



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



RENVILLE-SIBLEY
DECEMBER 2022 VOL. 23 NO. 8

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Little cars, big smiles

**Smile makers build
Toys for God's Kids**
Pages 8-9

**Treatment center
changes young lives**
Pages 12-13



Asher Smith plays with a few
of the thousands of small
wooden cars built each year
by Toys for God's Kids

Necessity is the mother of co-op innovation

Innovation is part of the rural electric cooperative DNA. Farmers and other rural leaders innovated to form rural electric co-ops in the 1930s and 40s to provide themselves electric service when no one else would. Minnesota cooperatives average 6-7 members per mile of distribution line, whereas investor-owned and municipal utilities serve much more densely populated areas, averaging almost 35 customers per mile. An electric co-op has to spread its fixed costs over far fewer customers, creating a highly cost-conscious culture in which co-op leaders go all-out to create value out of every dollar charged to co-op members.

In mid-August, MiEnergy Cooperative welcomed the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission to its headquarters in Rushford to hear from a number of Minnesota electric co-operatives about how they are innovating to keep electric service affordable and reliable. It was “Co-op Innovation Day” for the Minnesota PUC – a terrific meeting in a beautiful rural setting.

After a tour of the MiEnergy facilities and a welcome by Rep. Gene Pelowski, one of MREA’s Legislators of the Year for 2022, Minnesota PUC Vice Chair Joe Sullivan called the meeting to order.

Renville-Sibley CEO DeeAnne Norris started the day off with an inspiring presentation and video about a project she partnered on with Gabe Chan of the Electric Coop Innovation Center at the University of Minnesota. After weeks of classroom instruction, DeeAnne and Gabe took a number of graduate students on a hands-on tour of electric co-ops in South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota, to teach the next generation of students about the “how and why” of the electric co-op non-profit business model and the importance of electric co-ops to their communities. She emphasized the need for more partnerships like this one between universities and cooperatives, tying it back to the early success of rural electrification.

Following DeeAnne, the commissioners heard from Joyce Peppin, Dairyland Power’s general counsel. Joyce discussed Dairyland Power’s exploration of the potential for advanced nuclear technology to help maintain reliable, affordable wholesale power supply in a decarbonizing economy. Joyce shared details of the work Dairyland is doing with NuScale Power to evaluate

NuScale’s small modular reactor technology that can provide clean, dispatchable, flexible baseload power at a potentially affordable cost.

Next, Brian Krambeer, the CEO of MiEnergy Co-op, discussed how his cooperative is driving innovation for his members through partnerships and pilots for electric vehicles, residential battery storage, broadband, home security, distributed solar and more. MiEnergy serves members in Minnesota and Iowa, has a density of less than 4 members per mile, and has the highest penetration of distributed solar in the state. MiEnergy’s experience is a telling example of co-op innovation and the fact that Minnesota electric cooperatives are, in many cases, leading the power sector’s ongoing transformation for the benefit of their members.

Ryan Hentges, CEO of Minnesota Valley Electric in Jordan, MN, shared how MVEC drives value to its members through the sophisticated use of their advanced metering data. MVEC uses this data in conjunction with updated systems and innovative programs to create an ecosystem of innovation that helps ensure highly reliable and cost-effective service. Ryan also emphasized the importance of protecting the confidentiality of this sensitive member data. Ryan’s presentation underscored the fact that Minnesota’s rural co-ops are generally far ahead of IOUs in using AMI to benefit their members. 962200

The Commission then heard from Tim Sullivan, the CEO of Wright-Hennepin Electric Cooperative in Rockford, MN. Tim talked about the importance of beneficial electrification and the work they are doing to pull out all the stops to electrify more of the economy in their area. As electric supply gets cleaner and less expensive than other fuels, using electricity instead of those other fuels drives down emissions and saves members money. Tim also talked about the costs and frustration caused by congestion on the high-voltage transmission network, and asked the MN PUC to stay focused on reliability and share the challenge of the further build-out of transmission in the state.

It was a wonderful meeting – the co-op family truly appreciated the time and engagement of commissioners and staff.

MREA will look forward to finding other opportunities to tell policy makers of the importance of co-op innovation to the vitality of Minnesota’s rural economies and the members they serve.



Mike Bull
MN Rural Electric
Association

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

RENVILLE-SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

(USPS 019-074)

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Web site: www.renville-sibley.coop

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Stay safe during severe winter weather

When severe winter weather hits, power outages can occur. Roadways can be dangerous. Do all you can to prepare your pantry, home and car for the next severe winter storm. Once you are ready, watch and listen for weather bulletins mentioning winter storms, blizzard warnings or windchill dangers.

Supplies for the storm: At home, have enough nonperishable food, water and medical supplies/medicines for 72 hours. Store one gallon of water per person per day. Have cell phones and chargers, as well as backup charger sources, ready. Gather important documents and medical records. Protect your pets and make sure you have enough supplies for them as well. Also have these items ready: a first-aid kit, a flashlight and batteries, hand sanitizer, blankets, and warm clothing.

