

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Local art teacher's mural  
commemorates dedicated  
Burke lineman.  
*Photo by Jacob Boyko*

## Rural Murals

Small Communities  
Showcase History  
and Culture Through  
Mural Art

Pages 8-9

## Blizzard Bags

Pages 12-13



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

## September Board Report

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of FEM Electric was held in Ipswich, South Dakota at 8:30 a.m. on September 24, 2024, 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, Tom Thorpe, Eric Odenbach, Kelly Melius. Operations Manager Sean Christiansen, Accounting Clerk Angie Sieh, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, Manager/CEO Scott Moore, Electrical Manager Ryan Holien.

Guest Employee: Gregg Zwart

**Changes to the agenda:** None

**Changes/Additions to Minutes from August 20, 2024, 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 15, 2024, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

Motion by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to approve administrative business.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to acknowledge manager and staff reports.

Around 9:45 the board and staff listened in on PUC hearing Docket EL24-027 pertaining to Leola Data Center and discovery documentation pertaining to rates and contract.

Motion by Tom Thorpe, seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to enter executive session at 10:15 a.m.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen to leave executive session at 11:00 a.m.

Motion by Kelly Melius, seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to approve employee compensation plan as presented by the CEO and CEO compensation for 2025.

August 2024 Cyber Security Report was acknowledged.

### Resolutions and Contracts:

Directors reviewed Policy 106 Director Per Diem. There were no changes.

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to nominate and approve Tom Thorpe as voting delegate for 2024 Mid-West Annual meeting.

Motion by Paula Petersen seconded by Tom Thorpe and carried to sign an update service agreement with Glacial Lakes Ethanol.

A discussion was held on use of CFC Integrity Fund. It was decided to wait and see what our legal fees total on Leola Data, LLC before deciding.

### Membership Business:

Board acknowledged membership business.

### New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:

**Disconnects:** Jerry Gilmour, Onida, SD, Active Farm; Amy Kessler, Aberdeen, SD, Vacant Farm; Steven & Janet Wik, Faulkton, SD, Active Farm & Grain Bin; Andrew & Lacey Rohrbach, Bowdle, SD, Active Farm

**Reconnects:** Gilmour Brothers, LLC, Onida, SD, Active Farm; Steve Pfeiffer, Aberdeen, SD, Vacant Farm; Thomas Newman, Faulkton, SD, Active Farm; Newman Farms, Faulkton, SD, Grain Bin; Brandon & Samantha Rohrbach, Roscoe, SD, Active Farm

**Contracts:** Jacob Schneider, Roscoe, SD, Grain Bin; Bode Brothers, Orient, SD, Grain Bin; Newman Farms, Faulkton, SD, Shop

**Retired Locations:** None

Motion by Kelly Melius seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approve three construction contracts for new service.

### Capital Credits:

**Estates – September 2024 – One =** \$875.30

**73 & Older – September 2024 – One =** \$1,252.33

The 2025 Nominating Committee Fee was discussed, and it was decided to leave at \$50 plus mileage.

*Continued on page 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. Secretary/  
Treasurer  
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

#### CEO/General Manager

Scott Moore  
info@femelectric.coop

#### Management Staff

Sean Christiansen  
*Operations Manager*  
Ryan Holien  
*Electrical Department Manager*  
Rhonda Tuscherer  
*Director of Finance and  
Benefits*

#### Editor's e-mail:

oban@femelectric.coop

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**

It seems that around every corner or news article, we hear "the sky is falling". In reality, change is coming if we like it or not. There probably is a legal path for such change and a process that takes time. Many of these changes are driven by public policy and not true supply and demand.

The electric industry is in many articles while people and organizations are trying to change our power generation mix. This isn't a new subject but one that continues to get attention, and it should because it wasn't created to lower your monthly energy bill and will instead continue to pressure electric rate increases. Electric cooperatives will continue to work to keep power affordable and our rural economy strong. Our state and national associations have done a great job of educating and informing policy makers at all levels on the risk of pushing such change too fast and the harm it has on the rural America economy. Currently, there are articles reporting that some nuclear generation

plants are being recommissioned and some closures of fossil fueled generation are being delayed due to America's hunger for energy. America's economy will not grow without reliable power.

