A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

FEM ELECTRIC
DECEMBER 2026 VOL. 76 NO. 12

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Christmas Storms

Christmas on Call
Pages 8-9

Light of Mine Ranch
Pages 12-13

Photo Submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative



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

October 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 October 20, 2026, pursuant to due call and notice. It being determined that a quorum was present, President Tom Thorpe called the meeting to order. Secretary Eric Odenbach kept the minutes of the meeting. The following directors were declared present by roll call: Josh Heinrich, Eric Odenbach, Tom Thorpe, Kelly Melius and Paula Petersen. Electrical Manager Ryan Holien, Director of Finance and Benefits Rhonda Tuscherer, Operation Manager Sean Christiansen, and CEO Scott Moore.

Guest Employee: Barb Schaefer

Changes to the agenda: 7 D. Additional rate discussion/SDREA Legislative Supper Aberdeen

Changes/Additions to Minutes from September 29, 2026, meeting: none

Next Meeting Date: After a review of the calendars, directors agreed that the next regular meeting of the board would be on Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. to be held at FEM Electric Board Room in Ipswich, South Dakota.

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

The board and staff watched NRECA Governance Video titled "A Discussion About Key Ratio Trend Analysis (KRTA)".

Moved by Josh Heinrich, seconded by Kelly Melius and carried to acknowledge the manager, and staff reports along with East River Electric load management report.

The board acknowledges receiving and reviewing September 2026 Cyber Security Report.

Resolutions and Contracts:
None

Membership Business:
Board acknowledged membership business.

New Memberships, Member Cancellations and Contracts:
Disconnects: Robin (Weigel) Wolff, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Kent Snow, Faulkton, SD, Lake House; Shirley Wolff, Leola, SD, Active Farm; Nathan Boe, Erhard, MN, Shop; Sharon Beitelspacher, Bowdle, SD, Grain Bin, Irrigation, Pasture Pumps - 5, Shop, Active Farm, Active Farm/Grain Bin; Bernadine Henderson, Ipswich, SD, Vacant Farm
Reconnects: Taylor & Emily Weigel, Ipswich, SD, Active Farm; Cody & Sarah Edgar, Rockham, SD, Lake House; Kevin & Tammy Heupel, Leola, SD, Active Farm, Shop; Mark & Tara Beitelspacher, Grain Bin, Irrigation, Pasture Pump – 2, Shop, Active Farm; MT Enterprises, Bowdle, SD, Pasture Pump – 3, Active Farm/Grain Bin; Max Henderson, Ipswich, SD, Vacant Farm
Contracts: Andrew Fuhrmann & Olivianne Stavick, Roscoe, SD, House
Retired Locations: Justin & Sarah Bieber, Bowdle, SD, Vacant Farm

Moved by Josh Heinrich seconded by Eric Odenbach and carried to approved service contract for Andrew Fuhrmann and Olivianne Stavick.

Moved by Kelly Melius seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve Electrical Market Rates for Agtegra Bowdle and Aberdeen Energy for 2027.

The FEM Electric member appreciation pancake breakfast will be Friday, January 22, 2027, at FEM Electric headquarters.

Capital Credits:
Estates: October 2026: one = $796.04
73 & Older: October 2026: None

Board acknowledged receipt of following financial business.

Financial Business: The board acknowledged reviewing the following financial information:

The check register for the month of September 2026 contained information on checks #36594 through #36662 and automatic payments/withdrawals for September 2026 totaling $479,792.95.

September 2026 financials were reviewed.

Continued on page 6

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

FEM ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

(USPS 189-720)

Board of Directors
Tom Thorpe, President
Kelly Melius, Vice President
Eric Odenbach, Secretary
Paula Petersen, Treasurer
Josh Heinrich, Asst. Secretary/ Treasurer
Vaughn Beck, Attorney

CEO/General Manager
Scott Moore
info@femelectric.coop

Management Staff
Sean Christiansen
Operations Manager
Ryan Holien
Electrical 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.

Subscription information: As part of their membership, FEM members devote $1.00 from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Nonmember subscriptions are available for $15 annually. (USPS 189-720) Periodical Postage Paid at Ipswich, SD 57451 and at additional offices.

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Design assistance by SDREA

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Scott Moore
General Manager/CEO

It's November 4th and yes hopefully the campaign commercials and unsolicited text messages are done for the time being. I hope everyone went out to vote, and by the time this article reaches you, the combines are headed to winter storage. I'm guessing many of our members have already or will be starting plans for 2027. FEM Electric is no different as we work through our annual budget and our work plans for 2027. History at FEM Electric shows that if we create and follow a good plan and budget our projects will be successful.

