



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**RENVILLE-SIBLEY**  
**JANUARY 2022 VOL. 22 NO. 9**

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Cross country skiing is a way to keep moving and maintain physical and mental health during the winter months.

## **Skiing for fun and health**

**Nordic skiers find  
paradise on the snow**  
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**Car dealers adapt to  
EV market**  
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# Take care in selecting electrical and solar contractors

**Fritz Ebinger, J.D.**

Clean Energy  
Resource Teams -  
Rural Energy  
Development

U of MN Extension -  
Regional Sustainable  
Development  
Partnerships

We are all accustomed to blind mailings, cold calls, and emails from salespersons to buy this new thing or refinance that old thing. These same sales pitches extend to clean energy technologies like solar, small wind and biomass as well. Though these technologies are often well-suited for many rural businesses and farms, it is important not to get swept up in a sales pitch or the novelty of the technology without a little due diligence.

The large majority of solar technology and renewable energy vendors operate ethically, because honest service is in their long-term business interests. Nonetheless, there are a few bad apples who ruin the bunch by being pushy and overstating energy production or financial performance. Just like selecting a contractor for a construction project or remodeling job, a little research is deserved in selecting solar and electrical contractors.

In Minnesota, the installation of racking, placing and securing solar modules, and the installation of all electrical wiring and electrical equipment must be performed by a licensed electrical contractor or their registered employees. Before hiring a contractor, signing anything or paying any money, ask for the contractor's license number and call the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry to verify the renewable energy vendor is licensed or if they have a disciplinary history. You can also visit the DLI License Lookup Tool ([dli.mn.gov](http://dli.mn.gov)) or call 651-284-5069.

Be sure to ask about the installer's credentials. For example, the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners ([nabcep.org](http://nabcep.org)) requires that NABCEP-certified solar PV installers receive training before being certified and that they receive ongoing training to maintain certification. This NABCEP training often dovetails with Minnesota's electrician licensure requirements and offers the benefit of specialized knowledge in the State Electric Code's solar requirements and solar technology.

Do not be afraid to request references. You

should feel free to call references and ask about their experience with the solar or renewable energy installer. Did the installer meet the reference's expectations? How were issues with permitting and interconnection resolved, if any? Did the installer work hard to resolve any issues? Were they responsive in the years after installation? A few short conversations with references can tell a lot. And if the vendor cannot offer any references, well, then you have your answer.

**A few short conversations with references can tell a lot. And if the vendor cannot offer any references, well, then you have your answer.**

In addition to state licensure and legal requirements, many renewable energy vendors also affirm a code of ethics in their business associations. For example, members of the Minnesota Solar Energy Industries Association ([MNSEIA.org](http://MNSEIA.org)) abide by 10 canons. A few of these customer-oriented canons include maintaining high ethical standards when advertising, selling and installing solar equipment. MNSEIA members shall present honestly the capabilities, performance and energy savings potential of solar products. They shall offer clear and understandable warranties of the equipment and installation service, and also be professional and faithful agents for each client. Perhaps most importantly, MNSEIA members avoid all practices that are likely to discredit the solar profession or deceive the public. After all, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. 642604

If you are considering a renewable energy project, lists of installers are available on MNSEIA's "Find an Installer" ([mnseia.org](http://mnseia.org)), the UMN's Clean Energy Resource Teams site ([mncerts.org](http://mncerts.org)) under "Tools & Guides," and the MN Dept. of Commerce's Solar Business Directory. You are also welcome to contact CERTs staff at 612-626-1028 with any questions about solar and renewable energy matters.

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### RENVILLE-SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

(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  
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Clint Olson – Journeyman Lineman  
Kathy Ridl – Office Assistant  
Shane Suess – PT Janitor  
Lenae Wordes – Communications Manager

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

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

# Holly Bratsch is selected Scholar of the Month

Congratulations to Holly Bratsch from Renville County West High School for being selected as the November Scholar of the Month.

Holly was nominated because of her work ethic, ability to stand up for herself and make moral decisions based on what is right, not what is popular.

Holly and her FFA team placed third at the national FFA Convention, and she received an individual award at the convention. She is also a three-sport athlete, involved in band, choir, student council and NHS.

Renville-Sibley Co-op Power salutes Holly Bratsch as the November



Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Month. More information about the Scholar of the Month program can be found on our website [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop) under the Customer Service tab.

## Member Notice

Renville-Sibley has received several inquiries on what local contractors need to do if they are interested in bidding on the new building project. We have hired a general contractor, Breitbach Construction Co., who will hold a public bidding process. The public notice was placed in local newspapers published the week of Dec. 13 and 27. If you are interested in participating in the bidding process, please contact Ryan Breitbach at 320-697-5525 or [ryanb@bcc-mn.com](mailto:ryanb@bcc-mn.com).

## Save the date!

### Member Informational Meetings:

Renville-Sibley will be hosting our annual member informational meetings throughout the service area Feb. 19 and the week of Feb. 21. More information about the meeting dates will be published in the February issue of Cooperative Connections.