The electric industry has challenges but so do many other industries and I don't believe we are facing any tougher challenges today than the leaders before us faced. Today, it is easy to look back seventy, sixty or forty years ago and analyze a decision and the results that were made. I'm hopeful in future years that the next generation can benefit from today's decisions, and I believe they will.

The key to success is working as a team with our sister cooperatives, state and federal agencies, and other companies in the utility business. America has growing power consumption in the rural and urban areas. Electric utilities need to continue to work finding the resources to keep power reliable and affordable for all Americans.

By the time this article gets out we will be well into fall harvest and hopefully

**Continued on page 10**

#### FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@FEMEelectric on

@fem\_electric on

@FEMEelectric on

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

## Statement Mailing Dates

November 26, 2024 for November's energy  
December 27, 2024 for December's Energy

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

# HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

**Rachel Dotson**

USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

It's the time of year when many families will be gathering around the dining room table savoring the flavors of their favorite holiday meals. Check out how to keep your holiday meals safe this season with a few tips from Land-grant University Extension Services.

### Shopping Safely

Before shopping, check the ingredients you have at home and verify their expiration date. It is helpful to prepare a shopping list before going shopping. Make sure you have sufficient room in your refrigerator for all purchased food items. Cold foods that need refrigeration or freezing should be purchased last.

Oklahoma State University Extension advises while shopping, keep raw meat, poultry and seafood away from other foods in your grocery cart. Placing raw meat, poultry and seafood in plastic bags can be a good method to separate them from other foods. Ask a cashier to place your raw meat, poultry and seafood in a separate bag.

### Safe Food Handling Practices

- When it comes to preparing meats, washing poultry and meats at home is no longer necessary and is not recommended by the USDA. University of Connecticut Extension recommends thawing meat in a refrigerator or in a cold-water bath.
- Defrost meats in the refrigerator for approximately 24 hours, depending on size, or submerge meat in its original package in cold water and allow 30 minutes of thawing time for every pound.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt. Even wash prepackaged greens to minimize bacterial contamination.
- While preparing food, use two cutting boards: one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting fruits and vegetables, cooked food or preparing salads.
- Don't forget to also wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.

### Storing Leftovers

Bacteria grows when the food is left out for more than

two hours at room temperature. Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension advises reheating cooked leftovers to 165 degrees. Use a food thermometer to measure temperature accurately. Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil. When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food where bacteria can survive.

### Multistate Approach for Food Safety

Food-borne illnesses affect 48 million Americans each year. Research and education have led to major advances in food safety; however, challenges remain. Many methods that use heat or chemicals to ensure food safety are not 100% effective and can damage food color, texture, flavor and nutrients.

Researchers at 32 Land-grant Universities are collaborating on innovative solutions for food safety and quality.

Their work is helping meet consumer demand for minimally processed, additive-free food items with longer shelf lives, higher nutrient content and less potential to cause food-borne illnesses.



### Farm Safety "Always Be Alert"

#### Clyde Manas, Age 8

Clyde Manas warns farmers and ranchers to be careful with their equipment around power lines. Thank you for your picture, Clyde! Clyde's parents are Terry and Lacey Manas, members of Bon Homme Yankton Electric.

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.



# Holiday DELIGHTS

## EASY CRANBERRY SALAD

### Ingredients:

12 oz. fresh cranberries  
20 oz. crushed pineapple,  
drained (reserve juice)  
1/2 cup pineapple juice  
(from reserved juice)  
2 cups sugar  
3 oz. pkg cranberry jello  
(may also use cherry jello)  
1/4 cup maraschino cherries,  
finely chopped

### Method

Boil cranberries with pineapple juice and sugar. When berries pop, remove from heat. Add dry jello, pineapple and cherries. Refrigerate. Keeps for up to two weeks in the refrigerator.

Elaine Rieck  
Harrisburg, S.D.

## CAKE BATTER DIP

### Ingredients:

8 oz. softened cream cheese  
8 oz. thawed cool whip  
1/3-2/3 cup milk  
1 box Funfetti cake mix  
(unprepared)  
Sprinkles

### Method

Add whipped topping and cream cheese to a large mixing bowl and beat with a hand mixer until smooth and creamy.

Add cake mix and 1/3 cup milk and stir with a wooden spoon until combined. Dip will be very thick, so add more milk, a little at a time, until you get to your desired consistency. I used about 2/3 cup for my dip.

