



# Cooperative Connections

**S.D. is open for  
business**

Page 8

**Co-op history  
and why it  
matters**

Page 12



# Renville-Sibley Holds Rescheduled Annual Meeting



**DeeAnne Newville, CEO**

dnewville@renville-sibley.coop  
Phone: 320-826-2593 or  
Toll Free 800-826-2593

On Aug. 27, we hosted our rescheduled 82nd annual meeting at the Island Ballroom in Bird Island. We had a great turnout considering the circumstances. As you may be aware, we had to cancel our annual meeting scheduled for March 2020 due to the state lockdown. The board of directors elected to host a drive-up annual meeting since we were still operating in a peacetime emergency due to the pandemic and had to follow gathering, social distancing, and mask guidelines.

Members entered the parking lot and were guided around the building counterclockwise by cooperative directors. At the first stop on the north side of the building, we collected their invitation card and provided a bag of materials that included a Renville-Sibley logoed flyswatter. This flyswatter would later be used to wave out their windows for motions and voting. Athmann's catering served box lunches and bottled water at a stop on the west side. The members continued around the building, eventually ending on the east side, where they were guided by our linemen to stagger park.

One of our flatbed trailers served as a stage with microphones and stands, allowing each speaker to remain 6 feet apart. Bob Gale from East River Electric, our wholesale power provider, operated an FM radio system that broadcast our meeting across a designated radio station. This allowed our members to listen to the annual meeting safely tucked in their vehicles.

Members were required to preregister so we could plan for parking and meals. By Tuesday, Aug. 25th, 45 members were registered to attend the annual meeting, and we needed at least 75 members to have a quorum. Our directors reached out to members, and they did a great job inspiring an additional 33 members to register and attend!

Our board chair, Roger Manthei, led the meeting, and Alan Neyers, the board secretary/treasurer, provided a presentation on the summary of the 2019 audited financial report that had been mailed to all members last March.

During his presentation, Roger reminded members that according to the Renville-Sibley Bylaws, in the event of a mail-in vote, both the members present in-person and those represented by mail shall be counted as present. As long as at least 75 members cast a ballot for directors' election, the election can be counted and valid. The number of ballots cast for this year's board election back in March was slightly higher than in previous years, far exceeding the quorum requirements. On the evening of March 26th, the annual meeting tellers were at the cooperative board room, counting the ballots. The following received the highest number of votes and were therefore elected as directors for a 3-year term:

- District 1 for a three-year term: Kylie Rieke
- District 2 for a three-year term: Matthew Haubrich
- District 3 for a three-year term: Roger Manthei



Aerial view of the annual meeting taken by Jake Rieke.

*(Continued on page 6)*

**One of our flatbed trailers served as a stage with microphones and stands, allowing each speaker to remain 6 feet apart.**

# Renville-Sibley

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS 019-074)

### Board of Directors

Roger Manthei – Chair  
 Wayland Zaske – Vice Chair  
 Alan Neyers – Secretary/Treasurer  
 Gary Eekhoff  
 Matt Haubrich  
 Whitey Hinderman  
 Gary Peterson  
 Kylie Rieke  
 Helen Ruebel

### Renville-Sibley Employees

Gene Alex – Line Superintendent  
 Brian Athmann – Journeyman Lineman  
 Shawn Beckler – Crew Chief  
 Mike Benson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Brad Braulick – Crew Chief  
 Nick Bruns – Systems Coordinator  
 Anthony Carruth – Journeyman Lineman  
 Amy Ervin – Consumer Accounts Representative  
 Brayden Fischer – Journeyman Lineman  
 Cindy Mertens – Administrative Services Manager  
 DeeAnne Newville – CEO  
 Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman  
 Kathy Ridl – Office Assistant  
 Lenae Wordes – Communications Manager

RENVILLE-SIBLEY COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS is published monthly by Renville-Sibley Co-op Power Association, 103 Oak Street, Danube, MN, 56230 for its members. Electric cooperative members devote 50 cents from their monthly electric payments for a subscription. Non-member subscriptions are available for \$6 annually. Periodicals Postage Paid at Danube Post Office, Danube, MN 56230 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Renville-Sibley Cooperative Connections, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230; Telephone (320) 826-2593; Toll Free 1-800-826-2593; Fax (320) 826-2679;

Web site: [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Operation Round Up donates funds to local groups



In last month's newsletter, there was information about Operation Round Up (ORU) donations awarded at the June ORU board meeting.

A donation was given to West Central Entrepreneurial Opportunities (WCCeO) program that was started with the 2020-21 school year. This program is a combination of students from MACCRAY, KMS and RCW who will be working with area businesses to learn more about entrepreneurship. Renville-Sibley received a picture of the first class of students. Good luck students!

Also receiving a donation from the ORU funds was the Gibbon Fire Department. The co-op received a photo and thank-you note for that donation.