Readying the house: Weatherproof your home ahead of winter by caulking windows and doors and looking for air leaks. Inspect chimney flues for wood stoves or wood-burning fireplaces. Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors on each floor of your home. Protect pipes from freezing.

Prepare your vehicle with an emergency kit: According to Consumer Reports, it can be cheaper to buy a prepared emergency kit than to purchase items individually. A kit typically includes battery booster cables, an ice scraper, a portable shovel, flashlights, a signaling cone, backup batteries for the flashlight, roadside triangles, a reflective vest, a basic first-aid kit (add in what is needed for individual needs) and a cell phone charger.

In addition, your car or truck should also be stocked with gloves, a blanket, a rain poncho, wipes, rags, boots, and a hat. It cannot hurt to also have bottled water and nonperishable snacks in your vehicle in case you get stranded.

Prepare your vehicle: Complete annual maintenance, test the car battery and cooling system, use winter tires, and replace them if the tread is less than 2/32 of an inch, check tire pressure and wiper blades, add wiper fluid rated for less than minus 30 degrees and keep the gas tank at least half full.

Know that when the power goes out, we work hard to restore it safely and efficiently.

Thank You Notes

What a nice surprise to receive the call that I had won the leaf blower from the Farmfest drawing! It has come in very handy even before all the leaves fell. Thank you very much!

Connie Mulder

On behalf of the entire Corn Capital Days Planning Committee, we want to thank you and your organization for your generous donation towards our week-long celebration. Our goal is to

make each year better than the last, and that wouldn't be possible without your donation. Your gift goes a long way to making Corn Capital Days successful!

Corn Capital Days Planning Committee

Thank you for allowing me to get the scholarship from the random drawing at the annual meeting to help pay for my education at Ridgewater.

Kayli Ryks

Deck your halls with home safety in mind

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.

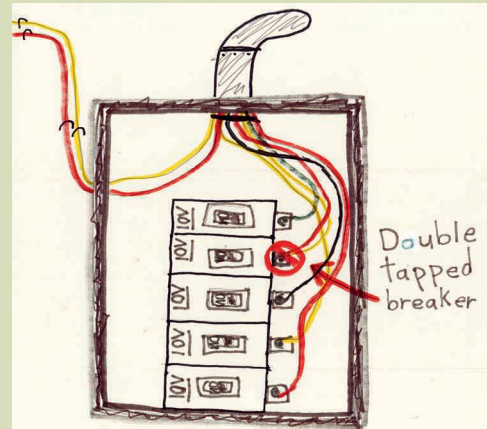


A NEW TEACHING TOOL FOR SOLAR POWER EDUCATION



Rushmore Electric and Touchstone Energy have joined together to construct a demo trailer designed to teach co-op members across the state more about how solar power functions. The trailer is equipped with fold-out collection panels and also battery storage capability. Co-op energy experts use the trailer to frame discussions about net metering, interconnection agreements and more.

To see a video of the trailer and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



Don't play on transformer boxes

Olaf Sahlstrom

Olaf Sahlstrom, 9, shares a tip he learned from his parents, Ben and Naomi Sahlstrom: Double-tapped breakers are unsafe and can lead to overheating, arcing, and electrical fires. The Sahlstroms reside in Tracy, MN and are members of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

CHRISTMAS DESSERTS

PEANUT BUTTER PIE

Ingredients:

1 heaping c. peanut butter
1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
(softened)
1 8 oz. tub cool whip (thawed)
1/2 c. milk
2 c. powdered sugar graham
cracker pie crust (prepared)
Crushed Butterfingers or Reeses
for garnish

METHOD

Thoroughly mix peanut butter and cream cheese. Add 1/2 cup milk and slowly add 2 cups powdered sugar. Mix well. Fold in cool whip. Put in a prepared graham cracker crust. Makes two 9" pies or one 10" pie with a little extra. Top with crushed candy. Place in freezer until frozen. Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving.

Elaine Rieck, Harrisburg

HOLIDAY HOT CHOCOLATE

Ingredients:

8 qt. box powdered milk
1 lb. can Nestles Cocoa Mix
7-8 oz. jar powdered creamer
3 c. powdered sugar
1/3 c. cocoa

METHOD

Mix in order given in large bowl. Put in air tight container. Use 1/4 cup mix per cup of hot water. Makes about 16-cup mix.

Phyllis Niemann, Clear Lake

MOM'S CHRISTMAS DESSERT

Ingredients:

2-1/2 c. Rice Krispies
1/2 c. light brown sugar
1 c. slivered almonds or toasted
nut meats
1/2 c. butter, melted
1/2 gal. vanilla ice cream
1 can pie cherries
1/2 tsp. almond flavoring

METHOD

Mix first four ingredients together. Spread half mixture in a 9x13 pan evenly. Cut and press vanilla ice cream on top and spread remaining mixture on top. Freeze. When ready to serve, stir pie filling and almond flavoring together and heat on stove top or microwave and use for topping individual pieces.