Garnish with sprinkles and serve with whatever dippers you prefer (graham crackers, animal crackers, vanilla wafers, pretzels, fresh fruit, etc.)

Kayla Beaner  
Centerville, S.D.

## OPEN-FACED HOT TURKEY SANDWICHES

### Ingredients:

1 container (12 oz.) turkey  
gravy  
8 slices cooked turkey  
1 loaf baguette bread,  
(12 in. long)  
1 cup fresh spinach leaves  
1 cup prepared stuffing,  
warmed  
1/2 cup cranberry sauce

### Method

Cook gravy and turkey slices in large skillet on medium-high heat until heated through.

Cut baguette in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half. Place bread, cut-side up, onto four serving plates.

Top bread evenly with spinach, turkey, stuffing, any remaining gravy and cranberry sauce.

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



# BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

## Board Report Continued from pg 2

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

**Financial Business:** The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information: The check register for the month of August 2024 contained information on checks #34610 through #34688 and all automatic payments/withdrawals for August 2024 totaling \$425,927.74.

Board acknowledged receipt of August 2024 financials.

Director of Finance and Benefits, Rhonda Tuscherer reported to the board that FEM received \$55,281.25 from the sale of REC's (Renewable Energy Credits).

Rhonda Tuscherer reviewed options with the board on money being held in a Margin stabilization fund of \$396,000 plus interest totaling around \$420,291.41.

Motion by Eric Odenbach seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to invest \$350,000.00 in NRECA VCAP funds and the remainder approximately \$70,292.00 to purchase several years inventory of AMI meters.

Motion by Tom Thorpe seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

**Legal Update:** Attorney Vaughn Beck gave an update on PUC case and IRS notices.

## Meeting Report:

East River monthly board report was given by Gary Bachman. Kelly Melius reported on East River annual meeting. Gary Bachman reported on SDREA Board Leadership session he attended.

Safety meeting minutes from August 22 and employee meeting minutes from August 28, 2024, were acknowledged.

**Adjourn:** President Gary Bachman declared the meeting adjourned.



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

# WATER DELIVERED



Six pallets holding 60 cases of water were donated and delivered to six schools on August 20th and 21st. The bottles display electrical safety messages designed by students that attend schools in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties.

A contest is held every two years where students design new electrical safety messages for the bottles, and four designs are selected from numerous designs submitted. Each winner is given a prize, and their design is used for two years.

The donated water is used for fundraising opportunities for the school and any school sanctioned club.

FEM also keeps a few cases on hand to donate to other non-profits for fundraising opportunities.

Thank  
You

Dear FEM,  
I would like to thank everyone involved in the process of sending Chase, Hannah, and myself on the 2024 NRECA Youth Tour. It was an incredible opportunity to visit Washington, D.C. I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved in the organization and sponsorship of this trip. Thank you again for this incredible experience!

Sincerely,

Jessica Neuback





## Small Communities Showcase History and Culture Through Mural Art

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

### Lemmon

Visitors from all over the map flock to Lemmon each year to explore the town's plethora of fascinating exhibits, from the Petrified Wood Park to the life-size steampunk-style sculptures by local artist John Lopez.

But of all the town's unique offerings, there's one stand-out exhibit that ties everything together: Boss Cowman Square.

Lopez's lifesize metal sculpture of cowboy legend George Edward Lemmon is the focal point of the square. The Boss Cowman clutches the reins of his steampunk stallion, his eyes fixed on the horizon watching for stray cattle.

"Dad Lemmon," as the town's founder is so fondly known among locals, settled the town in 1906 between the Grand River and North Dakota border. It would soon be a stop along the incoming Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which Dad Lemmon had been recruited to platte westward.

The sculpture is accompanied by a background mural depicting a scene far away from the bustling saloons and general stores of early Lemmon. In the scene, saddled-up cowboys under the careful

watch of the Boss Cowman sculpture guide a meandering herd hundreds of heads long across a river – no problem for Dad Lemmon, whose roundup skills and knowledge of the land were legendary across the West.

In 2015, as Lopez dreamt of what would one day be Boss Cowman Square, he recruited the help of two Nigerian artists, Dotun Popoola and Jonathan Imafidor, to help bring the vision to life.