*The Gibbon Fire Department uses the positive pressure fan on different firefighting tactics. Positive Pressure Ventilation is a technique used to remove smoke, heat and other combustion products from a structure. The use of a positive pressure fan prevents smoke flow to areas within a structure and allows firefighters to perform tasks in a more tenable environment.*

*We appreciate your donation as our budget is always thin due to the numerous changes and upgrades to keep our firefighters safe. Every year Gibbon Fire works hard to stay within their budget, when unexpected expenses occur we try to purchase*

*equipment with donations and fundraisers. Again, thank you so much for the donation towards our Gibbon Fire Department to purchase a positive pressure fan (below).*



The ORU board also received the following thank you note from the Fairfax Fire Department:

*We would like to thank the co-op for the \$500 donation to the Fairfax Rural Fire Association along with the Fairfax Fire Department we received from the round up dollars fund. We are fortunate to have an excellent fire and rescue department in Fairfax and they serve the area townships as well. The townships share in the costs of many of the equipment needs and we have a good working relationship with Fairfax.*

# Use Safety as Your Guide When Planting Trees

If the trees in your yard have grown so tall that they touch overhead power lines, they can cause all kinds of trouble. Branches that sway in the wind and rain can snap an electric line, sending a live wire to the ground, where it can electrocute anyone who touches it.

Plus, power lines that are broken by fallen trees will cause you and your neighbors to lose electricity and require a costly trip from your electric cooperative.

That's why any tree that poses a danger—even an old or favorite tree—could be slated for removal by your electric cooperative.

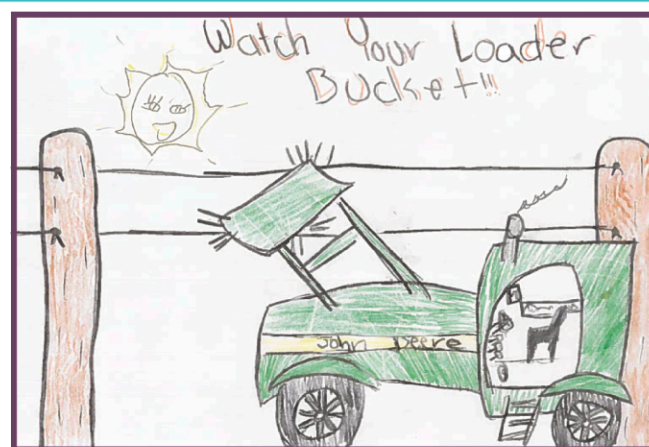
You can prevent problems on the front end by planting smart.

Here are a few tips:

- Do some research and learn all you can about the particular type of tree you want to plant. Learn how tall it will grow when it matures and how wide the full span of its mature branches will become. Use those dimensions to determine how far away from an existing power line you should plant it. Some trees are safe only when they grow 30 feet or more away from a line.
- If the landscape design you like requires you to plant trees in close proximity to electric lines, choose a low-growing variety that will never be tall enough to pose a hazard.
- Before digging any holes to plant trees, call 811, the state's "call before you dig" service. If you don't call and hit underground utility lines, you could be liable for damages.
- Avoid planting in the right-of-way on the edge of your yard or personal property. Your local electric cooperative and other utility companies must maintain that space and could wind up trimming trees out of the way of power lines, possibly leaving the tree looking lopsided.
- Don't plant shrubs too close to your home's outdoor air conditioning unit. AC units require breathing room and should never be crowded by shrubbery or debris.
- If your yard is already home to trees that are close to power lines, keep the trees trimmed so they don't touch any overhead wires. Hire a professional tree trimmer with the proper tools and training to provide this service for you. Don't risk doing it yourself.



## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



### "Watch Your Loader Bucket!"

**Adalin Homola, 11 years old**

Adalin Homola is the daughter of Joe and Sonja Homola from Lake Nordin. They are members of H-D Electric Cooperative based in Clear Lake.

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.

# People-Pleasing Pasta

## Pasta Florentine

16 oz. penne pasta	1 zucchini, cut in thin strips
1 red pepper, thin cut	2 cans mushrooms, drained
1 onion, chopped	1/8 cup butter
1 cup tomatoes, chopped	1/4 cup flour
1 cup skim milk	1 cup chicken broth
1/2 tsp. nutmeg	1/2 tsp. pepper
1 pkg. frozen spinach, thawed, drained	1/4 cup Parmesan

Prepare pasta, cooking 7 minutes. Drain. Spoon into greased 9x13 baking dish. Cook and stir zucchini, peppers, mushrooms, and onions for 3-4 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in tomatoes. Spoon mixture over pasta and gently mix. Whisk flour with drippings in skillet. Whisk in milk. Add broth, nutmeg and pepper. Cook over medium heat and stir until mixture comes to boil and thickens. Add spinach and cheese. Pour sauce over casserole. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 40-45 minutes.

**Glen and Linda Erickson, Chester, SD**

## One Pan Chicken Alfredo

3 tablespoons olive oil	1/2 lb. penne pasta, or any bite-sized shape pasta, uncooked
1/4 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts	2 c. freshly shredded real parmesan cheese
2 cloves garlic, minced	Salt and pepper
2 c. low sodium chicken broth	Flat leaf parsley for garnish
1 c. heavy cream or half and half	

Cut chicken breasts into half-inch and 1-inch pieces. Season with salt/pepper. Brown chicken in olive oil over medium heat. It will finish cooking as it simmers. Add minced garlic and saute for 1 minute. Add broth, cream or half and half and uncooked pasta and stir. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce to a simmer. Keep pan covered while simmering. Simmer for 15-20 minutes or until pasta is tender. Remove from heat, stir in shredded parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper.