We are still operating in times of short supplies and high demand, which is a recipe for higher cost. Throwing in bad policies and unstable politics into the mix over the past six years means we've gone from sixty percent to four hundred percent increases for some material and higher annual operating costs. This isn't new news to our members who are dealing with everyday cost of living increases.

What is FEM Electric doing to contain cost? For the past twenty-six years FEM Electric has been replacing aging/original power lines and working to increase reliability and safety. Think back to the size of agriculture equipment just thirty years ago to today. One close call pertaining to powerlines is too many but with the conversion of overhead power lines to underground close calls are happening at a much lower rate. FEM Electric has a fairly new system that has been maintained and engineered to meet our members' current and future load growth. Over the past twenty years we have been able to lock in interest for money borrowed and repriced past loans at a much lower rate, which has been a great way to maintain costs. However, I must say interest rates have turned and are on the rise which will affect our bottom line moving forward. FEM Electric has strong equity and financials, but we need to meet certain banking financials that we monitor very closely.

Nationally and regionally, it seems

Continued on page 6

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.

Statement Mailing Dates

December 30, 2026 for December's energy
January 28, 2027 for January's energy

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

CHRISTMAS GIFT IDEAS FOR WINTER STORM READINESS

Some of the best Christmas gifts aren't the ones that get used right away.

A flashlight, emergency radio or box of freeze-dried meals may not be the most exciting thing under the tree, but when a South Dakota winter storm rolls in, practical gifts can quickly become some of the most valuable items in the house.

Winter weather can bring heavy snow, bitter cold, drifting roads and extended power outages. In rural areas, where homes may be miles from the nearest town, it can take longer for roads to reopen or help to arrive. This Christmas, consider giving something that can help friends and family stay safe, warm and prepared.

A portable radio with a weather band is a good place to start. Battery-powered or hand-crank models can provide weather alerts and emergency information even if the power is out or cellular service becomes unreliable. Many also include flashlights, USB charging ports and other emergency features. For someone who lives in a rural area or travels frequently during the winter, a weather radio can provide another way to stay informed when conditions change quickly.

Food is another important part of storm preparedness. Freeze-dried meals have a long shelf life and are easy to store, making them useful for emergency kits. Pair several meals with bottled water, shelf-stable snacks or an insulated thermos for a practical preparedness package. Canned goods, granola bars, dried fruit and other foods that do not require refrigeration can also help a household get through a period when roads are closed or travel is discouraged.

For the car, consider putting together a winter emergency kit. Useful items include a warm blanket, gloves, flashlight, jumper cables, ice scraper, first-aid supplies and nonperishable food. A compact shovel and traction aids can also come in handy if a vehicle becomes stuck in snow. Road flares or reflective warning triangles can help make a stranded vehicle more visible.

This is especially important in South Dakota and Minnesota, where a short drive can quickly turn into a long wait if snow begins to blow across rural highways. Even experienced winter drivers can find themselves dealing with whiteout conditions, stalled traffic or roads that close with little warning.



A portable power bank can help keep a cellphone charged during an outage, allowing someone to receive alerts, check road conditions or contact family and emergency services. Larger rechargeable battery packs can power multiple small devices, which may be handy in the event of an extended outage.

Warm clothing also makes a practical gift. Wool socks, insulated gloves, hand warmers and heavy blankets can provide extra protection from the cold at home or on the road. An insulated hat, neck gaiter or pair of winter boots can also be useful for anyone who spends time outdoors checking livestock, clearing snow or traveling between buildings.

Battery-powered lanterns and headlamps are another good option. A headlamp allows someone to keep both hands free while finding supplies or moving around a dark home. Lanterns can provide area lighting for a room without relying on candles. Consider including extra batteries – just in case.

Other practical ideas include a new carbon monoxide detector, fire extinguisher, first-aid kit or basic tool kit. As a gift for parents, grandparents and new homeowners, consider replacing their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.

While it's difficult to prepare for every possible emergency, having supplies on hand can help you and your loved ones stay comfortable, informed and safe until the storm passes or travel becomes safe again.

"Never drive high loads under low power lines!"



Artwork by Lydell Weaver

Lydell warns readers to never climb near power lines. Thank you for sharing, Lydell! Lydell's parents are Lyndon and Gwen Weaver, members of Dakota Energy 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.