"We studied a few materials and made sure all the elements were well captured, like the kinds of trees, the way the river looks and the butte in the background," Imafidor recalled about the 2016 project.

One obstacle that posed a challenge for the traveling artists – beside the shock of South Dakota's cold spring weather – was the slight differences between the cattle they knew in Nigeria and the cattle of the American West.

"We are representational artists and we've done a lot of drawings of cows, so we kind of had an idea of what the cattle should look like," Imafidor explained. "But in Lemmon, the kind of cattle that are found in the region are a little different than what we have in Nigeria. I remember when we started painting the cattle ... John Lopez told us, 'I don't think you can find those here.' Then he brought some material for

Cowboys keep a herd of longhorns moving at the bank of the Missouri River. Visitors will notice the sculpture of Dad Lemmon turned around to keep an eye on the progress. *Photo provided by John Lopez.*

us so we were able to see the difference and then we made the corrections."

After about a month of work, the mural was completed and the Boss Cowman Square was unveiled to the public in July 2016.

### Burke

In Burke, K-12 art teacher Kate Witt isn't shy about brightening up her community. The mom of four has designed and painted four murals around town, including one depicting the town's beloved utility worker, Rich Bailey.

Rich's wife, Margaret Ann Bailey, commissioned the mural after Rich's passing in 2023. The mural shows the lineman hanging onto a utility pole as he works on the power lines.

"When we came here in 1970, there wasn't a bucket truck or anything," recalled Margaret Ann. "So he climbed everything, whether it was blizzarding or lightning, and he made sure people had electricity."

The mural also features emergency vehicles, as Rich served for decades as a volunteer firefighter and an emergency medical technician. Parked beneath the lines, the rusted white pickup truck Rich drove around town that over the years became synonymous with himself.

"With this mural specifically, I felt I had



a big important job,” Witt said. “This is a man who the town really loves, and I had a big job to make something beautiful that [Margaret Ann] was going to be proud of.”

Witt incorporated her own signature styles into the mural; her white outlines make the lineman’s silhouette stand out against the more geometrically designed Missouri River bluffs and cloudy sunset in the background.

“That’s where I have a little fun, putting in the modern twist and bold colors,” Witt continued. “I put this white line around everything which made some elements almost look like they’re stickers on a wall.”

Since Witt completed the mural last August, it’s become a point of pride for Margaret Ann who says it’s a testament to her husband’s years of dedication to his community.

“There was an older gal here in town, and she called him at 2 o’clock in the morning and said ‘my air conditioner isn’t working and it’s darn hot in my house,’” Margaret Ann recalled.

She said her husband explained that his job was to fix power lines, not air conditioners. Still, he went to flip the breaker on the woman’s fuse box anyway before going back to sleep.

“That’s the kind of guy he was, and I’m proud,” Margaret Ann said.

## Tabor

Where in South Dakota can you find roses, ears of corn, a cardinal and Czech kolaches all in one mural?

Only in Tabor, probably.

Commissioned for the town’s 150th anniversary in 2022, the colorful mural on the sidewall of the local library meanders through the community’s history. From the heavy Czech influence of the earliest settlers represented by pastries and roses to the school’s original mascot, the cardinals, Robbie Jelsma worked very intentionally to portray the town in a way only a knowledgeable local artist could.

Growing up in nearby Springfield, Jelsma is no stranger to Tabor and its famous Czech Days, which draws thousands of people from across the country for the three-day celebration.

“I wanted to represent Czech Days and the Czech culture, so I did my own

research,” Jelsma said.

He incorporated roses, which are the national flower of the Czech Republic, as well as the fluffy pastries with fruit in the middle called kolaches.

He also incorporated local history—Tabor’s school mascot was the cardinal before merging with Springfield and Tyndall to form Bon Homme School District.

When he’s not painting murals, Jelsma is a highly sought-after tattoo artist specializing in more realistic styles. For him, the highlights of the Tabor mural is the level of depth and realism he achieved in his roses and clouds.

The hardest part of painting the mural is working with the elements, as there’s a laundry list of work that needs to be done on the surface before any real painting can begin: washing; smoothing; primer.

On top of that, unpredictable Midwestern weather requires a careful eye on the weather radar for any outdoor painting projects, Jelsma said.