**Judy Mendel, Doland, SD**

## Pizza Hot Dish

2 lb. hamburger - brown, sprinkle with onion and garlic salt	1/2 cup water
1 10-oz. can pizza sauce	1/2 tsp. salt
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce	1/4 tsp. pepper
	1 tsp. oregano

Simmer above ingredients 20 minutes. Add 1-1/2 cup grated American cheese (Velveeta) and 8-oz. package of wide noodles, cooked. Put 1/2 of sauce in 9x13 cake pan. Top with noodles. Add rest of sauce. Top with mozzarella cheese and sprinkle generously with parmesan cheese. Bake 30-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

**Shirley Miller, Winfred, SD**

## Shrimp Scampi

8 ounces pasta linguine	1/4 teaspoon black pepper
2 tablespoons butter	1 dash crushed red pepper flakes
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil	1-1/2 pounds large or extra-large Aqua Star shrimp, shelled
4 garlic cloves, minced	1/3 cup parsley, chopped
1/2 cup dry white wine or seafood broth	1/2 lemon, juice only
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt	

Cook pasta according to package directions. In large skillet, melt butter and oil. Add garlic and saute until fragrant. Add wine or broth, salt, red pepper flakes and black pepper. Bring to simmer and reduce by half. Add shrimp and saute until shrimp turn pink and opaque, approximately 2-4 minutes depending on size. Stir in parsley, lemon juice and cooked pasta. Provided by [www.aquastar.com](http://www.aquastar.com).

Please send your favorite vegetarian, garden produce and pasta 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 2020. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

# Renville-Sibley Annual Meeting, *continued*

As long as the tellers were in the office that night, each teller drew a scholarship applicant's name to be the winner of a \$1,000 scholarship. The winners were:

Connor Aalderks, son of Ryan and Jeni Aalderks

Anthony Maher, son of Tom and Sara Maher

Colby Schroeder, son of Dale and Lisa Schroeder

Unfortunately, I was not able to present at the annual meeting due to circumstances that came up the day before the meeting. I recorded my presentation to be played at the meeting since I was not able to share the stage with Roger and Alan. However, I did listen to our annual meeting on the radio. Roger and Alan came through my radio beautifully. The song, God Bless the USA, Lee Greenwood's latest rendition sung in collaboration with the U.S. Air Force Band, the Singing Sergeants, and Home Free was moving. As soon as it was done, Roger said, "Wasn't that wonderful?" and the members started honking their horns – very cool!

The following is a recap of my presentation at the annual meeting.

I will be covering two topics that have not normally been a part of our leadership presentation at previous annual meetings. I will provide an update on our facilities project and what we are doing at the Co-op for the COVID-19 pandemic. Both topics were recently covered in our newsletter. Copies are online at [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop). Also, you are always welcome to call our office with any questions or concerns on any topic.

From well before I started in October of 2012, our board has wrestled with the challenge of addressing our current facilities. Due to the ever-increasing size of utility equipment, we have outgrown our garage space. We marvel at our linemen's driving skills as they back the large trucks into spaces that, in some instances, have only a few inches of clearance from walls and other vehicles. We are also challenged

with issues due to the age of our building. The current location has served us well for over 70 years, but it can no longer adequately meet the cooperative's needs. The board made a diligent decision to move forward with a new facility project.

Breitbach Construction, out of Elrosa and Engan Associates Architects out of Willmar are working with our facilities committee, made up of a cross-section of co-op employees and directors, to develop a new facility plan. Additionally, we have asked both the City of Danube and the City of Olivia to bring land options to us for consideration.

our next set of facilities meetings. The board's decision to move forward with the new facility was not taken lightly, and the leadership they showed during this process was impressive. We value the trust the membership has placed in us to make sound decisions to serve our members.

On March 17, we rolled out our pandemic protocol due to hearing of the first case of COVID-19 within Renville County. Since then, we have modified our plan a few times based on the feedback we received from our employees and guidelines established by the state and the federal government. 975200



Members drive up to turn in their registration card and receive a gift bag.

At our member informational meetings in February, we presented a PowerPoint presentation, including multiple pictures and video, to show the state of our current operations and hoped to give the same presentation during our annual meeting. In early August, we set up eight meetings for members interested in seeing our presentation both online and at a socially distanced in-person format.

In the next several months, we will offer opportunities for members to learn more about our facilities project. Please keep an eye on our newsletter or call our office if you want to be personally invited to

As a part of our pandemic plan, we closed our office to the public. However, the office is staffed during all business hours. We do not have enough space in our lobby to allow members to maintain a 6-foot distance. Only one member can be in the office at a time due to space constraints. Please contact the office if you would like to make arrangements to come in for an appointment or schedule an appointment using another technology like Zoom or phone. We will welcome you into our office following all the social distancing and mask requirements. We installed a doorbell on the outside of our building to alert us of a member's arrival.

## Renville-Sibley Annual Meeting, *continued*

We have isolated groups of employees from each other, so if one of our employees should fall ill with Covid-19, only the employees working directly with that person will be quarantined, allowing us to continue to provide uninterrupted service to our members. At the Governor and the Public utilities commission's request, we suspended disconnections of service for non-payment through the end of August. Cooperative employees have been and will continue to work

**As a part of our pandemic plan, we closed our office to the public. However, the office is staffed during all business hours.**

with members who have been impacted by COVID 19 to set up reasonable payment arrangements. We will follow the Minnesota Cold weather rules for any accounts subject for disconnection.