Rise & DINE

COLD OATMEAL MUESLI

Ingredients:

½ cup raisins
½ cup old-fashioned oatmeal
1½ cups quick oatmeal
⅓ cup brown sugar
½ tsp. cinnamon
2 cups milk

Method

Mix all ingredients together. Cover and refrigerate overnight. Serve cold. If desired, add walnuts, apples or fresh berries just before serving.

Elaine Rieck
Southeastern Electric

BREAKFAST HOT DISH

Ingredients:

14 slices bread, divided
2 cups milk
½ lb. cubed ham
½ lb. sliced cheese
5 eggs
½ tbsp. mustard
⅓ cup melted butter

Method

Place 7 bread slices on bottom of greased 9x13 pan. Spread cheese and ham over bread slices.
Mix eggs, milk, and mustard, then pour over.

Tear the remaining 7 bread slices into pieces and sprinkle over the mixture. Pour melted butter over the bread pieces.

Bake 1 hour at 350°F.

Rowena Wipf
Northern Electric

OVERNIGHT COFFEE CAKE

Ingredients:

½ cup white sugar
½ cup brown sugar
¾ cup butter
1 cup buttermilk
2 eggs, beaten
2 cups flour
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder

Topping:
½ cup brown sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg (optional)
Nuts, as desired

Method

Cream together the butter, white sugar and brown sugar. Add the beaten eggs. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt, baking soda and baking powder. Add the dry ingredients to the butter mixture alternately with the buttermilk.

Spread the batter in a 9x13-inch baking pan. Combine the topping ingredients and sprinkle over the batter. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, bake at 350°F for 35 minutes or until done.

Rowena Wipf
Northern Electric

RECIPE CORRECTION: SWEDISH PANCAKES

Ingredients:

1½ cups flour
3 tbsp. sugar
½ tsp. salt
3 eggs
2 cups milk
2 tbsp. melted butter

Lois J. Larson
Clay-Union Electric

Method

Sift together the flour, sugar and salt. In a separate bowl, beat the eggs until thick and softly mounded. Add the milk and melted butter to the eggs, then add the flour mixture.

Lightly grease a griddle with butter. Spoon 1 tablespoon of batter onto the griddle for each pancake. Cook over medium heat until lightly browned on both sides.

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 2027. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

BOARD REPORT CONTINUED

Board Report continued from page 2

Quarterly Budget Projection with TIER along with loan summaries were reviewed.

Moved by Josh Heinrich, seconded by Paula Petersen and carried to approve and sign contract for 2026 Audit with Eide Bailly.

The board reviewed the 2027 employee wellness plan, the dollars will be included in the 2027 budget.

The board acknowledged receiving notice of CFC Interest Received (SCTC)

Moved by Eric Odenbach, seconded by Josh Heinrich and carried to approve board expense reports and attorney fees.

Legal Update:
Bylaw review Page 11 Section 4 through page 18 along with Statement of Nondiscrimination and Policy Manual Forward were reviewed. Further discussion on Page 14 of FEM Electric Bylaws Article VII (a) are being researched and discussed.

Meeting Report:
East River monthly board report was given by Kelly Melius and East River Video was also watched.

The safety meeting minutes from September 14, 2026 were acknowledged.

The Safety Committee meeting minutes from September 18, 2026 were acknowledged.

Adjourn: President Tom Thorpe declared the meeting adjourned.



Manager's Report continued from page 3

to be a different story. We have, and will continue to see, growth in generation and transmission facilities, and the cost to build or to restart generation facilities is not going down. I believe to have a strong rural economy we will experience growing pains, and that we're beginning to feel them now. We need to have stable and reliable infrastructure in place that is well maintained to allow future growth. We are on the right track thanks to strong communication, electric cooperatives, water systems, county and state roads and several agriculture value added plants.

FEM Electric plans to hold the course serving our members with safe, reliable, and affordable power.

Please call Sean Christiansen or Ryan Holien at 605-426-6891 if you are planning to add any additional load in 2027.





Prevent Holiday Fires...

Candles, fireplaces and decorations can turn festive into fiery. **Follow these tips to stay safe** and bright this holiday season.

Using candles with care

- Keep burning candles in sight.
- Use candles on sturdy, heat-safe surfaces, away from pets and kids.
- Choose electric candles near curtains, trees and other flammable decor.

Fireplace safety

- Keep mantel décor, such as stockings and greenery, away from flames.
- Don't burn trees, wreaths or wrapping paper. They can create dangerous sparks.
- Have fireplaces, chimneys and vents inspected annually. Follow manufacturer's instructions for electric fireplaces.