### Annual Meeting:

Renville-Sibley's annual meeting will be held on March 31 at the Redwood Area Community Center in Redwood Falls. More annual meeting information will be provided in upcoming newsletters.

## Comparative Report

	Current YTD through October 31, 2021	One Year Ago YTD through October 31, 2020	10 Years Ago YTD through October 31, 2011
average # of Consumers	1,882	1,882	1,927
kWhs purchased	148,779,636	142,751,625	130,764,426
Cost of purchased power	\$9,678,672.87	\$9,030,309.60	\$5,942,151.55

# Crunch the numbers on New Year's savings in your home

If your New Year's resolution to spend less and save more always fizzles out by March, don't fret. With a few simple adjustments in your house, you can save money on your energy bill each month. Here's how:

- Save up to 20 percent on heating by installing a programmable thermostat and setting it to automatically lower the heat when you leave the house for more than five hours and when the family goes to bed for the night.
- Save 1–3 percent on heating costs for each degree you turn the thermostat down. For optimal savings, set the thermostat at 68 degrees while at home and 65 degrees at night and before you leave the house for an extended period.
- Save up to 20 percent on heating and cooling bills by sealing air leaks around doors and windows with caulk and weatherstripping. This inexpensive energy saver will pay for itself within a year.
- Save at least 25 percent on air conditioning when you replace your old, inefficient central AC with one that has a seasonal energy-efficiency ratio of 14 or higher.
- Save up to 40 percent on what you spend to run your refrigerator by replacing an old unit with a new Energy Star-certified model.
- Save more than 50 percent on energy for cooking when you use a microwave oven instead of a conventional oven to heat meals.
- Save more than 10 percent on your water heating bill by lowering the water heater temperature from 140 degrees to 120.
- Save 75 percent or more on energy for lighting by replacing incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs. They also last about 25 times longer. Switching out CFLs for LEDs will reduce lighting costs as much as 50 percent.
- Consistently turning off lights when not in use or when natural light is sufficient can reduce lighting expenses 10–40 percent.
- Enable the power management function on computers and sleep setting on appliances.

## CO-OPS IN ACTION



South Dakota's electric cooperatives deliver affordable, reliable power to our members in every corner of the state. But we do so much more!

Visit our Co-op Connections Plus YouTube channel and you'll see co-ops in action at local community events, youth leadership programs and charitable fundraising events like the annual Line Patrol Charity Ride. We've got South Dakota covered!

Simply scan the QR code to the right and be sure to subscribe!



## Keep out of power boxes

### Trinity Kurtenbach

Trinity knows that those green “power boxes” that are often seen near homes or along roadways contain electrical equipment that can pose a hazard. Trinity is the child of Cory Kurtenbach and Tonya Buchholz-Froehlich of Nunda and attends Sioux Valley Elementary in Volga. They are members of Sioux Valley Energy.

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.



# SOUPS FOR THE SOUL

## SMASHED POTATO SOUP

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup coarsely chopped carrot  
1/2 cup coarsely chopped celery  
1 pkg 14 oz refrigerated mashed potatoes  
1 14.5 oz can chicken broth  
1/2 cup milk  
1 garlic clove pressed  
1/4 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp pepper  
1/2 cup sour cream  
2 Tbsp fresh parsley

### METHOD

Place mashed potatoes in medium saucepan. Gradually add broth and milk, whisking until mixture is smooth. Stir in carrot, celery, garlic and salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, 10 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in sour cream and parsley. Top with desired toppings. 4 servings; 5 cups. Optional toppings: sliced green onion, shredded cheddar cheese, cooked, crumbled bacon.

**Becki Hausser, Tripp**

## CREAMY CHICKEN GNOCCHI SOUP

### Ingredients:

6 Tbsp butter  
2 Tbsp olive oil  
2 cups onion  
1 cup diced celery  
4 garlic cloves (minced)  
1/2 cup all-purpose flour  
4 cups half and half  
1 (32 oz) container chicken broth (add more for a thinner soup)  
1 Tbsp thyme  
2 cups carrots  
2 cups spinach or kale  
3 cups diced, cooked chicken  
2 (16 oz) packages potato gnocchi  
Salt and pepper to taste

### METHOD

Add butter and olive oil to large pot over medium heat. Sauté onions, celery, and garlic until tender. Add flour to create a roux and stir for one minute. Slowly add the half and half and chicken broth. Stir until it thickens. Add the thyme, carrots, spinach, chicken and gnocchi. Cook for 5-10 minutes until gnocchi is cooked and soup thickened. If soup gets too thick just add more chicken broth. Salt and pepper to taste.