The last several months have certainly



Board Chairman Roger Manthei and Secretary/Treasurer Alan Neyers give their presentations at the annual meeting.

been a challenge for all businesses, healthcare providers, schools, and individuals. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we navigate through this pandemic. Our leadership team will continue to assess the situation daily to determine if any additional steps are needed and will work proactively to mitigate risks by following all guidelines and evaluating operating procedures. Our priority is to provide reliable electric service to our members while protecting our employees and members from unnecessary risk.

Although our linemen are working under different conditions due to our pandemic protocol, they continue to make progress on RS2020, work plan projects, member-requested upgrades, and maintenance as well as being available 24 hours a day to respond to outages on our system. In the most recent edition of our newsletter, you received an update from Gene Alex, our Line Superintendent, on the cooperative operations. If you have not had the opportunity, I encourage you to read his article for more details.

I am proud of all our employees and appreciate their dedication to you, our members. They are the ones who bring you safe and reliable electricity, answer your questions, maintain your data, and make sure we meet all our state and federal mandates. It is an honor to work with such an amazing group of individuals, and I am thankful for the opportunity I have been given to be a part of your cooperative.

We had a quorum, a nice meal, beautiful weather, and a steady flow of members arrive at our first ever drive up annual meeting. All in all, this year's annual meeting was a success! On behalf of our Board of Directors, leadership team, and employees, I would like to thank you for your patronage and support.



If you look closely, you can see blue flyswatters waving as this was the method members used to make and approve motions.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

While the ag markets have experienced shifts and changes, rural South Dakota continues to offer a favorable business climate for many industry sectors.

# S.D. IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

## REED Fund supports business growth in rural areas

**Billy Gibson**

editor@sdrea.coop

The old adage about making hay while the sun is shining is not lost on the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

During the summer months, the department launched an aggressive regional advertising campaign called "South Dakota Means Business," aimed at encouraging companies from surrounding states to relocate to a more business-friendly environment.

The timing of this marketing strategy was intended to take advantage of the favorable national publicity the state has received for its response to COVID-19 and also to lure disaffected businesses weary of increasingly onerous and burdensome regulatory policies in other states.

The promotional initiative was based on a long list of advantages that make it easier in South Dakota for companies to maximize positive margins and plan for future growth.

The campaign featured Gov. Kristi Noem emphasizing the fact that South Dakota has been ranked best in the nation in several categories: lowest business costs; most accessible financing; two-year college graduation rates; lowest regulatory restrictions; lowest state tax revenue volatility; and more.

"We hear over and over from business owners in other states that increased government regulations are making it difficult to earn a profit and plan for growth," said Commissioner Steve Westra. "We want to get the word out that it doesn't have to be this way."

"As out-of-state businesses become more frustrated with

Dakota Style is a thriving business that has received REED funding through Codington-Clark Electric.



overreach by their state governments, they're turning to South Dakota," said Gov. Noem. "The number of new businesses interested in moving to South Dakota has increased dramatically. We're ready to show these businesses what South Dakota can do for them."

While Gov. Noem pushes to attract more businesses to South Dakota, the state's rural electric cooperatives continue to be engaged in efforts to spark community development. Twenty of the state's electric cooperatives collaborate with five western-Minnesota co-ops to support local business growth through the Rural Electric Economic Development, Inc. (REED) Fund. The non-profit corporation provides financing in all or parts of roughly 70 counties in the two states.

The REED Fund was created in 1997 to boost business growth in small communities and has issued nearly 400 loans totaling more



than \$102 million. That financial support has resulted in more than 9,000 jobs.

While the fund is used by rural electric cooperatives to boost economic activity in their service areas, it is not restricted to co-ops. Many loans have gone to retail entities, manufacturing facilities, agriculture processing and marketing and support services. The fund has also been used to support rural health care, education, recreation, arts, public safety, community infrastructure, housing and office space.

The fund is supported by state and federal government entities, including the Governor's Office of Economic Development and the USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program, and also private groups such as Dakota Resources, Basin Electric Cooperative and banking institutions.

The REED Fund had a record year in 2019, with \$12.8 million in new loans. REED and Avera Health also signed a new workforce housing development financing partnership as Avera committed to a \$2 million investment in the fund. This investment, along with an additional \$1 million pledge from SDN Communications and another \$1 million from First Bank & Trust, will expand efforts to finance workforce housing.

Two loans issued in August went to Lesterville Fire and Rescue from Bon Homme Yankton Electric, and to 605 Sires, LLC, from Southeastern Electric.

Bon Homme Electric Manager Stephanie Horst said the money would go toward the purchase of new air packs and a new building addition for the local volunteer fire department.

"A big part of our guiding principles as locally-owned, locally-controlled electric cooperatives is to do whatever we can to improve the quality of life in our service areas and to expand the range of economic opportunities available to our members and our communities," Horst said. "It's very gratifying for us to know we're making a positive impact."

She noted that more than 80 percent of the REED Fund's lending is established in communities of fewer than 4,000 people and 98 percent of REED-financed projects have local ownership.

At Southeastern Electric, General Manager Brad Schardin said 605 Sires, LLC, used its financing to expand its family-owned, full-service bull collection and donor facility. The company opened in 2017 and delivers its products to customers both domestically and internationally.

According to Schardin, "Delivering electrical power that is safe, affordable, reliable and accessible is a tall order in itself. But our commitment goes beyond providing electricity. We also have an obligation to enhance and improve the communities we serve. The REED Fund is an excellent resource to help us fulfill that commitment."

For more information on the REED Fund, visit [www.reedfund.coop](http://www.reedfund.coop) or call 605-256-8015.

