



# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



This year's sunflower crop is expected to be bountiful as market forces have driven up demand and prices

## Sensational Sunflowers

**Sunflower market blooms**

Pages 8-9

**Everyone's welcome in the Chislic Circle**

Pages 12-13

# WCEC programs designed for your convenience

In all of today's hustle and bustle, someone can easily miss things and accidentally let things slip through the cracks. Because of this, we periodically try to take a moment to remind the membership of some of the programs that we offer as your member-owned electric cooperative.

The first program I'd like to mention is our leveled billing program, in which your bill is based on a rolling 12-month outage. This is particularly beneficial for those with electric heat in the colder winter months.

Another useful service we offer is the SmartHub App that you can download directly to your phone or view in a web browser. SmartHub gives you access to all your billing information at any time of the day or night, and you can easily track your daily usage. Seeing how much electricity you use over a given time period enables you to gain greater control over your consumption so that you can make more informed decisions in your household.

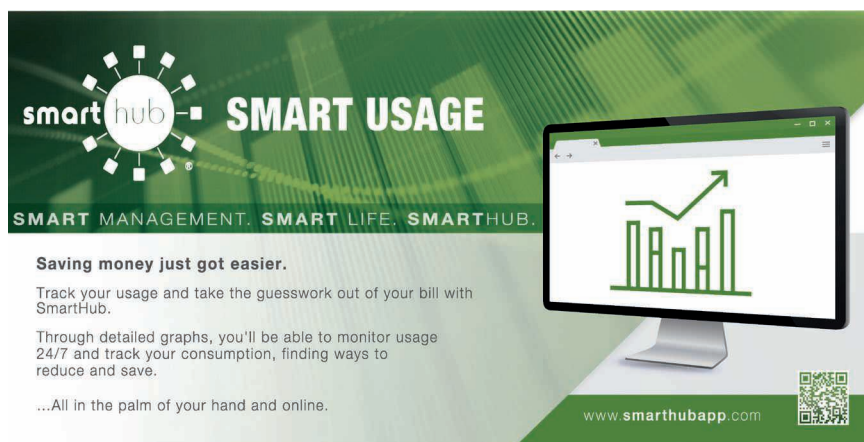
We also have a program that allows members to settle the estates of former members. This program allows you to

receive the balance of the estate's capital credits on a discounted basis rather than wait until they would normally be paid out. This option is also available to those who are 70 or older.

Still another way we try to help the membership is by utilizing a phone answering service to handle after-hours outage calls. The dispatcher is able to enter



**Jeff Birkeland**  
CEO



The graphic features a green background with a grid pattern. On the left, there is a logo for 'smart hub' with a circular arrangement of small squares around it. To the right of the logo, the text 'SMART USAGE' is displayed in large, bold, white capital letters. Below this, in smaller white capital letters, is the phrase 'SMART MANAGEMENT. SMART LIFE. SMARTHUB.'. Further down, the text 'Saving money just got easier.' is followed by two paragraphs: 'Track your usage and take the guesswork out of your bill with SmartHub.' and 'Through detailed graphs, you'll be able to monitor usage 24/7 and track your consumption, finding ways to reduce and save.' Below these paragraphs is the phrase '...All in the palm of your hand and online.' On the right side of the graphic, there is a computer monitor displaying a bar chart with an upward-trending arrow. At the bottom right, there is a QR code and the website address 'www.smarthubapp.com'.

the outage into the system and let our Outage Management System “ping” various meters within that area to isolate the section of lines that are out of power. This system has reduced average outage times and we are continually seeing additional benefits.

Last but not least, I would also remind you to plan on attending our 73rd Annual Meeting in Kadoka on Oct. 5 at the City Auditorium. This is a prime opportunity for you to ask questions of your board and management, express any concerns you may have, offer helpful suggestions or maybe even pay our employees a compliment for all of their hard work in keeping the lights on.

Hope to see you there!



## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### WEST CENTRAL ELECTRIC

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Design assistance by SDREA

## 'The June Storms' test co-op's mettle and determination

Sometimes Mother Nature likes to test you, and then kick you when you are down! As evidenced by what will be remembered as "The June Storms" for the folks in and around Philip, Kadoka and Belvidere.

The first round hit on the night of June 11. As reported, the lights went out sometime between the moment the last rider at the Philip Match Bronc Ride came off the horse and before he hit the ground. The major damage to the system resulted in the loss of the two miles of H-structure transmission from the Philip WAPA station into town as well as the two miles of 3-phase distribution line adjacent to the H's. On the line to the Hilland substation, there were also 17 transmission poles north of the



**Kit Talich**

Operations

WAPA station. WAPA was left with one of the four feeds into their station after the storm damaged roughly 38 structures and took down the Basin 230 kV line into the station. This damage prevented us from picking up the Hilland station loads until we could get the 17 transmission poles or the two miles of 3-phase rebuilt. Working through the night, we were able to back-feed most of the town of Philip and finally get our transmission feed back from the Midland WAPA station. Little did we know that this was just the beginning of what Mother Nature had planned!

The second night, June 12, saw the loss of transmission structures between Philip and Kadoka and between Kadoka and Belvidere. With the two miles of H's still down NW of Philip, we had no way to feed Philip, Kadoka or the Philip Rural substation. There was also a broken transmission structure between Murdo and 1880 Town and a confirmed EF2 tornado about six miles NW of Murdo. We called in two contractors and crews from five other co-ops to assist restoration. They were able to get the transmission line to the Hilland Station temporarily fixed. With the help of outside crews, the WCEC crews were able to get the structures around Kadoka temporarily fixed to get the town of Philip back on late that evening...for a few hours.