**Tracey Burkett, Olivet**

## CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP

### Ingredients:

1-1.5 lbs chicken thighs bone in or boneless (skinless)  
3 bay leaves  
5 peppercorns, whole  
1 small whole onion peeled, hairy end intact  
3 large garlic cloves  
12 cups chicken stock low sodium  
2 large carrots diced  
2 cups potatoes diced  
1 1/2 cups egg noodles or any short pasta  
1 1/2 tbsp salt  
1 tbsp olive oil  
3 tbsp fresh dill, parsley or green onion finely chopped

### METHOD

In a large Dutch oven or pot, add chicken thighs, bay leaves, peppercorns, onion, 2 garlic cloves and stock. On high heat, bring soup to a boil covered then move lid to the side a bit to keep soup clear. Cook for 20 minutes, removing foam as it rises to the top with a mesh strainer. Dice potatoes and carrots. Chop dill and grate garlic. Add potatoes and carrots, stir and reduce heat to medium. Cook with half lid open for 5 minutes. Add pasta, stir and cook for another 5 minutes. Discard onion, bay leaves and peppercorns with mesh strainer. Add salt, olive oil, grated garlic clove, dill and ground black pepper to taste. You can also shred chicken right in the pot. Let sit covered for 5 minutes.

**ifoodreal.com**

Please send your favorite soup 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.

# Renville-Sibley directors approve capital credit retirement

Lenae Wordes

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association

Capital credits can be confusing to new members and sometimes even more seasoned members could use a refresher course. So let me explain how capital credits work.

First of all, Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is a member-owned company. As a cooperative, our main goal is to provide at-cost electric service, not to make a profit. Anyone who uses or purchases electric energy is a member. As a member, you invest in the efficient operation of your co-op. Unlike an investor-owned utility, we don't pay dividends or other amounts to shareholders who don't purchase electricity from us.

Generally, co-ops operate at cost, meaning they collect enough revenue to run and expand the business without over-charging members. At the end of each year, any excess revenue is allocated back to the membership in the form of capital credits. The allocation is based on the amount of electricity each member consumed during the year. Please see the article published in the September 2021 Cooperative Connections newsletter for more details on the 2020 margin that was allocated to the members.

When our board of directors determines it is financially feasible and prudent, and when we meet the financial requirements stated in our loan documents, we retire capital credits. At the October board meeting, the board of directors approved a disbursement of \$400,000 retirement to be applied on the December statement. Checks will be issued to inactive members who have a capital credit balance in the years being retired. Roughly 1,440 members will receive a credit on their electric statement and approximately 570 inactive members will receive a check.

This retirement reflects the remaining 1998 and 1999 allocations and 54.1% of the 2000 allocation from East River Electric, the remaining 2001 and 71.2% of the 2002 allocation from Basin Electric. East River and Basin Electric are our Generation and Transmission Cooperatives (G&Ts). Renville-Sibley will retire approximately 7.4% of the 2020 allocation.

Below are some common capital credit questions. If you have more questions regarding capital credits, please contact the office.

### COMMON CAPITAL CREDITS QUESTIONS:

#### *What are capital credits?*

An electric cooperative operates on an at-cost basis by annually "allocating" to each member, based upon the member's purchase of

electricity, operating revenue remaining at the end of the year. Later, as financial condition permits, these allocated amounts - capital credits - are retired. Capital credits represent the most significant source of equity for Renville-Sibley. Since a cooperative's members are also the people the co-op serves, capital credits reflect each member's ownership in, and contribution of capital to, the cooperative. This differs from dividends investor-owned utilities pay shareholders, who may or may not be customers of the utility.

#### *Where does the money come from?*

Member-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops set rates to generate enough money to pay operating costs, make payments on any loans, and provide an emergency reserve. At the end of each year, we subtract operating expenses from the operating revenue collected during the year. The balance is called an operating "margin."

#### *How are margins allocated?*

Margins are allocated to members as capital credits based on their purchases from the cooperative—how much power the member used. Member purchases may also be called patronage.

#### *Do investor-owned or municipal utilities retire capital credits?*

No. Within the electric industry, capital credits only exist at not-for-profit electric cooperatives owned by their members.

#### *Are capital credits retired every year?*

Each year, the Board of Directors makes a decision on whether to retire capital credits based on the financial health of the cooperative. During some years, the co-op may experience high growth in the number of new accounts, or severe storms may result in the need to spend additional funds to repair lines. These and other events might increase costs and decrease member equity, causing the board to not retire capital credits. For this reason, Renville-Sibley's ability to retire capital credits reflects the cooperative's strength and financial stability.

#### *Do I lose my capital credits in the years the co-op decides not to make retirements?*

No. All capital credits allocated for every year members have been served are maintained until such time as the board retires them. Prior to this year, Renville-Sibley has retired all capital credits through 1996.

#### *What years will be retired this December?*

Renville-Sibley will be retiring the remaining 1998 and 1999 allocation and 54.1% of the 2000 allocations from East River Electric, the remaining 2001 and 71.2% of the 2002 allocation from Basin Electric and 7.4% of the 2020 Renville-Sibley allocation.