Holiday lighting

- Choose UL-certified lights.
- Replace lights with damaged wires or sockets.
- Connect only the recommended number of strands.
- Don't overload outlets or extension cords.
- Hang lights with clips, not tacks, nails or screws.
- Use outdoor-rated lights and GFCI protection outside.
- Keep cords and connections out of water and snow.
- Stay at least 10 feet from overhead power lines.

Christmas trees

- Water fresh trees daily.
- Choose a fire-resistant artificial tree.
- Keep away from heat sources, walkways and exits.
- Anchor to prevent tipping, especially around kids or pets.

Before you leave or go to bed:

Extinguish candles and fireplace fires.
Turn off holiday lights and decorations.

Learn more at: SafeElectricity.org®



CHRISTMAS ON CALL

Sometimes The Holidays Have to Wait

The 2016 Christmas Storm Europa left 23,000 members without power and hundreds of broken poles across the state. *Photo Submitted by East River Electric Power Cooperative*

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

On Christmas evening in 2016, West Central Electric Cooperative Foreman Dustin Vollmer, then a lineman, headed north from Midland to investigate outages as a blizzard swept across western South Dakota. They made it about 12 miles.

"You couldn't even see the reflectors on the side of the road," Vollmer recalled. "We ended up pulling over and sat there till about 4 in the morning."

When conditions improved enough to turn around, the trucks had made their own snow drifts, and Vollmer's truck overheated twice on the trip back to Midland. More work awaited.

The 2016 Winter Storm Europa brought blizzard conditions, freezing rain and powerful winds across South Dakota on Christmas Day, damaging hundreds of utility poles. According to the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, more than 23,000 members of at least 20 electric cooperatives statewide were without power by Christmas evening. Restoration work would stretch into the new year.

Vollmer joined West Central Electric in 1999 after graduating from line school at Mitchell Technical College. Even in high school, he understood that linemen sometimes worked holidays. "I realized it could be any time, just whenever the lights go out," Vollmer said.

When Winter Storm Europa caused widespread outages across West Central Electric's service territory, neighboring cooperatives sent crews and equipment to help restore power. Vollmer remembers working alongside linemen from nearby West River Electric Association, one of several cooperatives that came to their aid. Nine years later, Vollmer was able to return the favor when a storm struck Black Hills Electric's service territory in the days leading up to Christmas.



Dustin Vollmer and other West Central Linemen get the power back on during the holidays. *Photo Submitted by West Central Electric Cooperative*

A Return To The Black Hills

On Dec. 18, 2025, winds exceeding 100 mph swept across western South Dakota, uprooting trees, breaking utility poles and leaving more than 11,000 Black Hills Electric Cooperative meters without power. More than 96% of the co-op's electrical system was affected, making it the largest outage event in Black Hills Electric's history.

With damage spread throughout its service territory, Black Hills Electric requested assistance from neighboring cooperatives. Crews and equipment arrived from across western South Dakota, including Vollmer's crew from West Central Electric.

Vollmer was back to work over the Christmas holiday, honoring the cooperative spirit. He said getting around was easier than it had been during the 2016 blizzard, but widespread tree damage made restoration difficult in the Black Hills' rugged terrain. Crews worked to clear fallen trees, replace poles and repair damaged lines throughout the service territory.

Altogether, 55 additional linemen from six neighboring cooperatives and a local contractor assisted Black Hills Electric. Crews worked 12- to 16-hour shifts, prepared to remain through Christmas if the power wasn't restored in time.

"All the outside crews said they weren't leaving," recalled Bill Brisk, manager of operations at Black Hills Electric. "They stayed to help us finish."

By Christmas Eve, nearly all of Black Hills Electric's members had power again, allowing the visiting crews to head home. Black Hills Electric employees continued limited restoration work through Christmas, while Vollmer made it home to Midland late Christmas Eve.

The Families Behind The Work

Vollmer was fortunate to spend much of Christmas with his family following both storms, but not every lineman made it home for the holidays. During the 2016 storm, some employees were called back from trips while others spent days repairing power lines.

Ken Schlimgen, former general manager of Central Electric Cooperative, also acknowledged the sacrifices made by employees' families.

"The individuals who receive the least amount of credit for their role are the spouses and family members," Schlimgen wrote in his 2017 Cooperative Connections column following the Europa storm.

When the first call comes, linemen rarely know whether they'll find a small repair or widespread damage. Families have to plan around that uncertainty. Vollmer's family understands the demands.