Patty Sinning, Lennox

GINGERBREAD KISSED THUMBPRINT COOKIES

Ingredients:

3 c. flour
2 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. salt
3/4 c. (1-1/2 sticks) butter,
softened
3/4 c. firmly packed brown sugar
1/2 c. molasses
1 egg
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
1/4 c. granulated sugar
60 milk chocolate kisses

METHOD

Mix flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg and salt in large bowl. Set aside. Beat butter and brown sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Add molasses, egg and vanilla; mix well. Gradually beat in flour mixture on low speed until well mixed. Press dough into a thick flat disk. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight. Preheat oven to 350°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in granulated sugar to coat. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake 8-10 minutes or until edges of cookies begin to brown. Immediately press a chocolate candy into center of each cookie. Remove to wire racks; cool completely. Store cookies in airtight container up to 5 days.

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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

Are you interested in a new adventure?

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is beginning to plan for the 85th Annual meeting of the membership that will be held on March 30, 2023 at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls, Minnesota. Three (3) directors will be elected during that time, each for a 3-year term.

The First District, consisting of the townships of Cornish, Severance and Moltke in Sibley County; the townships of Ridgely and West Newton in Nicollet County; and the townships of Cairo, Wellington, Martinsburg, Camp, Bandon and Palmyra in Renville County is represented by Alan Neyers, Whitey Hinderman and Kylie Rieke. Kylie Rieke's term will expire in 2023.

The Second District, consisting of the townships of Honner and Delhi in Redwood County; and the townships of Beaver Falls, Flora, Henryville, Birch Cooley, Norfolk, Melville, Bird Island and Kingman in Renville County is represented by Helen Ruebel, Wayland Zaske and Matt Haubrich. Matt Haubrich's term will expire in 2023.

The Third District, consisting of the townships of Roseland and Holland in Kandiyohi County; Rheiderland in Chippewa County the townships of Troy, Winfield, Emmet, Crooks, Sacred Heart, Hawk Creek, Ericson and Wang in Renville County is represented by Gary Eekhoff, Gary Peterson and Roger Manthei. Roger Manthei's term will expire in 2023.

As stated in the Renville-Sibley by-laws, the following is the Qualifications and Tenure for the position of Director:

Each director shall be a member of the Cooperative and shall be elected by the members within their respective district at the annual meeting of the members for a term of three years. No member shall be eligible to become or remain a director or to hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who is not a bona fide resident in the area served by the Cooperative, or who is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or space heating/cooling appliances, fixtures, or supplies to the members. When a membership is held jointly by two or more persons, including husband and wife, only one of such joint tenants may be elected a director, provided, however, that neither one shall be eligible to become a director, unless all shall meet the qualifications herein set forth.

Director qualifications required for service to the cooperative shall include:

- A. Must be an individual and must be at least 18 years of age.
- B. Must be competent and able to execute

a contract.

- C. Must not have been convicted of a felony or gross misdemeanor during the preceding 5 years prior to becoming a director for the Cooperative or during the period while serving as a director.
- D. Must have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- E. Must make a reasonable effort to become and remain knowledgeable about special issues regarding electric cooperatives by attending training, workshops and seminars.
- F. Must attend at least three-fourths (3/4) of all monthly scheduled board meetings during any twelve (12) month period.

Upon becoming a candidate for and/or to remain a Director, an individual must complete an annual conflict of interest disclosure form, approved by the Board of Directors. All Directors and/or Director candidates must comply with or meet the following conflict of interest qualifications:

- A. Shall not be a close relative of an existing Director, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative other than an existing Director who will cease being a Director upon the candidate assuming office;
- B. Within 5 years immediately prior to becoming a Director, shall not have been a Cooperative Officer, employee, agent or representative of the Cooperative or any subsidiary or affiliated company;
- C. Shall not be employed by, materially affiliated with, nor share a material financial interest with any current Director;
- D. Shall not be engaged in any business, nor employed by, nor materially affiliated with, nor have a material financial interest in any individual or entity that:
 - 1. Is regularly, directly, and substantially competing with the Cooperative or any other entity that the Cooperative controls or in which the Cooperative owns a majority interest (Cooperative Subsidiary).
 - 2. Is regularly selling goods and services to the Cooperative or the Cooperative Subsidiary.
 - 3. Possesses a substantial conflict of interest with the Cooperative or the Cooperative subsidiary.
- E. A former Director is ineligible for employment by the Cooperative for 5 years following the end of the tenure as a Director.

As a Director, the member agrees to:

- Abide by, promote and uphold the Articles of Incorporation and By-laws, both of which can be found on our

website, and Policies of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

- Attend regular and special Board meetings of the Cooperative.
- Attend, when appointed, committee meetings of the Cooperative.