*How much will be retired in total in 2021?*  
Approximately \$400,000 was retired in December.

#### *I did not get electric service from Renville-Sibley in 1998, will I get any retirement?*

Maybe. Although you will not receive a retirement from 1998, you will receive a retirement if you purchased electric service in 1999, 2000, 2001 or 2020. This credit was applied to the December electric statement.

#### *How much has Renville-Sibley paid in total capital credits retirements since it began in 1938?*

Renville-Sibley will have paid just over \$13.7 million in capital credits retirements to current and former members by the end of this year.

#### *How often do members receive capital credit retirements?*

The Board of Directors makes a decision each year by November whether or not to retire capital credits. When the cooperative is strong enough financially and member equity levels high enough, the board directs staff to retire some portion of past years' capital credits.

#### *How will the retirement work?*

Active members received a credit on their December electric statement. Inactive members were mailed a check provided the amount is over \$5. Due to the expense involved in printing checks, the minimum retirement check that will be written will be \$5.

#### *What if I have moved?*

If you move or no longer have electric service with Renville-Sibley, it is important that you inform the cooperative of your current address, so that future retirements can be properly mailed to you. If you purchased electricity during the years being retired, then you will receive a capital credit retirement, even if you move out of our service area. If we have your current address, we will send your retirement check by mail.

#### *How many people will get retirements?*

Roughly 1440 active members will have a credit applied to their account and about 570 inactive members will receive a check.

#### *Can I donate my retirement back to the cooperative?*

Yes. If you would like to donate your retirement back to the cooperative, please call our office at 800-826-2593 or email our communications manager, Lenae Wordes, at [lwordes@renville-sibley.coop](mailto:lwordes@renville-sibley.coop) for instructions. All donated capital credit retirements will be designated to our scholarship fund and will be awarded at the next annual meeting to students in our local communities.

# Are you interested in a new adventure?

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association is beginning to plan for the 84th Annual meeting of the membership that will be held March 31, 2022 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. Whitey Hinderman's term will expire in 2022.

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. Wayland Zaske's term will expire in 2022.

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. Gary Eekhoff's term will expire in 2022.

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 last Monday of every month, beginning at 9 a.m. in December, January and February at 8 a.m. the rest of the year. 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 and all personal expenses.

If you are interested in becoming a candidate, contact the Renville-Sibley office at 1-800-826-2593 before Jan. 3 for further information.





# FUN AND FITNESS ON THE SNOW

An estimated 5.2 million Americans participate in cross country skiing while reaping the rewards of being active during the winter months.

## Nordic Ski Club promotes the benefits of cross country skiing on mind, body and soul

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Many winter sports enthusiasts are firm in their belief that snow skis are meant to travel in one direction only – downhill.

But members of the Black Hills Nordic Ski Club use their skinny skis to take them wherever the trail may lead.

The club's winter playground is located at Big Hills XC Trails seven miles southwest of Spearfish where its

members have frolicked in the snow since the 1970s. Early prospectors named the area after they encountered steep grades in their pursuit of gold and fortune, but these days people flock to Big Hill for fitness and fun.

With more than 1,200 Facebook followers, the group invites not only cross country skiers to enjoy the 13.6 miles of trails but also skate skiers, fat bikers, snow shoers and even snow man makers.

Immediate past president Josh Wangeman explains there are an

estimated 5.2 million Nordic skiing enthusiasts throughout the country who seek both physical and mental health restoration along the trails.

After spending his day teaching science to his eighth graders at Spearfish Middle School, Wangeman likes to unwind in the woods.

"I've found that it's a good way to escape the crowds and participate in the wonders of nature," he said. "It's a great sport if you're looking to find some solace, enjoy the outdoors and get a good workout at the same time."

Wangeman, who also enjoys swimming and cross country running, fell into the sport after joining the National Guard six years ago. He began training for the biathlon, a competition where skiers travel from check point to check point with a .22 caliber rifle and shoot at targets. He has represented the Guard at competitions in Minnesota, Wyoming, Vermont and Utah.

Like many outdoor activities, cross country skiing has seen a significant surge in interest in the past year. One of the top attractions of the sport is that the cost of entry is relatively small. For instance, a quality mountain bike can cost thousands of dollars and other pastimes require a substantial financial investment for equipment, gear, fees and more.

"You can find some used gear and get everything you need for around \$100, or \$300 for new equipment," he said. "Trail access is free and you'll be outdoors getting some great exercise. As far as learning the technique, it's a straightforward process that's almost as simple as walking."

Wangeman said skiing across the snowy terrain can be a cinch compared to the work that's required to keep the trails maintained. Members of the Nordic Ski Club join forces with the Grooming Alliance of





Cross country skiers receive both the mental and physical health benefits of a sport that's economical to pursue.

Spearfish and log hundreds of hours of labor and donate hundreds of dollars each season to keep the pathways well-groomed for all to share. Some trails are designated for snow shoeing and fat biking only. Volunteers have also built a warming shelter in a meadow that's situated among the five loop trails where skiers can take a break from the wind and cold.