"They know what it is," Vollmer said. "People out of power, you gotta go."

Vollmer said West Central Electric supports employees when personal or medical circumstances arise, an understanding that works both ways. When a major storm hits, employees know their coworkers and members are depending on them.

Even cooperative members often return that commitment. Vollmer said members offer assistance when a truck gets stuck or crews need help reaching damaged equipment.

"We got real good consumers," he said. "You could usually find somebody. They'll drop everything and come help."

That willingness to help extends across cooperative service territories, where crews regularly assist neighboring cooperatives during major outages. For Vollmer, it's an expectation shared by the people who have worked alongside him throughout his career.

"When stuff gets bad, you're expected to come help," Vollmer said. "You're part of the team."



The 2025 Black Hills Christmas Storm not only left 11,000 members without power, but also uprooted trees in the area, damaging lines as they fell.
Photo Submitted by Black Hills Electric Cooperative

FEM ELECTRIC'S ANNUAL

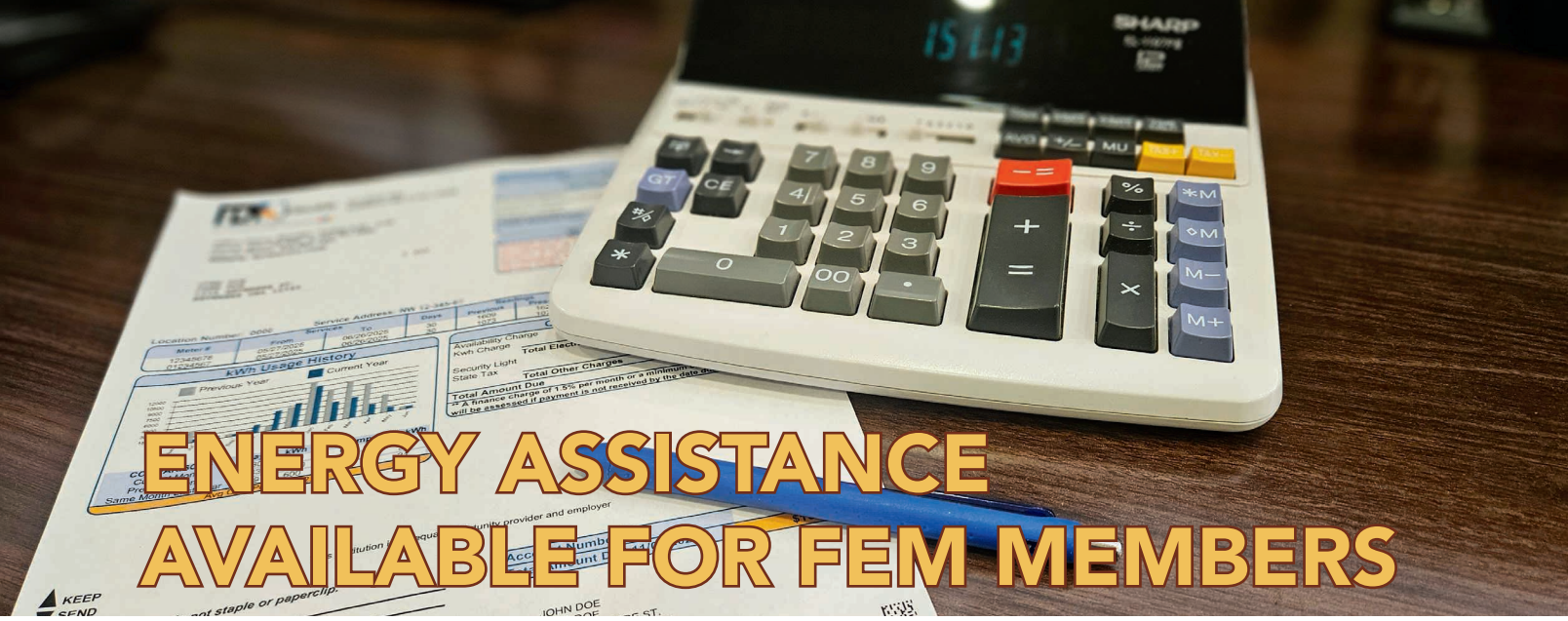
PANCAKE & SAUSAGE BREAKFAST

JANUARY 22ND, 2027
NORTH SHOP
7 AM - 10 AM



ACCEPTING FREE WILL DONATIONS OF PAPER PRODUCTS AND CLEANING SUPPLIES FOR OUR LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES.