“We started about early October so the fall was just getting started, and you never know in South Dakota if the weather is going to hold out or if you’ll get an early snow or strong wind,” he recalled about his three and a half weeks working on the project.

For Jelsma, the finished mural is as big of a point of pride for him, having been selected and commissioned for the work, as it is for the people of Tabor who get to show it off every summer during Czech Days.

“It’s cool I was thought of for the project,” Jelsma said. “It’s an art project that I think just lights everybody up a little bit when you drive down main street and you see something like that in a small town.”



Artist Robbie Jelsma puts the finishing touches on his mural ahead of the 2022 unveiling.

*Photo provided by Robbie Jelsma.*

## Manager's Article Continued from pg 3

the yields are good. We have seen a dry fall creating some fire hazards. Please be safe during your fall work and travels. Along our coastline we have seen hurricanes and large amounts of flooding leaving millions without power or daily essentials. In the Dakotas, ice and snowstorms create hazards and this would be a good time to check your supplies and operate your generators and standby switches. Waiting until you are without power during a storm can create some unnecessary anxiety.

Please remember to VOTE November 5, 2024. The only vote that will not be counted is the vote that was never cast.

If you are planning on adding any electrical load in 2025, please give Sean Christiansen or Ryan Holien a call 605 426 6891.



**We're Grateful  
for Your  
Membership.**

Our offices will be closed  
**Thursday, November 28,  
and Friday, November 29,**  
in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.  
We are incredibly grateful for your  
membership as our team spends this  
special time with loved ones.


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From our co-op family to yours,  
we hope you have a wonderful  
Thanksgiving!



feeling chilled?

## HEAT YOUR SPACE SAFELY



-  Keep flammable items at least 3 feet away
-  Place on a flat, level surface
-  Make sure the cord is not frayed or cracked
-  Plug it directly into an outlet
-  Follow all instructions and use models endorsed by a reputable testing lab
-  Do not use an extension cord or power strip, which can overheat
-  Do not use around small children or pets
-  Do not use one with a damaged plug or prongs

Safe Electricity.org®



# thanks!

Dear FEM,

Thank you for awarding me your Young Adults Light the Way Scholarship. I appreciate your generosity. I am enjoying my experience at college and I am going to learn a lot.

Thank You Again  
Evan Olson

**FREE**  
*Gift*  
**Wrapping**  
**December 5th**  
**9:00 am to 4:00 pm**  
**at FEM Electric**



## THE COUNTRY COOKIN' cookbook

### RECIPES NEEDED

Help us create another great cookbook by submitting your favorite recipes.

Your recipe could be featured in the 41st volume of East River Electric's Country Cookin' cookbook!



Submit to be entered into a drawing for 1 of 2 \$100 Visa gift cards

Submit recipes to [graphics@eastriver.coop](mailto:graphics@eastriver.coop) or contact your local co-op for more information.



Deadline: December 15th, 2024



# PREPARING FOR WINTER WEATHER

**Jacob Boyko**

[jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop](mailto:jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop)

As we near the frigid winter months of South Dakota, it's important for you and loved ones to stay ready for an emergency.

Even though power outages are rare, a loss of electricity can affect modern lives in critical ways; In an instant, you may no longer be able to heat your home, prepare food or access critical information.

It's crucial to prepare for power outages and other general emergencies by keeping supplies in both your home and vehicles as well as making sure you and your loved ones have a plan in place.

Brad Reiners, director of communications for the state Department of Public Safety, encourages South Dakotans to stock

up on essentials like food, water and batteries prior to the winter months.

"Make sure you have enough food and water for at least three days, and each person in the household should have one gallon of water per day," Reiners said.

State DPS recommends keeping non-perishable food items like pasta, canned goods and nutritious snacks that don't require refrigeration and don't need to be heated or cooked before consumption.

"Never use gas powered generators, grills or portable stoves indoors, as they can produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide," Reiner added.

As you prepare, remember to be proactive about your health. Have your medical prescriptions refilled in advance of a severe storm and keep a battery bank charged so you can power your cell phone in case you need to

access telehealth services, emergency services or access critical information.

In your car, keep warm blankets, winter clothes, snacks, a shovel, flashlight and a set of jumper cables in case you get stranded.

"It's also advisable to check your tires for proper inflation and tread, and make sure your windshield wipers are in good condition with freeze-resistant washer fluid," Reiners added.