## Future of Energy Storage

Energy storage technology is extremely versatile - it's small enough to fit in your phone, or large enough to power your entire home.

Many people are familiar with small-scale batteries for handheld devices, but utility-scale batteries take energy storage to a whole new level. The ability to store energy helps to ensure that energy demand meets supply at any given time, making electricity available when you need it.

The most widespread form of energy storage in the U.S. is through pumped hydropower, a form of mechanical energy storage. Pumped hydropower has been used for several decades now, and currently makes up about 97 percent of the country's utility storage capacity.

Energy is stored by pumping water uphill from a lower elevation reservoir to store in an upper water basin. When energy is needed, the water is allowed

to flow through an electric turbine to generate energy, the same way it flows through a hydroelectric dam. This method is largely dependent on surrounding geography and any potential resulting ecosystem issues.

Battery technology is also gaining a lot of ground. In 2018, the power capacity from battery storage systems more than doubled from 2010. The most common type of battery chemistry is lithium-ion because of a high-cycle efficiency and fast response time. Some less-common battery types for utility storage include lead acid batteries, nickel-based batteries and sodium-based batteries. However, each chemistry has varying limitations. Beyond pumped hydropower and batteries, there are a few other forms of energy storage used at the utility scale: thermal, hydrogen and compressed air.

Energy storage currently plays a crucial role in incorporating renewable energy into our electric grid. Solar and wind energy are weather-dependent, so when energy demand is low but energy supply is high from the sun or wind, storing the excess energy makes it possible to use it later when demand is higher. As renewable energy becomes more prevalent, energy storage will help to create a more resilient grid.

Although battery prices have been decreasing steadily over the last several years, energy storage can be expensive to attain. Currently, there are 25 gigawatts of electrical energy storage capacity in the U.S., and many experts expect capacity to grow.



Energy storage plays a crucial role in incorporating renewable energy into our electric grid. Photo by Dennis Gainer

# Attention Members Impacted by COVID-19?

Attention members: Renville--Sibley encourages members to contact the office to make arrangements if they are not able to pay their electric bill in full due to the impact of COVID-19. Renville-Sibley employees will work with members to enter into reasonable payment arrangements based on their individual circumstances.



## Energy Efficiency

### Tip of the Month

The average household owns 24 electronic products, which account for roughly 12% of home energy use. When shopping for electronics, consider purchasing ENERGY STAR®-certified products, which can be 70% more efficient than conventional models.



## Where's the Number?

Last month Mike Brown found his member number in the newsletter. Congratulations! Mike will receive a \$30 credit on his electric bill for finding his number. 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 3rd of October, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

## Outage Report

Affecting 10 members or more:

None



## Mission Statement

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

## 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 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

# August Board Meeting Highlights

The August board meeting was held on Monday, August 31 at 8 am via Zoom. All board members were present. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Newville, Gene Alex, Cindy Mertens, Lenae Wordes along with guest Ryan Breitbach and Barbara Marks.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the July 27 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of July
- Capital Credits to an estate
- Safety report for August
- NRECA annual and regional meeting voting delegates
- Western Partners Technology, LLC

The board reviewed:

- Facilities update
- Total new members
- Capital credits transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the

activities in their department. Items in the reports include:

- High level Statement of Operations review – YTD through July (unaudited)
- Organization activities
- East River update
- Basin Electric update
- NRECA update
- MREA update
- Linecrew work in progress, equipment update and outage update
- Accounts receivable
- Annual meeting

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

## Thank You

This year has been a year to remember in many ways, but I really would like to thank you for your support and well wishes for my graduation. Your generosity is truly appreciated! I will be attending Ridgewater College in Willmar this fall for Ag Business with a livestock emphasis. REA, thank you so much for the scholarship. It will help me tremendously as I attend college.

Colby Schroeder

It was an honor to receive this scholarship. I will use it to help pay for my tuition at Ridgewater College this year. I appreciate your support for seniors in our area. Thank you very much for the impact you have made on my life!

Anthony Maher

## Does the Census Matter for your MN County? Yes!

The Census determines so much, for the nation, the state and, yes, YOUR County. Not only is the Census the basis for funding but it is used by private companies and government to make important decisions that affect everyone for 10 years. Minnesota received approximately \$15 billion, through 55 federal spending programs guided by data derived from the 2010 Census. That money is spent on schools, hospitals, roads, public works and other programs that matter to everyone.

We are down to crunch time to get everyone counted. Census workers are out in force to follow-up to locations that have yet to respond. Census workers take a lifetime oath to protect personal information because security is not only a top priority, it is the law.

## Notice:

The September board meeting will be held on Monday, Sept. 28 at 8 a.m. The October board meeting will be held on Monday, Oct. 26 at 8 a.m.

## Comparative Report

	Current YTD through July 31, 2020	One Year Ago YTD through July 31, 2019	10 Years Ago YTD through July 31, 2010
Average # of Consumers	1,882	1,882	1,929
kWhs purchased	91,535,479	85,734,692	95,553,323
Cost of purchased power	\$5,557,102.97	\$5,037,103.96	\$3,898,475.43



Life on farms and in small towns changed for the better when electric co-ops brought power to the countryside.

# CO-OP HISTORY

## Co-op legacy provides a road map to success

**Billy Gibson**

[editor@sdrea.coop](mailto:editor@sdrea.coop)

On Nov. 29, 1935, a handful of local farmers huddled together in a nondescript general store near Vermillion.