800 5TH AVE. - IPSWICH, SD



ENERGY ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR FEM MEMBERS

With electrical rates increasing once again in 2027, we are providing information for those who may need help with their electricity bills. The State of South Dakota has several assistance programs available.

Through the Department of Social Services (DSS) there are several assistance programs such as Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) and Weatherization Assistance to help lower your energy costs.

Members who need assistance will need to fill out a low income energy assistance application which can be found at dss.sd.gov and navigating to the economic assistance section of the website.

To be eligible for assistance, members must complete an application, have a total gross income that does not exceed maximum income guidelines (listed below), and must be responsible for paying home heating costs.

The following income rates are for the 2025-2026 year. Check the DSS website for updated rates in 2027.

Household Size	Maximum 3-Month Income
1 Person	$7,825
2 Person	$10,575
3 Person	$13,325
4 Person	$16,075
5 Person	$18,825
6 Person	$21,575
7 Person	$22,514
8 Person	$23,014
9 Person	$23,514
10 Person	$24,431

The Energy Crisis Intervention Program is also available for those who are at risk of disconnection during the heating months. Do not hesitate to reach out if you need help.

For other questions about you bill, you can contact FEM Electric at 605-426-6891 or 1-800-587-5880.





The Foster Care Shop offers free toys and essentials to local foster families in Black Hawk, S.D.
Photo courtesy of Light of Mine Ranch

FOSTER CARE
THE COMMUNITY'S KIDS

Light of Mine Ranch Helps Black Hills Foster Families Find the Supplies and Support They Need

Frank Turner
frank.turner@sdrea.coop

When children visiting the Foster Care Shop in Black Hawk, S.D., ask Jordan Combs how much something costs, he gets to give them good news. Everything is free.

Combs said children's eyes light up when they hear the news. They tell their foster parents, then make another trip around the shop.

"I'm the yes guy," Combs said. "If you ask me if you can have it, I'm going to say yes."

Combs and his wife, Mallory, founded Light of Mine Ranch, which provides clothing, baby equipment and household supplies at no cost to foster families.

The inspiration for the Foster Care Shop began when Jordan and Mallory Combs started fostering in 2016.

The couple had been considering international adoption when they attended a community dinner. Local agencies described the need for foster parents, and that's the moment they decided to foster.

"We just felt like God put it on our heart," Combs said.

Since then, the couple has provided long-term foster care for 10 children. When including emergency placements and short stays, Combs estimates that number exceeds 40. Today, the couple has five children, including two daughters they adopted.

As they cared for children and got to know other foster parents, they saw how stretched families could become. Everyday chores like grocery shopping became more complicated. Eating out became more expensive, and they wanted to help ease those burdens.

In 2020, the couple began building a nonprofit. They envisioned homes for foster families on a ranch, giving parents the space and support to focus on children. When housing prices did



Jordan and Mallory Combs have five children, including two they adopted.
Photo courtesy of Light of Mine Ranch

not cooperate with their vision, they put their dream on hold and began helping families on a smaller scale.

"We started looking at what impact can we make now," Combs said.

Light of Mine Ranch helped pay sports fees, purchase equipment and provide bicycles and bunk beds. As community members learned about the work, donations began filling the Combs family's garage.

At the same time, Combs noticed a recurring problem. Someone would offer a crib on Facebook when no family needed one. A few weeks later, a foster family would ask for a crib.

The couple decided to create a shop where donated supplies could be stored until a family needed them.

The Combs family opened the Foster Care Shop in June 2025, giving families a central place to find everything from strollers and shoes to meals and school supplies.

"We're trying to be your first stop to get all the supplies that you need," Combs said.

The shop also serves kinship families, including grandparents, aunts and uncles caring for relatives' children. Relatives often have little time to prepare, Combs said. A grandparent whose own children are grown may suddenly need a crib, a car seat and clothing for an infant.

The organization also assists some families referred by the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

Combs remembers one family relieved to avoid spending an afternoon driving between stores to gather everything they needed.

"They were happy that they didn't have to spend the whole afternoon shopping around town," Combs said.

Combs recalled another girl who had not started school by mid-October because of her family's circumstances.

"She was able to come here and get all her school supplies to get started for school," Combs said.

Since its grand opening, community donations have filled the shop faster than Combs expected. The same moment toys run low after an event, a donor always seems to arrive with boxes of puzzles, toys and dollhouses. When a family picks up a crib, Combs said another donation seems to take its place.

While the shop helps foster families with everyday expenses, the couple is still working toward a place for families and children to stay.