If anyone should decide to seek candidacy for the board of directors, there are many rewards to be enjoyed when elected. A director has the opportunity to demonstrate their leadership quality and increase their knowledge within the cooperative business environment and the electric industry. As a director, this person could play a significant role in the future development of Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association.

A director also has a very important responsibility which is to uphold and abide by the bylaws of the cooperative. Directors are to act as the trustees for the assets of the cooperative and are assigned the duties of formulating, approving and reviewing the policies that provide guidelines for the cooperative.

The board is responsible for sending representatives to the affiliated association meetings that often include voting requirements. They include East River Electric Power Cooperative, Minnesota Rural Electric Association, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, National Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, CoBank, Cooperative Network and the National Rural Electric Association.

Directors attend seminars and meetings of several organizations to learn about the industry. Directors are asked to lobby and remain informed on legislative issues that could impact this industry and/or the cooperative way of doing business. The Board meets monthly and reviews financial reports, work plans, annual audits, planning documents and evaluates the cooperative operations while approving budgets and purchases.

Most of all, a director should be available to visit with their constituents and have a genuine spirit of helping others at all times.

Board meetings are typically held on the fourth Tuesday of every month, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in December, January and February and beginning at 8:00 a.m. the rest of the year. Board meetings will be held in person or via Zoom. The estimated time needed to be committed annually is approximately 30 days which includes monthly meetings and committee assignments. Directors are compensated per diem for their time as well as all personal expenses.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate for the Renville-Sibley Board of Directors, contact the Renville-Sibley office at 800-826-2593 before January 3rd for further information.

New facility update: Project remains on schedule

Renville-Sibley's new facility project remains on schedule.

Installation of the precast wall and roof panels started on Oct. 10 with the last wall panel set on Oct. 25. Caulking between the precast panels took place as sections of the building were erected. Installation of the roof started the week of Oct. 24. The openings in the building will be temporarily enclosed to allow the building to be heated. Work activity will start in the shop, then proceed to

the office. Underground plumbing and electrical underground have started in the shop. When underground work is done, the shop will be fine-graded, and the in-floor heat tubing installed. The plan is to pour the floor in the shop in late November. Most likely, any additional site work will occur in the spring.

To watch the outside activity at the new facility, check out the video on our website: <https://rscpa.coop/news/renville-sibley-new-facility>

When you watch this video, it will seem like everything happened so fast right away then nothing happened for a bit. Then, when the walls and roof went up, there was a lot of activity on site. Once the walls and roof were installed, the contractors went to work inside the building so it will again appear as if nothing is happening at the site. However, there will be a lot of activity going on this winter to prepare for our move into the building in 2023.

Operation Round Up

The Operation Round Up Board of Trustees met on Tuesday, October 18. The following donations were approved:

- MACCRAY After Prom - \$500
 - Funds to support the after-prom activities
- Central Minnesota Christian School - \$500
 - Funds to support the after-prom activities
- BOLD After Prom - \$500
 - Funds to support the after-prom activities
- West Central MN CEO - \$500
 - MACCRAY, KMS, CMCS & RCW collaborative effort to teach students about entrepreneurship by directly working with area businesses.
- Cedar Mountain Imagination Library - \$500
 - Books for children from birth to age 5
- Historic Renville Preservation Commission - \$1,000
 - Repair the front entry ramp due to safety concerns on the existing ramp
- Splash Island Adventure Park - \$2,500
 - Support the building of a Splash Pad for the community to enjoy.
- Olivia Hospital & Clinic Foundation - \$1,000
 - Support the health of our communities through the Greatest Needs Fund, Good Samaritan Fund or any other area where funds are needed.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2023 at 3 p.m. The deadline for applications is Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2023. Applications for donations can be found at <https://rscpa.coop/operation-round>.

Scholar of the Month



Renville-Sibley Co-op Power, your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative, congratulates Madison Bentley from Renville County West High School on being selected as the October Scholar of the Month. Madison was nominated because she demonstrates the four pillars of Integrity, Accountability, Innovation, and Commitment by being involved in her school and community. Madison is a dependable student, respectful of her teachers and classmates, and strives to do her best. Not only is she involved in Student Council and the dance team, she also balances a job in the summer working within her community. Renville-Sibley Co-op Power salutes Madison Bentley as the October Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Month.



LeRoy Iedema, Richard Ringling and Duane Strand crank out nearly 60,000 toy cars each year from their 12x10-foot workshop in Platte.
Photo by Billy Gibson

Duane Strand gets lots of 'smileage' out of making toy cars for children

Billy Gibson

editor@sdrea.coop

Frustrated moms across the ages have been searching for a surefire method for getting an unruly child to simmer down.

Duane Strand is pretty sure he's found a failsafe solution: toy cars.

Several years ago, Strand began building tiny wooden cars in his nondescript backyard shed in Platte. He recalls visiting Pierre one evening and having dinner at a local restaurant when a young boy suddenly started pitching a fit and hollering at the top of his lungs.