They knew that six months earlier President Franklin Roosevelt had signed an executive order creating the Rural Electrification Administration (REA). They knew the purpose of this new federal entity was to provide low-interest loans so that small communities all across the nation could build the power delivery infrastructures required to bring power to the countryside. And they knew this would be their best opportunity to accomplish something for themselves that the for-profit corporate utilities were unwilling to do: energize rural America. They were all in.

While there were a few fits-and-starts along the way, what emerged out of that meeting was South Dakota's first rural electric cooperative, Clay-Union Electric Corp.

Meanwhile, this exact scenario was being replicated in other small towns and villages from coast-to-coast as the rural electrification movement gained momentum and transformed the lives of millions. From those humble beginnings, the movement has swelled to more than 900 locally-owned and locally-controlled cooperatives serving 42 million Americans in 47 states.

The improbable feat of individuals coming together, organizing, planning and building such a vast power delivery system through the most sparsely populated and inhospitable landscapes has been recognized as one of the country's crowning achievements.

America's electric cooperatives take a great deal of pride in their legacy of service, their spirit of independence, their ability to work together for a common purpose and their democratic system of control and decision-making. It's a system rooted in the



Local citizens got together in the 1930s to organize electric co-ops.

very ideals that made the country great.

So why should today's generation care about this legacy?

Dan Lindblom thinks he knows. Lindblom, along with his fellow co-op leader Verdon Lamb, recently received the South Dakota Rural Electric Association's (SDREA) Legacy of Leadership Award for 2020. He said the rich history of the cooperative movement is important because it provides a model for success that both current and future generations can use to overcome obstacles and challenges, to help navigate through difficult and seemingly intractable situations.

Having served 27 years on the board at Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer and 23 years on the SDREA board, Lindblom certainly knows about how to approach difficult dilemmas. As a statewide board officer, Lindblom found himself in the middle of many imbroglios and political squabbles over the decades.

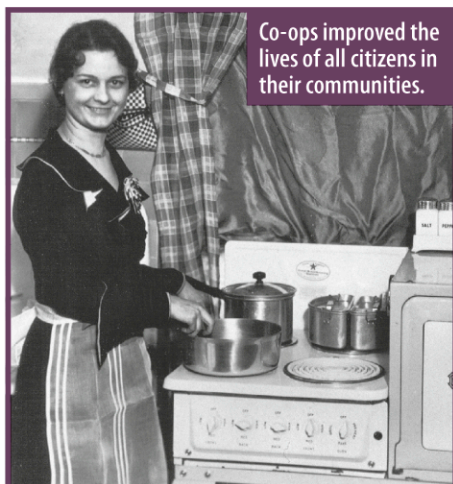
Whether the battleground was in Pierre or Washington, Lindblom fought to protect the interests of electric cooperative



Co-ops led the way in energizing rural America and today lead the way in developing new technologies such as electric vehicles.

members through a wide range of issues such as service territory disputes, state and federal environmental regulations, taxation, transportation and more.

In the process, he learned the art of compromise and the virtue of demonstrating mutual respect. He recalls the not-too-distant past when political



Co-ops improved the lives of all citizens in their communities.

opponents maintained personal, respectful relationships despite any ideological or policy differences they may have had. He also learned the meaning of the old axiom, “United we stand, divided we fall.”

“Speaking with one voice pays off, especially in the political arena,” Lindblom said. “We had situations where an issue may impact one or two co-ops, but we all had to stand together to provide the strength we needed to win. It’s a difficult decision to engage in a fight when you think you don’t have a dog in the hunt, but it’s necessary if you’re going to do what’s good for co-op members across the state. The next time, it may be your issue that comes up and you’ll need the support.”

Lindblom said the secret sauce of success is adopting a posture of give-and-take while standing in solidarity behind a set of shared values.

Verdon Lamb, the other 2020 Legacy of Leadership recipient, served 40 years on the board at Codington-Clark Electric Cooperative in Watertown and also served on the SDREA board. He said the history of the electric co-op movement is a prime example of what can be accomplished when people work together.

“It’s about leadership, sacrifice and working in harmony to do something that’s worth doing for other people,” Lamb said. “I always felt it was worth the sacrifice of giving up my personal time and my farming time to represent the members who put their faith in me and elected me to serve on the board.”

While some say the sense of community, sacrifice and selflessness are lost on the current generation, Lamb said he has hope that young adults will come to understand those ideals exemplified by electric co-ops.

“You know, people said the same things about us when we were kids,” said Lamb, who graduated from high school in 1953. “They said we weren’t going to amount to much, but we turned out okay.”

Chris Larson is manager at Clay-Union Electric Corp., where South Dakota’s electric cooperative system began. He pointed out that the legacy of electric cooperatives is rooted in friends, family and the community. Because cooperatives have always been owned, operated and controlled independently, and have always been geared for local service, they demonstrate the power of human connections and the strength that comes with

teamwork. He said this is especially clear to see as cooperatives and their members deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

“When times get tough, you look to your family and friends, and those are the people who make up our cooperative,” Larson said. “Cooperative communities work together to accomplish things that would be impossible to do alone. That’s what the cooperative legacy is all about, and we see how it lifts us up and sustains us through troubling times.”