"It'd be a six-bedroom home," Combs said. The organization has identified a prospective site south of Rapid City, but Combs said there is no construction timeline.

The home would provide temporary accommodations for children awaiting placement. Combs said it could also provide space for foster families to rest and take a break. Having several bedrooms would help accommodate sibling groups and children of different ages.

Whether a child stays with a foster family for a weekend or a year, Combs believes the time spent together matters.

"You can make it meaningful to them for that time," he said.

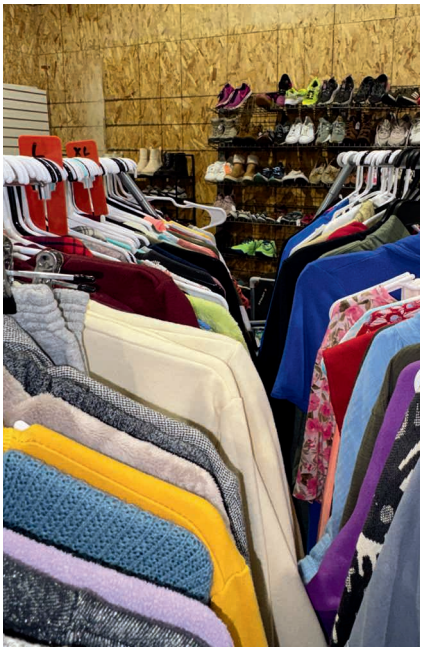
Private donations fund the organization's work and local volunteerism keeps it running, Combs said. They are always looking for more volunteers to sort donations and organize supplies.

Combs hopes the community will also rally together to help make foster families feel less alone. Taking children into a home is a family's decision, he said, but helping care for them is something the wider community can share.

"These are the community's kids," Combs said.



The Foster Care Shop has everything a foster family might need - everything from toys and strollers to racks of clothes. *Photos courtesy of Light of Mine Ranch*



Help or get involved

Families seeking assistance and people interested in helping can visit lightofmineranch.com for information. Combs recommends checking current hours and donation needs before bringing items to the shop.



KINDERGARTEN CLASS LEARNS ABOUT FEM ELECTRIC

IPSWICH SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN CLASS TAKES TOURS OF LOCAL BUSINESSES

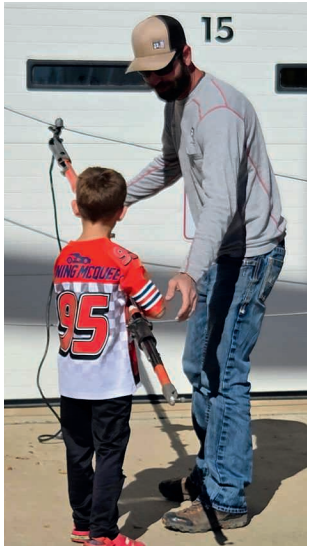
On October 1st, FEM Electric hosted the Ipswich Kindergarten class for a safety demonstration, and to talk about how line workers help in their communities.

The class has been hosting businesses in the classroom and touring some locations for social studies. The unit is called "Community Workers" and the students are learning about services that are provided to their families.



Sean Christiansen, Line Superintendent, talked about what linemen do, transformers, types of wire line workers use and electrical safety. The class was instructed to stay away from downed power lines and to not touch big green boxes.

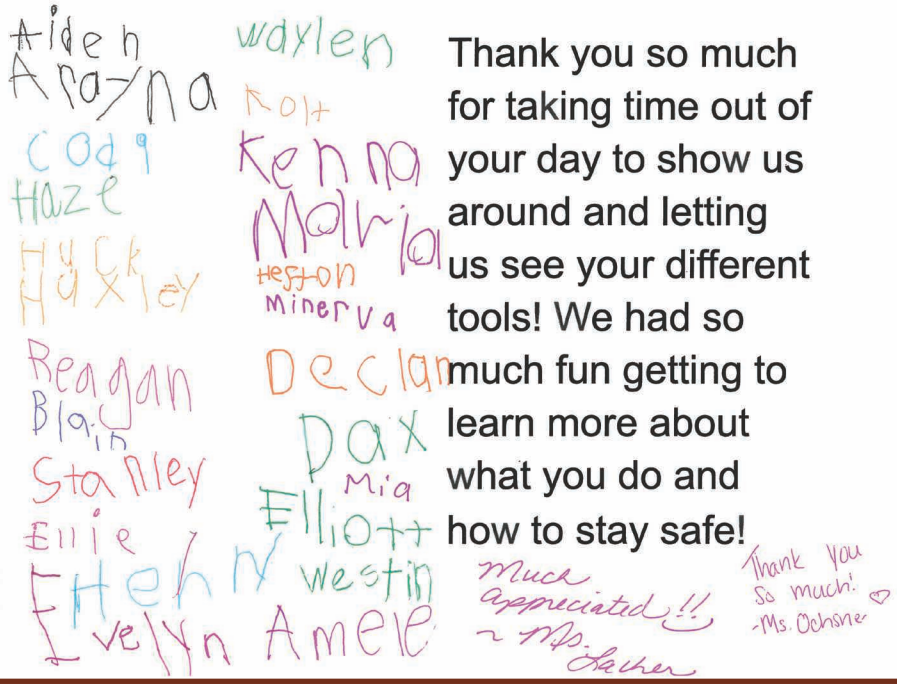
Justin Larson, Foreman, demonstrated how climbers fit over line workers boots, and students were able to try on a pair of line worker's gloves.