Strand just happened to have one of the cars in his pocket. He reached out and handed it to the child and was rather amazed at the result. Not only did the whining stop forthwith, but that boy's frown turned upside down as the

kid started beaming from ear to ear.

"He quit yelling right then and there. His whole attitude changed," Strand recalls. "These cars really have a soothing effect on the kids."

That's the impact Strand is shooting for as he and his three-man team of retirees crank out nearly 60,000 toy cars each year. They're looking to squeeze all the "smileage" they can get out of the toy cars they build.

The main construction crew includes retired farmer Richard Ringling and retired mechanic LeRoy Iedema. Ringling usually works the drill press to create holes in the wood where the axles will go. Then Iedema follows up by pressing the wheels onto the axles. He came up with a way to make sure the wheels roll straight and stay in place and dares anyone to try and pull off a wheel.

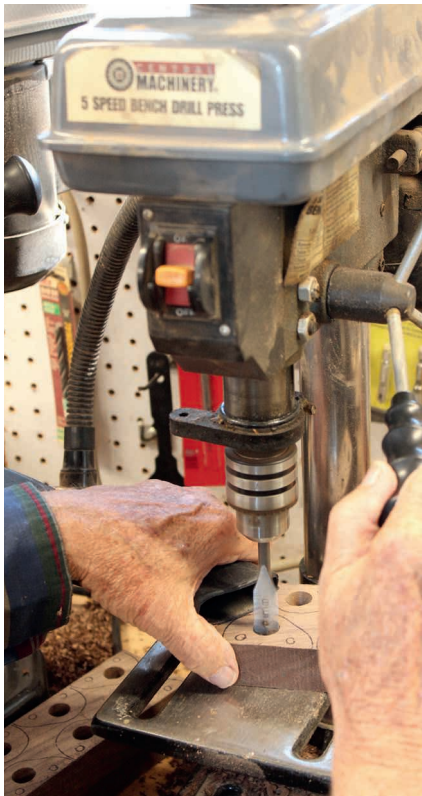
There are others who join in the

process: Justin Kok cuts the wood into manageable blocks; Brett Wynia performs repairs on the drill presses, band saws, sanders, routers and other pieces of equipment when they break down; and Curtis Versteeg helps to sand down the rough surfaces on the cars.



Toy cars are distributed by military personnel serving overseas.

And just down the road from the shop is the Platte Lumber Yard, where many of the material supplies are stored until needed for production. Strand said it was the folks down at the lumber yard who initiated the vital connection with



Dustin Knutson of Boyds Hardwood Gunstock supplies the toy makers with the laminated wood used to create the tiny cars (inset) for worldwide distribution. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Boyds Hardwood Gunstock that keeps the operation humming along.

“Without Boyds we wouldn’t be able to do any of this,” Strand said.

Dustin Knutson, a member of Central Electric Cooperative and part owner of the company that bills itself as the largest after-market gun stock maker in the world, is a Shriner with a heart for community service and said he was all-in when Strand approached him about supporting the program by supplying excess wood.

“They’re really easy to work with,” he said, noting that he keeps one of the cars on his desk. “They take whatever they can get and they show up consistently. We started saving off-cut blocks of wood specifically for the cars. The laminated wood works well because it’s colorful and looks good and the kids can pick out their favorite one.”

Strand’s distribution system is a bit scatter shot but he still manages to send them all over the globe. Anyone he knows who is planning a trip gets a supply of cars. Knutson, for instance, takes them with him when he travels for business or pleasure, whether vacationing in Mexico or hunting in Africa.

“People in America may think these are just simple toys, but I’ve been in parts of the world where a toy for a kid is a stick and a rock,” Knutson said. “But these little cars give kids something to smile about. Duane and his guys are just beautiful people doing good things for the good of humanity and we’re happy to help them any way we can.”

The toys also ride along in ambulances, military satchels and police vehicles in the event a child needs to be calmed. They show up in doctor’s offices, churches and other venues.

The operation is affiliated with a group called Toys for God’s Kids, a non-denominational organization based in Denver. Strand is the only affiliated “smile maker” in South Dakota.

While the three-man crew claims they’re working harder than they used to before retiring, Iedema assigns a greater value to his toil beyond the opportunity to put a smile on a kid’s face. He said his heart doctor has informed him that he’s in better shape than before he started woodworking three years ago. He’s slimmer, more active and feels a lot better.

Strand chips in, “...yeah, and he’s



more ornery than ever, too!”

Collectively, the guys crank out about 250 cars a day scrunched inside the 12 x 10-foot shed. Each unit has to be dipped in linseed oil to protect children from any potential toxicity. The toys are boxed and shipped to their destination at the recipient’s expense.

Strand doesn’t know how much longer he’s going to be able to keep cranking out cars. He’ll reach the age of 90 in a few months and his friend Ringling has a plan: “I told him when he turns 90 we’re going to take him up by the interstate and take a picture underneath the sign that says I-90. Get it?”

