

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
Pages 8-9

Car dealers adapt to EV market
Pages 12-13

Member Service Driven



Jeff Birkeland
CEO

We live in a device-driven world. Our smartphones, tablets, laptops and an assortment of other devices help us communicate and connect. Companies spend billions pushing out a steady drumbeat of messages and information, and we are constantly bombarded with one-way communication. But is anyone listening on the other end?

At West Central Electric, we are not only listening, we are eager to hear from you. Whether you text us, respond to a survey or social media post, send an email or simply stop by and chat in person, we thrive on your feedback. Connecting with you helps us keep pace with our community's priorities and needs.

Because we are a cooperative, we have a different way of operating. West Central Electric exists to provide safe, reliable and affordable energy to you, the members of the co-op. Equally important is our mission to enrich the lives of the members we serve. We hope you will consider us more than your

energy provider, but instead as a local business that supports our communities and powers economic development and prosperity for our members.

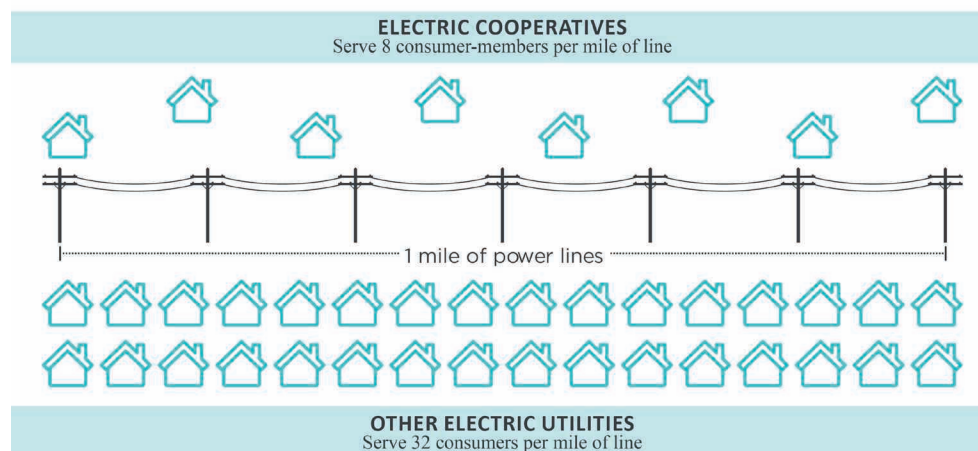
We are in the midst of significant changes in the energy sector, as technology and the drive for more renewables and a more balanced energy mix is impacting long-term planning. These are complex issues that we will be navigating in the coming months and years. This is why it's so important that we hear from you and other community members as we plot our course for the future.

West Central works to continually learn from our members about their priorities so that we can better serve you – because your electric co-op was built by the members, for the members. But we can only improve, adapt and effectively plan for the future if we have two-way communication.

For our co-op and communities to thrive now and in the future, we depend on hearing from you. I hope you will connect with us and let us know your perspective. You can always reach me at 605-669-8100 – I'm listening.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Did you know electric co-ops power fewer consumers per mile of line compared to other utilities?



**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS****WEST CENTRAL
ELECTRIC**

(USPS No. 018-988)

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**Our Mission is to Provide
Safe, Reliable Service
to our Member Owners.**

West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., is an
equal opportunity provider and employer.

**Call 605-669-8100
24-hour Dispatching**

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Design assistance by SDREA

Energy Savings for Your Business

Locally owned businesses are the backbone of our community. Now is always the perfect time to make sure your building is equipped for maximum energy savings.

- LED lighting for your business allows you to maintain your preferred brightness levels while keeping energy costs low. And don't forget about your outdoor lighting options as well as timers for automatic, overnight shutoff.
- Check any refrigeration to ensure it is running optimally and keeping items cool without setting the thermostat lower than necessary. Keep up with regular maintenance and freon refills to ensure safe and longer-lasting inventory.
- Electric motor-driven systems account for about 25 percent of all commercial energy use. For larger operations, variable speed drives may be necessary to optimize your energy consumption.
- Unplug all unnecessary or unused appliances and electronic equipment. Many of these devices continue to draw power even when they are turned off. Advanced power strips are a smart, low-cost upgrade.
- Make sure your HVAC system is sized correctly for your business space. If it is not, this could lead to inefficient operation or insufficient cooling. These tips can help you lower your energy use while keeping your operations humming.

