the chance to diagnose what problems there might be. They also do basic work like change the oil on district staff cars. That gives them experience in what it's like to work at a quick stop, she said.

Harrisburg students in the business management and administration cluster operate the Roar Store at the school. It offers snacks and drinks to students when meals aren't being served, Lynch said. For managing the store, including tasks like working with wholesalers to purchase products, the kids are paid in Roar Bucks they can spend at the store.

The aim of all of the career and technical education classes is to prepare students for the workforce, Lynch said. Workforce development is a prime focus of state leaders, she said.

Aberdeen Central's A-TEC Academy had a shop before the expansion. But students will get to try their hand at something new this school year.

The auto curriculum now has three electric cars, Pudwill said. Students will be able to build them, then the vehicles can be taken apart and used in future years.

Once finished, the cars will look somewhat like a dune buggy, he said. But they can be licensed and driven on streets and roads.

Even if students who take career and technical education classes choose another profession, they'll still have the skills to, for

example, make home or vehicle repairs, Pudwill said.

For those who go onto a postsecondary school, many of the programs are one or two years, Pudwill said. So students get into the workforce quicker while accruing less debt than they would at a traditional four-year college or university, he said.

Bobbie Jo Donovan is the college and career readiness manager for the Rapid City Public School District and past president of the South Dakota Association for Career and Technical Education. The number of high school students taking those courses is certainly on the uptick, she said.

One of the biggest challenges is finding qualified, certified teachers to lead the classes, she said.

Sometimes there's a community member with a strong background in a profession who isn't certified but would make a good teaching candidate, Donovan said. The state has programs to help those folks, who, because of their career experience, can often offer a wealth of knowledge to students, she said.

So many careers can start in high school with career and tech classes, Donovan said, and school districts want to be able to help those young people, she said.

Lynch said the Harrisburg district also offers opportunities to students in kindergarten

through eighth grade. Career learning can begin as early as age 4, so keeping students interested and curious in career and technical education options will pay dividends in the future, she said.

"We also know that students who take multiple CTE classes are more engaged in learning and see a higher graduation rate," said Nancy Van Der Weide, public information specialist with the state Department of education.

"Statewide, 82% of high school students graduated on time in the 2021-22 school year, but 94% of students who were actively involved in CTE graduated on time," she said.



Harrisburg students working on a car in the automotive class. Photo courtesy of Harrisburg School District



Students in the Harrisburg School District's home builders academy have built a full house. Photo courtesy of John Klemme



Nov. 2-4
Huron Ringneck Festival and Bird Dog Challenge
 Huron, SD
 605-352-0000

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.

OCT. 24-28
Grey Goose Halloween Display
 6 p.m.
 19988 Grey Goose Rd.
 Pierre, SD

OCT. 28
Hill City Children's Boo Bash and Pumpkin Festival
 Hill City Visitor's Center
 Hill City, SD
 605-574-2368

OCT. 28-29
Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association
 Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-731-9155

NOV. 3
Plankinton Service Club Fun Night
 7 p.m.
 Aurora County Ag Building
 Plankinton, SD

NOV. 4-5
Benson's Flea Market
 W.H. Lyons Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 5
American Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
 8:30 a.m.
 S.D. Military Heritage Alliance Building
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 5
Turkey Dinner/ Silent Auction
 11:45 a.m.
 RVUMC
 Rapid City, SD

NOV. 10-12
Christmas at the Barn
 10 a.m.
 Groton, SD

NOV. 10-11
Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds
 Sioux Falls, SD

NOV. 11
Sisseton Area Merchants & Crafters Holiday Extravaganza
 Sisseton, SD

NOV. 12
Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball
 4-7 p.m.
 Trinity Lutheran Church
 Chamberlain, SD
 605-730-0553

NOV. 24
Parade of Lights
 7 p.m.
 Dakota Avenue
 Huron, SD

NOV. 25
Mid-Winter Fair
 Gregory Auditorium
 Gregory, SD
 605-830-9778

NOV. 30-DEC. 3
Hatchery Holidays
 D.C. Booth Fish Hatchery
 Spearfish, SD

DEC. 2
6th Annual Holiday Party, Tour of Homes, Silent Auction
 4 p.m.
 Olive Grove Golf Course
 Groton, SD

DEC. 8-9
Alexandria's Winter Festival
 5 p.m.
 Alexandria, SD

DEC. 8-9
Junkin' Market Days
 W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Center
 Sioux Falls, SD
 605-941-4958

DEC. 17
Christmas Cantata
 3 p.m.
 Hermosa United Church of Christ
 Hermosa, SD

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