OFFICE HOURS TO CHANGE



Beginning in January 2023, Renville-Sibley's office employees will shift to a four-day work week. Office hours will be Monday – Thursday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. The office will be CLOSED on Fridays.

Cooperative Response Center (CRC) answers all after-hours calls for Renville-Sibley. Anytime our office is closed; evenings, weekends, holidays, and now on Fridays, if there is an issue or concern that needs timely action CRC reaches out to managers and employees who are on call.

The Renville-Sibley Board of Directors and employees are committed to providing excellent service to our members. We welcome your feedback on the change in business hours or any other topic.

Comparative Report

	Current YTD through September 30, 2022	One Year Ago YTD through September 30, 2021	10 Years Ago YTD through September 30, 2012
average # of Consumers	1,888	1,882	1,922
kWhs purchased	121,832,013	130,119,383	102,962,341
Cost of purchased power	\$6,843,444.08	\$8,455,255.59	\$5,055,655.01

FREE Want Ad Service

Members can submit ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent, and Wanted. Ads should be or are limited to no more than 15 words and must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Renville-Sibley reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Ads will be run one time only unless resubmitted. Please complete the following information and mail it to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Ad to be placed (limit of 15 words per ad)

Type of ad: ☐ Giveaway ☐ For Sale ☐ For Rent ☐ Wanted

MISSION STATEMENT

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide efficient, reliable electric energy and services to enhance the quality of rural living.

WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month Edward Garrahy found his member number in the newsletter. Congratulations! The credit will start over with a value of \$15. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 1st of December, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

WANTED

Mason to repair the mortar on my house chimney before winter. Estimate needed.

Doris Nelson
Fairfax, MN 55332
507-829-2318

Old CB Base Station

Dennis Hanlon
Franklin, MN 55333
507-557-2441

October board meeting highlights

The October board meeting was held on Tuesday, Oct. 25 at 8 a.m. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Norris, Gene Allex, Lenae Wordes, Cindy Mertens and Amy Ervin.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the Sept. 27 board meeting
- Construction Work Plan
- Safety report for October
- Sacred Heart Fire Department REDG Documents
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of September
- Capital Credit Retirement
- Basin Electric Annual Meeting Voting Delegates
- Executive Compensation 457(b) Plan
- Facility Project Liaison Spending Approval

The board reviewed:

- Total new members
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
 - High-level Statement of Operations review – YTD through September (unaudited)
 - Organization activities
 - East River update
 - Basin Electric update
 - NRECA update
 - MREA update
 - Linecrew work in progress, equipment update, and outage update
 - Accounts receivable
 - New facility update

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

OUTAGE REPORT

Affecting 10 members or more

Date: 9/21/22
Time off: 2:05 p.m.
Time on: 2:46 p.m.
Substation: Kingman
Cause: Scheduled

Date: 9/28/22
Time off: 9:10 a.m.
Time on: 11:28 a.m.
Substation: Birch Cooley
Cause: Scheduled

Date: 9/29/22
Time off: 3:30 p.m.
Time on: 5:27 p.m.
Substation: Birch Cooley
Cause: Excavating Contractor

Please contact Renville-Sibley's office for more details about these power outages.

NOTICE:

The November board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 22 at 8 a.m.
The December board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 20 at 9 a.m.

Renville-Sibley's office will be closed on the following days:

- Thursday and Friday, Nov. 24-25, in observance of Thanksgiving
- Monday, Dec. 26, in observance of Christmas Day
- Friday, Dec. 30 and Monday, Jan. 2, in observance of New Year's Day

From our co-op family to yours, we wish you a joyous holiday season!

CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE

Mark your calendar for Renville-Sibley's Christmas Open House to be held on Thursday, Dec. 8 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Those who attend can register to win a \$50 energy credit. While you are in town, stop over and visit Danube Upholstery and Flora Mutual Insurance who will be having their open house that day as well.



CHANGING YOUNG LIVES

The Great Plains Youth Regional Treatment Center near Mobridge is a place where at-risk youth can go to address their challenges with drug and alcohol abuse. *Photo by Roger Lawien*

Treatment center helps young people get back on the right path

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

It was a small compliment, but it meant everything to the young lady who wasn't quite accustomed to receiving positive reinforcement. A simple affirmation spoken softly and sincerely into her ear: "You're gorgeous, and you're worthy." And the tears began to flow.

The Indian Health Service Great Plains Youth Regional Treatment Center near Mobridge is a place where at-risk youth can go to address their challenges with drug and alcohol abuse and find the support they need to deal with difficult situations.

Acting Clinical Director Charita Dowdell remembers that encounter with the young woman.

"I tell all of our residents how gorgeous they are and that I see the beauty in them and who they are deep down inside," Dowdell said. "I told her she was worthy and that she had value,

and she just broke down. She told me that nobody had ever said that to her."

That's just one of the stories about how the treatment center's staff strive to change the lives of teens who enter the program. There are many others.

Program Director Lavon Booth has been involved with the residential program for 20 years, initially as an administrative officer when she started in 2002. She previously served at the Cheyenne River Service Unit in her hometown of Eagle Butte before starting at the YRTC.