West Central Electric knows that your bottom line is important when making these business operations decisions. If these or other energy-saving adjustments require purchases, be sure to check out our rebates section about ways to save.



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.

Do energy-saving measures in my home make a big difference?



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

For the average household, it depends on your home's efficiency and your habits. Your energy use is based on your home's equipment and how you use it. You might already have an efficient home and good energy use habits, or you might have room for improvement.

Energy keeps us comfortable in our homes, and our monthly bill is the associated cost for this energy use. To make energy-saving measures work in your home, it comes down to preventing energy waste while maintaining personal comfort in your home.

Let's take it back to the basics and see if we can find opportunities to save energy in your home. Filters, LEDs and thermostat settings are great places to start.

REPLACE FILTERS

If your home has a forced-air system, you have a filter. The filter needs to be checked regularly and replaced when it's dirty. A dirty filter can cause heating and air-conditioning systems to use 15 percent more energy, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

Since heating and air conditioning make up almost half of your energy use, replacing your filter when it looks dirty is a habit that can reduce energy waste.

UPGRADE TO LEDs

Upgrading your lighting to LEDs is a simple, low-cost way to cut energy use. Depending on your budget, you can do it all at once or change bulbs out over time. If you are going to replace a few at a time, prioritize the lights you use the most.

There are many LED options available. One major variation is the color temperature, which is listed on the packaging in Kelvin.

I recommend 2700K because it is similar to incandescent lighting. I also suggest ENERGY STAR®-rated products because they meet strict quality and efficiency standards, use up to 90 percent less energy and last 15 times longer than standard bulbs.



ADJUST YOUR THERMOSTAT

It's amazing how much difference a few degrees can make. By adjusting your thermostat to your home habits, you can save year-round on heating and cooling costs.

For winter months, the DOE recommends setting your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home and dialing it back 8 to 10 degrees when you leave the house or go to sleep. For summer, the recommendation is 78 degrees when you are home and 8 to 10 degrees warmer when you are away. Using a programmable or smart thermostat will allow you to set it according to your schedule.

Making these small changes in your routine will help improve your energy efficiency while maintaining comfort in your home.



Alex Cruz, Cheryl and Richard Skorupski, and Biana Garcia are shown at the El Corral restaurant in Clark.

Flyover County: Rick Skorupski spins tales of life in small town America

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

A place where folks wave with all five fingers.

A community where people actually listen to your response after asking how you're doing.

A home no closer than 10 miles to the nearest stop light.

Those were the requirements Rick Skorupski established when he decided he'd had enough of his native New Jersey and went looking for a more tranquil place to spend his retirement years. After conducting some extensive research, he and his wife Cheryl landed south of Frankfort nearly 20 years ago and have enjoyed the slower pace of life on their hobby farm in rural South Dakota.

While the Skorupskis have developed a wide social network and even recruited other family members to settle in Spink County, the acculturation process didn't go very smoothly at first. Turns out some folks in the community were convinced the Skorupskis were operating in a shroud of secrecy.

"They thought we were in the witness protection program," Rick recalls with a hearty chuckle. "Some of the neighbors offered to help us move our furniture in, and we declined, just trying not to be a bother. And then we'd make trips

back to New Jersey, so people started wondering what we were hiding."

But the suspicions didn't last long and the Skorupskis have been heavily involved in the local scene, participating in charitable projects, supporting civic events and contributing to the community in positive ways.

The Skorupskis' fondness for the people and culture of South Dakota is on full display in the six novels the two have published together with Rick as the writer and Cheryl the cover artist.

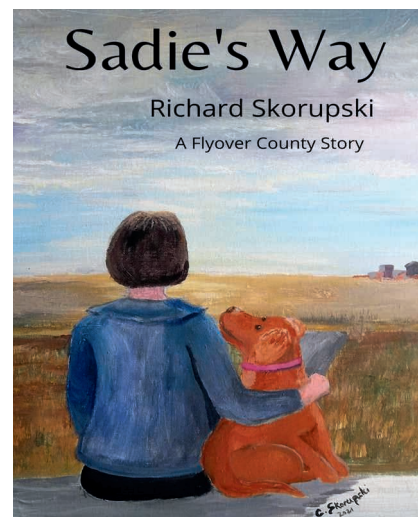
Rick, a member of Northern Electric and a U.S. Navy retiree, describes his self-published work as "nice stories about nice people." He got frustrated at all the anger, violence, sensationalism and negativity reflected in the media, so he decided to accentuate the positive aspects of life through his writing.