**Bottles of water and shelf-stable dry foods are perfect long-lasting emergency supplies to keep around.**  
*Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.*



If you plan to rely on a generator or wood burning stove for heat if the power goes out, check beforehand that your equipment is in safe working order, and you have enough fuel to last several days.

Keeping warm clothes, blankets and sleeping bags at the ready can be lifesaving if you're unable to heat your home.

### **Meals on Wheels here to help with Blizzard Bags**

For senior citizens, some of this advice is easier said than done. Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota understands that better than anyone, and they have come up with a solution.

"Blizzard Bags" have been a part of the organization's lineup for over 20 years now and include some of the essentials seniors need when hunkering down for severe weather.

"We deliver shelf-stable meals for seniors who, especially in rural areas, may not have access to food for a while if their electricity goes out," said Jennifer Paschke, regional manager for Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota. "We provide five meals in those bags they can use during a loss of power or being stranded in their homes due to weather."

The food supplied is generally items that don't require a heat source, like packages of tuna salad and crackers, protein bars or cans with a pop-top seal so no can opener is required, Paschke said.

The bags also include water and other donated supplies like batteries and flashlights from local businesses, including some rural electric cooperatives.

"The biggest success story I know in

my area is a couple of years ago when they had tornados in Philip," Paschke remembered. "The water we provided [in the blizzard bags] were some of the only sources of water some of those people had. Just having that food and water can be a godsend for some people."

Blizzard Bags are available to seniors age 60 and up who are a part of the Meals on Wheels program. The bags cost roughly \$20 to put together, according to Paschke, and are funded in part by community donors. The organization provides home deliveries for seniors living in both cities and rural areas.

Anyone interested in getting service or helping with the cause can contact Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota at (605) 394-6002.



Meals On Wheels of Western South Dakota provides blizzard bags to seniors in case weather conditions affect normal delivery.  
Photo provided by Meals on Wheels of Western South Dakota.

# RURAL MAIL SERVICE DELAYS CAUSE HEADACHES

**POTENTIAL CHANGES TO RURAL MAIL SERVICE MAY CAUSE EVEN MORE DELAYS AND INCREASED POSTAGE, BUT FEM AND SMARTHUB ARE HERE TO HELP**

FEM members may have already experienced delays in their mail service, and proposed changes may not only increase delays, but increase costs to deliver mail.

While this situation is not ideal, there are several solutions FEM has available to members. The first is signing up for ACH payments. This would require members to fill out a form, which is available at the FEM office or at [femelectric.coop](http://femelectric.coop), and return it to the office. FEM will automatically process payments each month, avoiding late fees and additional postage costs.

An alternate solution available to members is SmartHub. SmartHub is FEM's online payment portal available through FEM's website or as an app for smart phones. Through SmartHub, members can make payments, set up automatic payments with a checking account or a credit card, view usage, or receive notifications when their bill is available. Bill available notifications are sent the same day that physical statements are mailed. Members can still have the option to receive a physical statement, or they can choose to go paperless.

For a quick way to pay, members can use the "Pay Now" button at [femelectric.coop](http://femelectric.coop). They will need their account number and last name to



make a payment on their account, but it is designed to be fast and easy to use.

For those members who aren't as tech savvy as others, SmartHub also has a pay-by-phone option. To use the pay-by-phone option, members can call 1-844-965-1321. Again, there are options available to set up automatic payments with either checking or a credit card, or to make a one time payment.

If members are in the area, they can drop their payment off if the office is open, or in the payment drop box located in the parking lot. Payments are processed the following morning during business hours.


Finally, FEM would also like members to know that they are welcome to call the office at 605-426-6891 or at 1-800-587-5880 to ask about their bill. Mailing dates for bills are published in each edition of Cooperative Connections on page 3 so that members can mark their calendars.


With all these options available, FEM is working to help members avoid late fees and mail delays.



## AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS

Save time and money by automating your bill payments to avoid late fees and postage.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Visit [femelectric.coop/smarthub-information](http://femelectric.coop/smarthub-information) for more info!