Aside from the Big Hills XC Trails, the Black Hills National Forest area has other sites suitable for cross country skiing. The Eagle Cliff Network is located 15 miles southwest of Lead and offers 20 miles of trails that cross open meadows and meander through Ponderosa pine forests. Half the trails are rated "difficult."

Bear Mountain is situated 10 miles

southwest of Hill City and features rocky ridges, abundant wildlife and scenic overlooks along its 16-mile trail system.

Additional pathways in the area can be found at Beaver Creek, Bear Butte State Park, Custer State Park and portions of the Centennial and Mickelson Trails.

Here are a few helpful tips for those who are thinking about taking to the wintry trails:

1. Start your day right with a hot beverage.
2. Pack well, and don't forget gloves, hat and extra socks. Layer, layer, layer.
3. Choose the right place to ski with good grooming and a reasonable and amount of flat terrain.
4. Consider taking lessons to

### Cross country skiing sites

These state parks offer trails for cross-country skiers to enjoy:

- Adams Homestead and Nature Preserve
- Beaver Creek Nature Area
- Big Sioux Recreation Area
- George S. Mickelson Trail
- Hartford Beach State Park
- LaFramboise Island Nature Area
- Lake Herman State Park
- Lake Poinsett Recreation Area
- Newton Hills State Park
- Oakwood Lakes State Park
- Pelican Lake Recreation Area
- Richmond Lake Recreation Area
- Sica Hollow State Park
- Walker's Point Recreation Area



Volunteers keep the trails groomed for cross country skiing at Big Hill and also constructed a warming shelter, a popular site on cold and windy winter days.

improve your form.

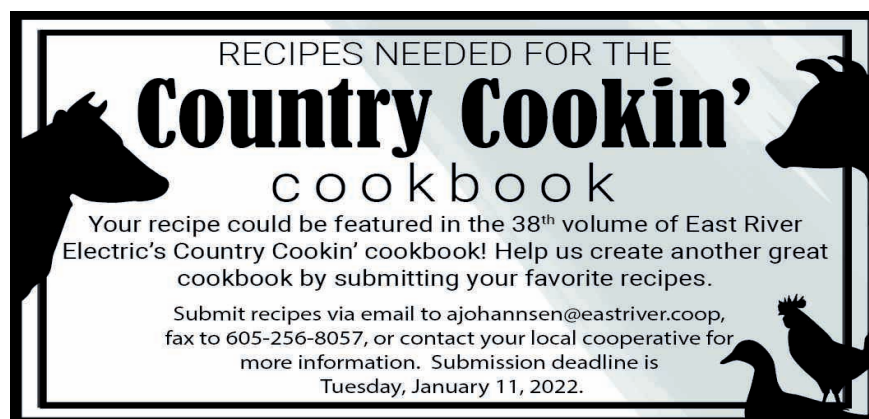
5. Be prepared to fall. Acquiring balance takes time.

6. Keep your energy up with a ready snack such as a granola bar or an apple.

7. Have fun. Explore a bit and lose yourself in the rhythm of the sport.

8. Don't forget to look around you, and keep an eye out for wildlife or scenic vistas.

9. Reward yourself! You worked hard and did something adventurous.



## 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, P.O. 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

## WHERE'S THE NUMBER?

Last month Mark Jansen did not find his member number in the newsletter. The credit will increase to a value of \$30. Another number has been hidden in this newsletter. If you find your number and call the office by the 4th of January, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

## FOR SALE

**For Sale:** Locally grown honey. Sizes are: 12 oz. bears, 1 lb. 8 oz. bottles and 2 lb. bottles.

Lenae Wordes  
Renville, MN  
320-522-0789

**For Sale:** 2-ton cherry picker, Engine stand, Dutch barn doors.

Stan Dworshak  
Redwood Falls, MN  
507-640-0857

**For Sale:** Straw, 5x6 net wrapped, 1000# plus, \$40/ bale, 2021 crop.

Dean Schroeder  
Renville, MN  
320-522-1374

**Wanted:** Vintage Electric Ceramic Christmas tree, also gas golf cart.

Donna Hanlon  
Franklin, MN  
507-557-2441



## November board meeting highlights

The November board meeting was held on Monday, Nov. 29 at 8 a.m. All board members were present except Whitey Hinderman. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Newville, Cindy Mertens, and Gene Alex.

The board reviewed and approved the following items:

- Minutes of the Oct. 25 board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of October
- Safety report for October
- Nominating Committee Appointments
- MREA Annual Certification of voting delegates
- Brady Martz Audit Engagement Letter
- Policy 209 – Capitalization Threshold – revised
- Policy 418 – Acceptable Use of Credit Cards by Members – revised
- Policy 530 – Medical Insurance – Health Savings Account – revised

### • 2022 Market Rate

The board reviewed:

- Capital credits transferred
- 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 October (unaudited)
- Organization activities
- Facilities update
- East River update
- Basin Electric update
- NRECA update
- MREA update
- Linecrew work in progress, equipment update, and outage update
- Accounts receivable

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

## NOTICE:

The January board meeting will be held on Monday, Jan. 31 at 9 a.m.