Inspired by those he befriended in his adopted home state, Skorupski produced a series of novels centered around an imaginary South Dakotan community called Helen (pop. 350 souls) located in fictitious Flyover County.

The plot lines involve local citizens, their shared hard-scrabble history as pioneers, settlers and sodbusters, and their interactions that take place in the tiny hamlet's schools, churches, diners, taverns and shops.

"I love my imaginary town and I feel I

know all the characters," Rick said. "I get up every morning and write what they tell me about their lives. Any time I have writer's block, it's because my imaginary friends stopped talking to me. But in the end, I hope my readers enjoy these stories as much as I enjoy writing them."



Skorupski was invited to participate in an exhibit at last year's South Dakota State Fair as part of the "Arts of the State Fair" program. During the event, he conversed with readers, discussed his characters, signed copies of his books and offered advice about his experience in self-publishing.

His books are sold through Amazon, and more information can be found by visiting www.flyovercounty.com.



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

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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.

Linderman Retires After 37 Years of Service

Presho Foreman Lyle Linderman will officially retire on Feb. 2, with 37 years of dedicated service at West Central Electric.

Originally from Timber Lake, Lyle has lived and worked in the Presho outpost for his entire career at West Central.



Lyle near the start of his career.

Lyle already had a couple of years in power line construction under his belt when he decided to go to Mitchell Tech for linemen school. His father worked for the REA in Timber Lake, so he was

well aware of the challenges and rewards of the job and the commitment it took to be a lineman.

When asked about memorable events in his career, Lyle said that the storms are too many to count, but his very first ice storm stands out. He was new on the job and was sent to help out at West River Electric. Lyle was paired up with another new guy from Wall. There was a lot of on-the-job training! The storms didn't bother him at all when he was younger, "I used to have fun during the storms, but not anymore. It's a young man's game!" said Lyle.

Technology has been the biggest game-changer in Lyle's career. When he started in Presho in 1984, there were no computers in the office. Now, Lyle says, "We do everything on the computer or iPads." He also stated that there has been a lot of line converted from overhead to underground in the last



couple of years. That used to be a rare occurrence.

Lyle says that his favorite part of the job and what he will miss most are his co-workers. He enjoys working with his crew.

He plans to do a bit of traveling, hunting and fishing, especially ice-fishing. He and his wife, Patrice, would also like to spend time with their grandchildren. Besides the grandchildren, his family also includes his grown children – sons, Cory and Jace, and daughter, Ali.

Congratulations on your retirement, Lyle! We wish you all the best.



Lyle operating the digger truck on a pole change.

WCE Offers \$20,000 in Scholarships

What is the West Central Electric Scholarship Program?

The West Central Electric Cooperative Scholarship Program is a program developed and designed to encourage and recognize the academic achievements of the children of West Central Electric Cooperative members.

By recently increasing the scholarship amount, West Central will now give out **20 \$1,000** scholarships!

How may the scholarship be used?

The West Central Electric scholarship program will award scholarships to students of rural electric cooperative members in five counties served by West Central Electric Cooperative.

The scholarships are for the 2022-2023 school year. The scholarships may be used for educational costs, housing, or educational materials. The student must enter college/vocational school in the fall of the year in which the scholarship is given.

Who is eligible to receive the scholarship?

The applicant must be a U.S. Citizen and the natural or adopted child of a member of West Central Electric



Cooperative. The applicant must be a graduating high school senior who is enrolled or planning to enroll in full-time graduate or undergraduate course of study at an accredited two-year or four-year college, or university. One half of the scholarship moneys will be given to students who are enrolled or planning to enroll in an accredited vocational/technical school.

How are the recipients selected?

The scholarships are awarded on the following guidelines. Work experience, participation in school and community activities, a statement explaining his/her educational and career goals, SAT/ACT scores and a written recommendation by a third party, not someone associated with the education system. A short essay is also required. Applications without all the listed criteria will not be considered.

How can I apply?

To apply, you must provide the required criteria and a completed scholarship application, which can be obtained at your local high school, at the West Central Electric Cooperative headquarters in Murdo, S.D., or on our website at www.wce.coop.

Applications should be returned to West Central Electric and must be received by **Feb. 11, 2022**, to be eligible. The applicant is responsible for submitting all the necessary information for the scholarship.

For further information contact Jessie Tucker at 605-669-8100.





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 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.



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

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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

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

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

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

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.