She sees the transformation of residents captured in plain view during graduation ceremonies that take place when the 12-week session concludes.

"We're very fortunate to see the change that happens in our residents from the time they arrive until the time they graduate," she said. "We see them moving in a positive direction and at graduation we get to hear them speak intimately about what they've learned and you see how it all comes together.

They come in very shy and reserved, and they leave here carrying a more positive spirit and more confidence. It's really touching for us and very rewarding."

The treatment center is housed in the old Chief Gall Inn hotel on land leased from the Standing Rock tribe. Youth between the ages of 13 and 17 are referred through tribal alcohol programs, local schools, community service organizations and other agencies.

According to the center's mission statement, the program "is dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle restoring balance and harmony in mind, body and spirit to our American Indian youth and their families."

Dowdell said playing a role in watching that mission statement come true to life in the form of changed behaviors and more positive attitudes makes her know she's definitely making a profound difference.

One effective modality is a mentoring program where residents taking part in the rehabilitation process shepherd those who are just entering the facility. Not only do the incumbent residents show the newbies around the physical



The youth treatment center is located in the former Chief Gall Inn hotel near Mobridge. *Photo by Roger Lawien*

space, but they also listen to their concerns, answer questions and try to allay their fears that stem from living in a new environment with certain rules, guidelines and expectations.

“When they start feeling homesick or afraid or stressed and they just need someone near their age to talk to, it helps them make the adjustment so they can settle down and focus on what they need to do to make changes. That bond is something that actually helps both of them get through and graduate successfully,” she said.

Dowdell noted there is a concern among staff about residents returning to a challenging environment. So, upon graduation, the youth receive support through a tracking system where staffers make regular check-in calls after three days, three months, six months and a year. A tele-health network is also

available to the graduates.

Role-playing also helps re-integration, Dowdell said. She added that the residents are taught to anticipate the same kind of challenges they faced before and how to handle them with a different approach.

“They return as a changed person, but everybody else around them will be doing the same things,” she said. “We tell them to stay connected to their support system and manage their emotions; how to be true to yourself while being respectful to others. We prepare them for what life is going to look like when they leave.”

She mentioned one particular youngster who entered the program with a defiant attitude and dealing with depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. She knuckled down academically and caught up to her class grade. After

graduation, she returned to juvenile detention for seven months. But in the end, she straightened out her life by applying the things she learned at the center.

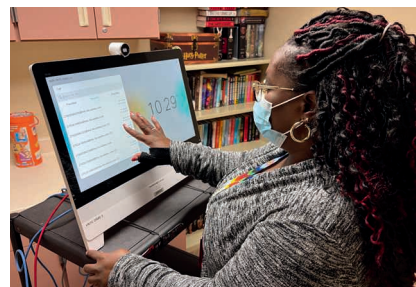
“She struggled with treatment, but she sent us a letter thanking us for what the program did for her,” Dowdell said. “She said she was grateful for giving her the skills to manage the difficult predicament she was going through. She changed her mentality and grew and matured and became a new person.”

Dowdell stressed that parents can play a key role in helping their children navigate through rehabilitation or prevent them from becoming a candidate in the first place.

“Listen to your children,” she emphasized. “They are saying something to you, but often they don’t feel like they’re being heard. Before you shut that door, listen to what they’re saying. You may have to shut the door anyway, but at least take the time to listen to what they have to say.”

Visit www.ihs.gov/greatplains/healthcarefacilities/greatplainsyrtc/.

Lavon Booth, left, and Charita Dowdell, work to provide students the skills they need to change the direction of their lives.





University of Minnesota graduate students pose in a massive coal bucket during an electric cooperative tour sponsored by Renville-Sibley and the university.

Renville-Sibley leads tour of electric cooperatives for college students

Erin Kelly

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

The smallest electric cooperative in Minnesota is having an outsized impact in educating college students about the co-op business model and how power is generated and delivered for co-ops in the region.

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association, a 1,586-member co-op with 15 employees, worked with the University of Minnesota to organize a week-long tour of distribution co-ops and generation and transmission co-ops in Minnesota, South Dakota and North Dakota for graduate students pursuing master's degrees in science, technology and environmental policy.

"These students are going to lead us into the future from a public policy

and an environmental perspective," said DeeAnne Norris, Renville-Sibley's CEO. "It's important that they understand there's an obligation to keep energy reliable and affordable while trying to marry that up with renewable energy and sustainability."

The mid-May tour began at Renville-Sibley's office in Danube, Minn., with a discussion about broadband, solar energy and farming. It continued with stops at several facilities run by Basin Electric Power Cooperative, the Bismarck, N.D.-based generation and transmission provider owned by 131 member co-ops that provide electricity for more than 3 million people in nine states.