## Operation Round Up news

The next meeting of the Operation Round Up Board of Trustees will be Jan. 12, 2022. Applications for donations can be found at [www.renville-sibley.coop](http://www.renville-sibley.coop) under the Your Co-op tab. Applications are due to the office by Jan. 1 to be considered at this meeting.

**Operation Round Up Thank you** - Thank you for your generous donation to Renville Area Ecumenical youth! We look forward to our mission trip to Quad Cities this June. Your donation will help us reach many people in that community and provide our youth with the opportunity to serve others. Thank you again for your generosity.

Ryan & Brittany Hebrink

Rich & Krista Schrupp

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## OUTAGE REPORT

Outages affecting 10 members or more:

**Date: 10-23-21**

Time off: 3:06 p.m.

Time on: 4:31 p.m.

Substation: Troy

Cause: Farm equipment

**Date: 10-23-21**

Time off: 3:36 p.m.

Time on: 6:06 p.m.

Substation: Troy

Cause: Farm equipment

**Date: 10-23-21**

Time off: 3:47 p.m.

Time on: 4:40 p.m.

Substation: Troy

Cause: Farm equipment

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



# CAR DEALERS ADAPT TO EV MARKET

Jesse Johnson of Jan Busse Ford in Highmore keeps customers informed of the latest industry news. *Photo by Billy Gibson.*

## Car dealers adapt to emerging EV industry by making new investments and keeping their customers informed

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Keeping up with the emergence of the electric vehicle market is like listening to the hushed intonations of the announcer at the end of a 1960s-style soap opera.

Will a reliable charging network be constructed?

Will EVs become more affordable?

Will drivers ever overcome their range anxiety?

Will the political winds change direction?

Tune in tomorrow. Same time. Same channel.

Scott Shepherd is no fan of soap operas, but he's happy to give you his take on the topic. Shepherd is a career educator who has taken the EV leap and last June invested in Ford's debut model: the Mustang Mach-E. Shepherd recently delivered a presentation

describing his experience and insights to a group of electric cooperative representatives.

Subtitled "The Good, the Kind of Bad, and the Ugly," the presentation was intended to be an unbiased, unvarnished and apolitical analysis of the investment he made last year. Though Shepherd admits to being somewhat of an EVangelist, audience members were eager to hear Shepherd's comments to help them convey useful, accurate information to their electric cooperative consumers back in their respective service areas.

On the positive side, Shepherd said the advanced technology and the instant torque of his Mach-E deliver an exciting driving experience, and he likes doing his part to reduce emissions. His dealer, Jesse Johnson at Jan Busse Ford (Pioneer Garage, Inc.) in Highmore, was knowledgeable and ready to answer all of his questions and concerns. He noted

that factoring in a federal tax credit of up to \$7,500, he was able to save nearly \$1,000 in his first 5,000 miles of travel in the Mach-E.

"There's no gas tank to fill at over \$3 per gallon and no oil to change," he said. "A trip to Sioux Falls cost me \$6 in electricity, compared to \$49 in gas for an ICE (internal combustion engine)."

**250**  
Approximate  
number of EV  
charging stations  
throughout the  
Upper Midwest.

On the not-so-good side, Shepherd pointed to the high front-end purchase price, reduced range during the winter months, the lack of Level 2 chargers in homes and the fact that traditional vehicles sometimes block access to public charging stations. He said in the rush to build out a reliable system of charging stations throughout the region,



standardized practices have yet to be developed.

“There can be a lot of inconsistent pricing with public charging stations,” he said. “Some require a connection fee plus a per-minute fee as high as 50 cents per kilowatt hour. The networks and the number of phone apps that are out there can be confusing, and I’ve also run across some charging stations that were malfunctioning.”

He pointed out that electric cooperatives, municipal utilities and investor-owned utilities in South Dakota and Minnesota are working together to create a charging network for public use that will reduce range anxiety for EV drivers. Presently, there are nine Tesla supercharger stations and four non-Tesla chargers in South Dakota, as well as more than 250 throughout the region and dozens more for the use of guests at hotels, campgrounds and other private properties.

Electrify America Fast recently announced the company is planning to install a bank of supercharging stations in Wall sometime in January, and state officials are looking to continue to invest money into light-duty charging stations from the second round of the Volkswagen Electric Vehicle Charging Station Program.

Johnson, Shepherd’s sales agent, said these days he’s getting lots of questions from scores of potential buyers who are ponying up the \$100 refundable



Jesse Johnson is shown adjusting the drive mode in the Ford Mustang Mach-E.