Larson said electric co-op history points back to a time in the 1930s when the country was racked by a slumping economy. Co-op organizers went door-to-door to rally support and ask for a membership fee. It was money that many households simply didn’t have. He noted that the first attempt at forming the co-op failed because the start-up funds weren’t there. But by working together and staying focused on the goal, the community accomplished the mission of energizing homes, farms, schools and businesses.

“Friends and families in the Clay County area pulled together and found a way to improve the quality of life for all,” Larson said. “The result is that today we provide power to water districts, banks, grocery stores, elevators, hotels, ag supply stores and more. Electricity is the life blood that makes our local economy run. That’s why our history is so important – it shows the possibilities of what can be done. It’s a road map for achieving what some think is impossible. That’s a message we can all learn from and has no expiration date.”

Larson said that by being attentive to the legacy of electric cooperatives, members of the younger generation can make a real difference in the future of the country.

# 'Standby' Me: The Pros and Cons of a Permanent Standby Generator

Many big businesses and massive office buildings rely on standby electrical power when the power goes out – for the safety of all of their employees and their customers as well as to power essential items.

More and more home versions are being installed in every region of the country so that families can have backup power for appliances, medical equipment, or simply for convenience.

There is more than one type of permanent emergency generator. One has a transfer switch that must be manually “thrown” before turning on the alternate source of power, which is wired into a house. This type of generator is permanent but not considered “standby” because of the manual switch, and should not be located near a home. (Consult an electrician when installing a permanent generator.)

Not throwing the manual switch can result in backfeeding, which sends electricity back into the co-op’s power lines, and it can seriously injure or kill electric lineworkers or others.

Another type of fixed generator is permanently housed in a metal box and is usually located

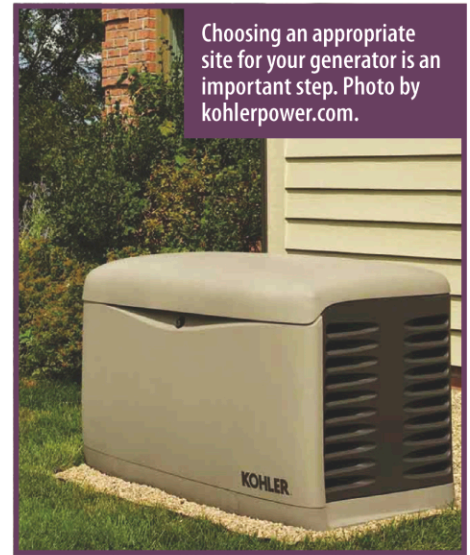
close to the house. It is the most expensive permanent generator—a standby version that is permanently and professionally installed to power most of the appliances in your home.

When needed, a standby generator automatically transfers the power source from the electric grid to the generator. The cost of this type of generator varies depending on how much backup power you want for your home.

Besides the cost of the system, there are also installation costs, since it will need to be installed by licensed and bonded contractors. (This is definitely not a DIY project.)

When considering the purchase of a standby generator, a representative from the supplier will assess your home’s energy needs and should ask you what you would like to power in the event of an outage. Other required steps include preparing a site near your current electrical meter and pouring a concrete pad.

The contractor(s) will install a new subpanel and automatic transfer switch. Your generator supplier should also create a detailed plan of which appliances and electronics should not be



supplied with power during an outage, since the generator’s power supply can fluctuate and possibly damage sensitive items.

For more information, contact your electrician, or go to [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org).

## Utility Payment Arrangements for Veterans

### 2019 MINNESOTA STATUTES - 325E.028

#### 325E.028 UTILITY PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR MILITARY SERVICE PERSONNEL.

Subd. 1. Restriction on disconnection; payment schedules. (a) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer if a member of the household has been issued orders into active duty, for deployment, or for a permanent change in duty station during the period of active duty, deployment, or change in duty station if such a residential customer:

- (1) has a household income below the state median household income or is receiving energy assistance and enters into an agreement with the municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility under which the residential customer pays ten percent of the customer’s gross monthly income toward the customer’s bill and the residential customer remains reasonably current with those payments; or
- (2) has a household income above the state median household income and enters into an agreement with the municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility

establishing a reasonable payment schedule that considers the financial resources of the household and the residential customer remains reasonably current with payments under the payment schedule.

(b) For purposes of this subdivision, “household income” means household income measured after the date of the orders specified in paragraph (a).

Subd. 2. Annual notice to all customers; inability to pay forms. (a) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must notify all residential customers annually of the provisions of this section.

(b) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must provide a form to a residential customer to request the protections of this section upon the residential customer’s request.

Subd. 3. Application to service limiters. For the purposes of this section, “disconnection” includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way.

Subd. 4. Income verification. Verification of income may be conducted by the local energy assistance provider or the municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility unless the customer is automatically eligible for

protection against disconnection as a recipient of any form of public assistance, including energy assistance that uses income eligibility in an amount at or below the income eligibility in subdivision 1, paragraph (a), clause (1).

Subd. 5. Appeal process. (a) The municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility shall provide the residential customer with a commission-approved written notice of the right to appeal to the commission or other appropriate governing body when the utility and residential customer are unable to agree on the establishment, reasonableness, or modification of a payment schedule, or on the reasonable timeliness of the payments under a payment schedule, provided for by this section. Any appeal must be made within seven working days after the residential customer’s receipt of personally served notice, or within ten working days after the utility has deposited first class mail notice in the United States mail.

(b) The utility shall not disconnect service while a payment schedule is pending appeal, or until any appeal involving payment schedules has been determined by the commission.