Finally, Sean demonstrated how a hot stick worked, and let a handful of kindergartners try it out on a makeshift power line. Once the demonstration was done, the kids were sent back to school with a goodie bag full of safety activity sheets, a buildable bucket truck, a coloring book and more.







FEM ELECTRIC *presents the* YOUTH TOUR

JUNE 17-23, 2027

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





DEADLINE: Dec 22 2026

What You Need to Know:

- **Cost:** Nothing!
- **When:** June 17-23, 2027
- **Sign-up:** Fill out an application from our website or from your school counselor
- **Eligibility:** HS Junior or Seniors
- **Win:** FEM Electric's selection committee will evaluate all applicants. 3 students will be selected.

Contact Us:
Crystal Thorson
thorson@femelectric.coop
PO Box 468
Ipswich, SD 57451
www.femelectric.coop



NOV. 24-DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
Pierre, SD
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

Photo courtesy of Travel South Dakota

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.

NOV. 20-JAN. 3
Winter Wonderland
5 p.m.-12 a.m.
Falls Park
Sioux Falls, SD
605-275-6060

NOV. 25-JAN. 2
1880 Holiday Express
222 Railroad Ave.
Hill City, SD
605-574-2222

NOV. 27-DEC. 31
Hall of Trees
Sat.-Thurs.: 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Fri.: 10 a.m.-8 p.m.
Mead Museum
Yankton, SD

NOV. 27-DEC. 27
Christmas Nights of Light
5:30-8:30 p.m.
Storybook Island
1301 Sheridan Lake Rd.
Rapid City, SD
605-342-6357

DEC. 3
City of Yankton Holiday Festival of Lights
4 p.m. Family Activities
6 p.m. Lighted Parade
Yankton, SD
605-665-5234

DEC. 4
'Twas the Night Before Christmas Soup & Sandwich Lunch
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
St. Pius X Catholic Church
Onida, SD
605-765-4841

DEC. 4-5
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Civic Center
Hot Springs, SD
951-591-2335

DEC. 5
KJAM Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Madison, SD
AmazingMadison.com

DEC. 5
Christmas in the Valley
2-9 p.m.
Irene, SD

DEC. 5-JAN. 6
Garden Glow at McCrory Gardens
5-9 p.m.
Closed Dec. 24-25, Jan. 1
Brookings, SD
605-688-6707

DEC. 5
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
4 p.m.
Summit Activities Center
Yankton, SD
605-665-5234

DEC. 6
KCBA Hometown Christmas
10 a.m.-4 p.m. (MST)
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

DEC. 6
Christmas on the Prairie Concert
St. Anthony's Catholic Church
Hoven, SD
605-948-2451

DEC. 10-13
Christmas at the Cathedral
Thurs. & Fri.: 7:30 p.m.
Sat.: 1 p.m., 7:30 p.m.
Sun. 2 p.m., 7:30 p.m.
Cathedral of St. Joseph
Sioux Falls, SD
Tickets: 605-988-3765

DEC. 12
Lake Campbell Lutheran Church Cookie Walk
9 a.m.
46610 219th St.
Volga, SD
605-864-9907

DEC. 12
Frontier Christmas
10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Fort Sisseton State Park
Lake City, SD
605-448-5474

DEC. 12
American Legion Chili Cookoff
11 a.m.
The Alliance; 1600 W. Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

DEC. 20
Bethlehem in Brule County
5 p.m.
Ag Building
Pukwana, SD
605-730-0553

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.