*Photo by Billy Gibson.*

fee at [www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com) to get placed on a waiting list for not only the Mach-E but also the new Ford F-150 Lightning, the company’s first electric-powered pick up. In fact, he has a personal spot on the Lightning list along with more than 160,000 others across the country. Tesla, GMC, Rivian and Chevrolet are also introducing their own pick ups.

“We’re getting calls from all kinds of people - retirees, commuting moms and dads, gear heads, collectors, technology buffs, environmentalists, farmers, you name it,” said Johnson, who has already sent two early adopting customers home with the Mustang Mach-E and has a third on his lot.

Johnson said car and truck dealers will have to redouble their efforts to provide service after the sale as the EV industry continues to emerge. He keeps his customers, including the many who are on the purchaser’s waiting list, apprised of any new developments

in the market. For example, when manufacturers began recommending that owners refrain from exceeding an 80 percent charge - unless going on an extended trip - to extend the car’s battery life, Johnson made sure his customers got the memo.

In preparing for the transportation future, car dealers are having to make significant investments in education for their sales force, training for technicians and new service and maintenance equipment to accommodate EVs.

“EVs are fun to drive with their immediate torque and safe-driving technology,” Johnson said. “These vehicles are an excellent option for those wanting to forget about the price of gas, reduce maintenance and emissions. We understand they may not fit everyone’s lifestyle, but we see a definite place for them in the future.”

**160,000**  
Number of  
reservations made  
for the new Ford  
Lightning F-150 at  
[www.ford.com](http://www.ford.com).



Scott Shepherd is shown above talking with students at the Lake Area Technical College Automotive Technology Program about his experience as an EV owner.

Hot Beer  
Lousy Food  
Bad Service  
Welcome

# SHARING A PASSION FOR COMMUNITY THEATRE

Bev Raske (left) and Diane Drager (right) pretend to share a cold one on set. The two have co-directed several shows together.

## Performers in South Dakota and Minnesota express their passion on the community theatre stage

**Emily Costar**

[emily.costar@sdrea.coop](mailto:emily.costar@sdrea.coop)

When you think of theatre, what's the first image that comes to mind? Maybe it's Hamlet, dramatically pondering whether "to be or not to be" with skull in hand and a rapt audience before him. Perhaps you envision a chorus line under the bright lights of Broadway, all high kicks and jazz hands.

Or maybe you think of a packed community hall with the folks up on stage delivering heartfelt moments and big laughs. The cast and crew consists of neighbors, colleagues and family. They're up on that stage, not for widespread acclaim or fortune, but for the love of live performance. This is community theatre.

In Minnesota, the town of Renville is no stranger to the performing arts;

they have the Renville Friends of the Arts organization, founded in 2002 and currently led by self-described "theatre junkie" Bev Raske. She first graced the stage at Renville County West High School in ninth grade for a one-act play, and continues to perform over six decades later.

"We use the same stage I stepped on back then," Raske fondly recalled.

Friends of the Arts tries to do two plays a year, which are held at the high school. Their most recent production was *Clue* this past October. Raske said productions are a "cooperative venture," as they work with the school to coordinate facility use and support other events. Friends of the Arts can't always have the space to rehearse, but that isn't a deal breaker.

"We've done a lot of rehearsing in my basement," Raske said with a chuckle.

It's that can-do attitude that's helped Friends of the Arts successfully apply for grants, such as the one that enabled them to acquire their own sound system, and then new LED lighting for the stage in a joint venture with the school.

It's also the attitude which led Joel Bakker, local farmer and Renville-Sibley Cooperative member-owner, to get involved with Friends of the Arts as an actor. Bakker was quick to applaud Raske's commitment to live theatre, saying, "She's a master of doing plays – she's the one that got me started."

Most recently seen onstage in 2020's *Twisted Christmas Carol*, Bakker has been in 10 plays with Friends of the Arts. As he put it, "I guess I enjoy being goofy in front of people. For some reason I don't have a fear!"

Bakker enjoys being involved because the productions provide folks with good entertainment they can come and see right in their area without having to travel. He also appreciates how close-knit the cast members get during a show, calling them "a second family."





Friends of the Arts also does musicals! One of their most recent productions was *Polyester the Musical*, a disco-style musical comedy.

And good news for those who are interested: Friends of the Arts is looking to expand that family.

"We don't want to end up being a bunch of gray-haired ladies trying to keep things going," Raske wryly noted. "We want new people with new ideas."

And as the organization celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2022, it's the perfect time for new folks to get involved.

Renville Friends of the Arts isn't the only community theatre group with an impressive history, though. In South Dakota, there's the Hayes Drama Club. Hayes itself is a small town of less than 100 people, but each year the community hall gets packed full of people from the surrounding areas, excited to see what the club has in store. And just this past November, the club put on its 68th annual Hayes play.

"We're the longest continuously running drama club in South Dakota!" Jack Mortenson proclaimed. He recently played Brad St. Clair in this year's Hayes play, *The One Who Got Away*.