Subd. 6. Enforcement. This section may be enforced pursuant to chapter 216B.

History: 2007 c 111 s 1; 2015 c 21 art 1 s 72

# MN Cold Weather Rule Statute

## 216B.097 - MINNESOTA STATUTES 2019

### 216B.097 COLD WEATHER RULE; COOPERATIVE OR MUNICIPAL UTILITY.

Subdivision 1. Application; notice to residential customer. (a) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. A municipal utility or cooperative electric association utility may (i) verify income on forms it provides or (ii) obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income.
- (2) A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.
- (3) A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.
- (b) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association must, between August

15 and October 15 each year, notify all residential customers of the provisions of this section.

Subd. 2. Notice to residential customer facing disconnection. Before disconnecting service to a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15, a municipal utility or cooperative electric association must provide the following information to a customer:

- (1) a notice of proposed disconnection;
- (2) a statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
- (3) a list of local energy assistance providers;
- (4) forms on which to declare inability to pay; and
- (5) a statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

Subd. 3. Restrictions if disconnection necessary. (a) If a residential customer must be involuntarily disconnected between October 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with subdivision 1, the disconnection must not occur:

- (1) on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a municipal utility or cooperative electric association;
- (2) on a weekend, holiday, or the day before a holiday;
- (3) when utility offices are closed; or
- (4) after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative

electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to the customer.

## 216B.097 - MINNESOTA STATUTES 2019

Further, the disconnection must not occur until at least 20 days after the notice required in subdivision 2 has been mailed to the customer or 15 days after the notice has been personally delivered to the customer.

(b) If a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice, the customer must not be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

(c) If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

Subd. 4. Application to service limiters. For the purposes of this section, "disconnection" includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits or interrupts electric service in any way.

History: 1991 c 235 art 2 s 1; 2001 c 212 art 4 s 2; 1Sp2003 c 11 art 3 s 2; 2007 c 57 art 2 s 14,15

## Update Your Contact Information

In the utility business, we know rough weather will occur and sometimes power outages can't be avoided. There are steps you can take to ensure your electricity is restored as quickly and safely as possible. One step is by keeping your contact information up-to-date. Not only does this help us when notifying you of planned outages for repairs and maintenance, it also assists in a quicker response when calling in an outage after hours. After-hour calls go to Cooperative Response Center (CRC). Your account information automatically shows if the number you are

calling from is tied to your account in our system. If we don't have the correct number linked to your home address, it can make your call to CRC more time consuming as they search for your account. Another step to a speedy response when calling in an outage is to have your account number available. Your contact information and account number is located on your statement. Please review your contact information and let us know if it needs to be updated. You can update the information on your return stub or by calling our office at 800-826-2593.

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

---

**September 24-26**

Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup and Arts Festival, Custer, SD, 605-255-4515

---

**September 25-27**

Coal Springs Threshing Bee Featuring Massey Harris Tractors, Meadow, SD 605-788-2229

---

**September 26**

Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival, 526 Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

---

**September 26**

Chamberlain/Oacoma Harvest Festival, Chamberlain, SD, 605-234-4416

---

**September 26-27**

Menno Pioneer Power Show, 616 N Fifth Street, Menno, SD

---

**September 26**

Wheelin' to Wall, Wall Community Center, Wall, SD

---

**October 2-3**

First United Methodist Church Rummage Sale, 629 Kansas City St, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-4294

---

**October 2-3**

Oktoberfest, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

---

**October 3**

Cruiser Car Show & Street Fair, Main Street, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

---

**October 3**

Cowboys, Cowgirls and Cowcatchers Soiree, 6 p.m., South Dakota State Railroad Museum, Hill City, SD, 605-574-9000



**Sept. 26**  
Wheelin' to Wall, Wall, SD,

---

**October 3-4**

Marshall Area Gun Show, Red Baron Arena, 1651 Victory Dr., Marshall, MN, 507-401-6227

---

**October 3-4**

Harvest Festival, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

---

**October 3-18**

Pumpkin Festival, Canton, SD, 605-987-5171

---

**October 10**

Annual Fall Festival, 4-6 p.m., Fairburn United Methodist Church, Fairburn, SD 605-255-4329

---

**October 10**

Groton's 5th Annual Pumpkin Fest, Groton City Park, Groton, SD, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lunch Served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

---

**October 10-11**

Pumpkin Festival, 27249 SD Hwy 115, Harrisburg, SD, 605-743-2424

---

**October 24**

Ladies Day Shopping Extravaganza, The Crossing Bar, Mina, SD, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

---

**October 29-30**

Helping with Horsepower's Phobia - A Haunted Trail, Reclamation Ranch, 40789 259th St., Mitchell, SD, 7-11 p.m. 605-770-2867

---

**October 31-November 1**

Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Assn. Sioux Falls Classic Gun Show, 3200 W Maple St. Sioux Falls, SD, 605-630-2199

---

**November 7**

Silver Star Bazaar, Lake Norden Community Center, Lake Norden, SD, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

---

**November 7**

Helping with Horsepower's RibFest, 4 p.m., Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, Contact mattcarter1421@gmail.com to Register Your Team

---

**November 14**

Annual Holiday Extravaganza, Sisseton Area Merchants and Crafters, Sisseton, SD, 605-698-7425

---

**November 21-22**

Winterfest: A Winter Arts Festival, 203 S Washington Street, Aberdeen, SD, 605-226-1557

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.