Other visits included Sioux Valley Energy, a distribution co-op in Colman, South Dakota, where students learned about electric vehicle charging and other kinds of beneficial electrification,

and East River Electric in Madison, South Dakota, a G&T that supplies power to Renville-Sibley and 23 other co-ops in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. Students learned about East River's load management, economic development programs and co-op relationships.

The tour wrapped up at Lake Region Electric Cooperative in Pelican Rapids, Minn., where students saw the co-op's creative member-focused programs like wind and solar generation and hydroponic gardening trailers.

"It's important for the students to be able to get out there in the field to see the really big energy infrastructure," says Gabriel Chan, an associate professor at the University of Minnesota and co-director of the Electric Cooperative Innovation Center, a new initiative focused on research partnerships with co-ops.

"You read about wind, hydro or coal plants, but being there is an entirely



The students put on their harnesses and took turns going up in a bucket to simulate working conditions for linemen. The group also stopped by the headquarters of East River Electric in Madison, SD.



different experience.”

Chan had worked with Norris since before the COVID-19 pandemic to organize the tour and used the pandemic delay to create a semester-long graduate seminar called The Energy Transition in Rural America, which brought in guest speakers and included site visits to nearby cooperative facilities.

“IF YOU DON’T TELL PEOPLE WHAT’S HAPPENING AT YOUR CO-OP, THEY’RE GOING TO COME UP WITH THEIR OWN STORY ABOUT YOU.”

- DEEANNE NORRIS, CEO, RENVILLE-SIBLEY

Sarah Komoroski, a mechanical engineer who is halfway through her master’s degree program, said she felt like “a kid in a candy shop” on the tour as she got up-close and personal with coal boiler, gas turbine and other infrastructure.

“I was just smiling the whole time,” says Komoroski, who describes her passions as climate change and the transition to renewable energy. “Everyone

was so nice and so welcoming and so passionate about what they do.

“I think the biggest thing that struck me about co-ops is they’re so unique in terms of their governance structure,” she said. “They’re non-profit, member-owned, and their goals and incentives are different than a traditional for-profit utility. They’re each tackling the challenges of affordability, reliability and sustainability in a slightly different way.”

Komoroski said she believes electric cooperatives also have the advantage of having a special relationship with their members.

“Co-ops are uniquely positioned to build trust with their members during the energy transition,” she said. “That relationship is the exciting part to me.”

Norris and Chan say they hope to continue the week-long tour every other year for students in the two-year master’s program. The professor said he would like to hear more from cooperative consumer-members, and Norris says she would like to start it a day earlier.

“The students are in their 20s and

30s, but regardless of your age, that was a very taxing schedule,” says Norris, who went on the tour herself.

“It was an intense week,” Komoroski agrees. “We had about 15 stops in five days, with 26 hours of driving.”

Norris urges other co-ops across the country to connect with local universities or university extension offices and plan similar experiences that can raise awareness of energy systems in rural areas and how consumer-centric utilities like co-ops can lead the energy transition.

“When I was planning this trip, there was a little skepticism by a few people we wanted to visit,” she said. “But if you don’t tell people what’s happening at your co-op, they’re going to come up with their own story about you, and often it’s not close to reality.”

“This experience shows that when we open our doors, we can engage and collaborate with students who are excited about the cooperative business model, who are passionate about the Earth and her resources and are enthusiastic about learning and making a difference.”

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth in LaCroix Hall at the Black Hills Stock Show to win an electric snow blower!

Your Phone Number: _____
Your E-mail Address: _____



December 15-18, 2022
Christmas at the Cathedral
521 N Duluth Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-988-3765

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. 25
Olde Tyme Christmas Kick-off and Parade
Hill City, SD

NOV. 25
"Light up the Night" Parade and Fireworks
Belle Fourche, SD

NOV. 25-26
Kris Kringle Kraft Fair
Hill City, SD

NOV. 26
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
Gregory Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 2-3
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-745-4140

DEC. 3
Santa's Thrift Village
Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD
605-394-1887

DEC. 3
Tabor's Holiday Light Parade
Tabor, SD
605-660-0274

DEC. 3
60th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale
Central States Fair Grounds,
Rapid City, SD
605-343-0710

DEC. 3
Julefest 2022: Scandinavian Christmas Festival & Bazaar
8 a.m.-2p.m.
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Spearfish, SD

DEC. 4
Sioux Falls Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast
8:30 a.m.-noon
1600 W Russell St.
Sioux Falls, SD

DEC. 4
Hartford Hometown Christmas
Hartford, SD
www.hartfordhtc.com

DEC. 4
Walk Through Bethlehem
United Methodist Church
Webster, SD
605-345-3747

DEC. 10
Frontier Christmas
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park
Lake City, SD
605-448-5474

DEC. 15-18
Christmas at the Cathedral
521 N Duluth Ave.
Sioux Falls, SD
605-988-3765

DEC. 17
Custer Christmas for Kids
Custer High School
Custer, SD
custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com

JAN. 14
Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.
\$80 for a four-person team
Meadowood Lanes
Rapid City, SD
605-393-2081

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