The club's success shows a distinct passion for community theatre in the area, with many of its actors and volunteers traveling from surrounding areas to be a part of it. Mortenson himself regularly drove over 30 miles to and from Hayes to be in this year's show. Beyond the dedication of its participants,

there's a lot of community history in the club as well.

"Three generations of my family have been in the Hayes Drama Club. It's tradition at this point," said Mortenson, who has been in three Hayes plays already and is looking forward to future involvement as well.

Auditions for the annual play are usually held a couple months ahead of time at the Hayes Hall. And the audition details, such as time and date, are generally spread through word of mouth. So, if you find yourself wanting to join in on the theatrical fun, it wouldn't hurt to join the Hayes Community group on Facebook to help stay in the know.

Renville Friends of the Arts and the Hayes Drama Club are just two out of hundreds of community theatre groups scattered across Minnesota and South Dakota. Live theatre is more than just national



For a few nights every year, Hayes Hall gets packed to standing-room only. West Central Electric Cooperative provides the hall's electrical power and is an annual sponsor of the Hayes play.

tours in big, urban cities. It's also the folks in your town coming together to deliver a heartfelt production at the local school or community hall just down the road.

So the next time you find yourself in the mood to sit back and have a few laughs, maybe shed a few tears and be immersed in another world for a couple hours – consider checking in on your local theatre group to see what they've been up to. You just might be surprised by what your community has in store.



Joel Bakker (center) in a cast photo from his most recent production with Friends of the Arts, *Twisted Christmas Carol*.

Want to get involved and stay up-to-date with Renville Friends of the Arts? Go give their Facebook page a like and follow at: [www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-360087927337206](https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Arts-360087927337206)

To keep up with the latest happenings in Hayes (including the Hayes Drama Club), go join the public Hayes Community group at: [www.facebook.com/groups/144509355581709](https://www.facebook.com/groups/144509355581709)

**61st Annual Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo**  
**January 28-February 5, 2022**



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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

**DECEMBER 21-25**  
**Fort Sisseton Drive Thru Christmas Light Display**  
 11907 434th Avenue, Lake City, SD, 605-448-5474

**DECEMBER 23-24**  
**1880 Train Holiday Express**  
 222 Railroad Avenue, Hill City, SD, 605-574-2222

**DECEMBER 26-31**  
**Christmas Nights of Lights**  
 Storybook Island, Rapid City, SD, 1-605-342-6357

**DECEMBER 26-31**  
**Garden Glow**  
 McCrory Gardens, Brookings, SD, 605-688-6707

**DECEMBER 31**  
**New Year's Eve With The Davis Sisters**  
 Performing Arts Center of Rapid City, Rapid City, SD, 605-348-4676

**JANUARY 1**  
**Winter Wonderland Nature Hike**  
 Big Sioux Recreation Area, Brandon, SD, 605-594-3824

**JANUARY 4-6**  
**Dakota Farm Show**  
 USD DakotaDome, Vermillion, SD, more info available at [dakotafarmshow.com](http://dakotafarmshow.com)

**JANUARY 7**  
**Neal McCoy**  
 The Dakota Event Center, Aberdeen, SD, 605-725-2641

**JANUARY 8**  
**Eric Church**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 14-15**  
**Deadwood Red Dirt Festival**  
 Deadwood Mountain Grand Event Center, Deadwood, SD, 605-559-0386

**JANUARY 15**  
**Burning Beetle**  
 10th Street, Custer, SD, find out more at [www.facebook.com/barkbeetleblues](http://www.facebook.com/barkbeetleblues)

**JANUARY 15-16**  
**Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association Gun Show**  
 Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-793-2347

**JANUARY 16**  
**Sioux Falls Izaak Walton League January Trap Shoot**  
 5000 N Oakview Place, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-332-9527

**JANUARY 16**  
**WWE Supershow**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 21-23**  
**That Golden Girls Show**  
 Orpheum Theater Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**JANUARY 22**  
**Reba McEntire**  
 Denny Sanford Premier Center, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-7288

**JANUARY 28-29**  
**Deadwood Pro Snocross Races**  
 Days of '76 Rodeo Grounds, Deadwood, SD, 605-578-1876

**JANUARY 28-29**  
**27th Annual Dinner Theater**  
 Reliance Legion Hall, Reliance, SD, call 605-730-0553 for more info and tickets

**JANUARY 28-31**  
**Lead Winterfest**  
 Various Locations, Lead, SD, call 605-584-1100

**JANUARY 28-FEBRUARY 6**  
**Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo**  
 Central States Fairgrounds & Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-355-3861

**JANUARY 29-30**  
**Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association Gun Show**  
 National Field Archery Building, Yankton, SD, 605-731-9154

**FEBRUARY 5**  
**Lake Hendricks Improvement Association Ice Fishing Derby**  
 Hendricks, MN, contact Tim at 507-828-2113 for registration and more information

**FEBRUARY 5**  
**Lakota Games on Ice**  
 3200 Indian Village Road, Mitchell, SD, 605-996-5473

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