# FEM ELECTRIC PRESENTS THE 2025

# YOUTH TOUR

## JUNE 15 - 21, 2025

**Here is your chance of a lifetime to experience an all-expenses paid trip to Washington, D.C., June 15-21, 2025.**

### **What does it cost?**

**Nothing!**

This is why cooperatives are different! Co-ops are always giving back to the communities we serve, and helping students learn about the political process to interact with your government is one way cooperatives give back. We hope students who attend walk away from this week as a better leader, and with a sense that they can make a difference.

### **When is it held?**

**June 15-21, 2025**

Students will meet in Sioux Falls on Sunday, June 15th for an orientation before flying to D.C. on Sunday, June 16th. Everyone will return to South Dakota on Saturday, June 21st.

There will be featured speakers on National Youth Day that will provide insight on the important roles electric cooperatives play in their community. Students will learn about American history, and their role as a citizen by meeting with their representative and senators at the nation's capital.

For more information contact:  
Crystal Thorson  
thorson@femelectric.coop  
FEM Electric Association, Inc.  
PO Box 468  
800 5th Ave.  
Ipswich, SD 57451  
[www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop)  
Application Deadline:  
December 13th, 2024

**This trip is for any high school junior or senior in FEM Electric's territory!**

### **How do I enter?**

Students who are interested should complete the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C. application. Applications can be found at [www.femelectric.coop](http://www.femelectric.coop), through your school counselor, or you can pick up an application at FEM Electric.

### **How do I win?**

FEM Electric's selection committee will review and evaluate all applications received. Students may be asked to participate in an interview. The committee will select THREE students to represent FEM Electric at this year's event.





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. 26**  
**Mortimer's Monstrous Halloween**  
 3 p.m.-6 p.m.  
 Oakwood Lakes State Park  
 605-627-5441

**NOV. 2**  
**Wall Community Craft Show**  
 10 a.m.-3 p.m.  
 Wall, SD  
 605-279-2665

**NOV. 2**  
**Fall Fling Craft Show**  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m.  
 Dakota Christian School  
 Corsica, SD  
 605-366-7940

**NOV. 8-9**  
**Sioux Empire Arts & Crafts Show**  
 Friday, 12 p.m.-8 p.m.  
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-332-6004

**NOV. 9**  
**Deadwood's Big Whiskey Festival**  
 4 p.m.-8 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Deadwood, SD

**NOV. 22-JAN.5**  
**Winter Wonderland**  
 Nightly - 5 p.m.-12 a.m.  
 Falls Park  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-275-6060

**NOV. 9**  
**Christmas at the Homestead**  
 12 p.m.-4 p.m.  
 North Sioux City, SD  
 605-232-0873

**NOV. 9-10**  
**Zonta Craft & Vendor Show**  
 Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Ramkota Hotel  
 Pierre, SD  
 605-280-1511

**NOV. 16**  
**Festival of Trees**  
 6 p.m.  
 Lead, SD  
 605-584-2067

**NOV. 23-24**  
**Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival**  
 Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.  
 Sunday, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.  
 Aberdeen, SD

**NOV. 30**  
**A Hometown Christmas Market**  
 2 p.m.-6 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Elk Point, SD

**NOV. 29-DEC. 29**  
**Trees & Trains Exhibit at SD State Railroad Museum**  
 Hill City, SD  
 605-665-3636

**DEC. 1**  
**A Christmas Carol**  
 2 p.m.  
 Gayville Music Hall  
 Gayville, SD  
 605-624-2859

**DEC. 5**  
**Christmas on the Prairie**  
 4 p.m.  
 Main Street  
 Miller, SD

**DEC. 5**  
**Holiday Festival of Lights**  
 4 p.m.-7:30 p.m.  
 Yankton, SD  
 605-665-3636

**DEC. 6-8, 13-15**  
**A Sherlock Carol**  
 Dec. 6-7, 13-14, 7:30 p.m.  
 Dec. 8, 15, 2:30 p.m.  
 Corson, SD  
 mightycorson.com

**DEC. 7**  
**KJAM Parade of Lights**  
 5:30 p.m.  
 Madison, SD  
 605-256-4514

**DEC. 7**  
**Santa Day**  
 2 p.m.  
 Stockholm Buggy Museum  
 Stockholm, SD  
 605-467-3940

**DEC. 7-31**  
**Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens**  
 5 p.m.-9 p.m.  
 Brookings, SD  
 605-688-6707

**DEC. 14**  
**Parade of Lights**  
 Wessington, SD  
 605-359-2049

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