On the third night, June 13, Mother Nature decided Kadoka looked like a good target and battered the town with 90 mph winds and tennis ball-sized hail. This storm broke four transmission structures on the tap into the town of Belvidere and seven H-structures between Belvidere and 1880 Town, thus removing the ability to serve the Kadoka and Philip areas again. That morning the contract crews went to work on the two miles of H-structures that went down the first night. WCEC and visiting co-op crews worked hard on distribution poles that day. As things came together, we were able to turn almost everyone back on at the same time when the normal feed from the Philip WAPA station was energized. There were a few poles to still work on over the following day or two to get everyone back on, but luckily, Mother Nature decided she had enough with us and gave us a break!

In total, the Cooperative experienced the destruction of about 250 distribution poles and 75 transmission poles - by far the worst damage to the transmission system the Cooperative has had in its 73 years. Currently, the damages are estimated to cost \$1.65 million. The President has signed a disaster declaration for this event, so the Cooperative will begin working with FEMA soon on reimbursement. Between FEMA and the State of South Dakota, the Cooperative will be able to recover 85 percent of eligible costs. For photos, see page 11.

# Take safety precautions during harvest season

Harvest season brings long, grueling hours in the field, which can make workers weary and prone to neglect safety precautions that can prevent serious or fatal electrical injuries. Every year, an average of 62 farmworkers are electrocuted in the U.S., and many more are injured by shocks.

Farm operators, their family members and farm employees are urged to beware of overhead power lines, to keep farm equipment safely away and to know what to do if accidental contact is made with power lines.

The increasing size of farm equipment, particularly grain tanks on combines that have become higher with extensions, allows operators to come perilously close to overhead power lines over entrances to fields. It is vital to keep equipment safely away from these lines. Maintain a minimum 10-foot radius around electric lines.

Portable augers are the No. 1 cause of electrocution on the farm. Augers being maneuvered by hand around bin sites have caused the deaths of many farmworkers who became the path to ground for electricity when the top of the auger touched overhead power lines. Always retract or lower augers when moving or transporting.

Other equipment commonly involved in power line accidents includes oversized wagons, large combines and other tall equipment.

Harvest is the most likely period for farm-related injury accidents and fatalities. Combines and other equipment loaded onto trailers can contact power lines and cause electrocutions, as can raising the bed of a truck to unload. That's exactly how a 53-year-old Michigan truck driver was tragically killed when he raised the bed of his semitrailer truck while parked beneath a power line at the edge of a field. He was attempting to clean out the bed, and when he touched the truck bed, he became the path to ground for the electricity.

Follow these safety measures:

- Use a spotter when moving tall loads near power lines.
- Inspect farm equipment for transport height and determine clearance with any power lines under which the equipment must pass.
- Make sure everyone knows what to do if accidental contact is made with power lines. These accidents are survivable if the right actions are taken.

## STUDENTS LEARN HOW POWER IS PRODUCED

A group of high school students recently gathered together to take a trip and learn how electricity is produced and how it is used to power their homes, farms, appliances and local businesses.

The students traveled to Bismarck, N.D., to tour the power generation facilities of Basin Electric, which supplies electricity across nine states and is one of the largest power producers in the country.

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



Don't Mess With a  
Transformer Box



## Beware of the green box

**Cambrie Koistinen**

Cambrie, age 11, advises electric cooperative members to use caution around pad-mounted transformers, also known as green boxes, because they contain high-voltage power equipment. Cambrie is the child of Lance and Holly Koistinen of Hayti.

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.



# FRESH FROM THE GARDEN

## ZUCCHINI SPINACH CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

2 lbs. zucchini  
1 lbs. frozen spinach  
1 chopped onion  
4 cloves of garlic  
5 beaten eggs  
1/2 cup salad oil  
1-1/2 cup cracker crumbs (save  
1/2 cup for top)  
1-1/2 cup cheddar cheese (save  
1/2 for top)

### METHOD

Cook and drain first four ingredients. Add eggs, salad oil, cracker crumbs and cheddar cheese. Add salt, pepper and parsley to taste. Spread the remaining crumbs and cheese on top. Bake at 350 for 40 minutes.  
**Glenda Morton, Sioux Falls**

## CREAMY CUCUMBER SALAD

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 long English cucumbers cut  
in half moons  
1 1/2 lb tomatoes on the vine  
sliced in segments  
1/4 cup red onion thinly sliced  
(optional)  
3 tbsp dill finely chopped  
2 small garlic cloves grated  
1/2 cup sour cream  
1/2 tsp salt  
Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

In a large bowl, add cucumbers, tomatoes, red onion, dill, garlic, sour cream, salt and pepper. Stir gently from the bottom in the center of the bowl until well combined. Serve salad within next six hours or so.  
**ifoodreal.com**

## CUCUMBER SANDWICHES

### Ingredients:

1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese,  
softened  
1 pkg. Good Seasons Italian  
Dressing Mix (dry)  
1 mini loaf of cocktail rye bread  
1 cucumber, sliced  
fresh dill weed, chopped

### METHOD

The night before serving the cucumber sandwiches, mix together the cream cheese and the Good Seasons Italian Dressing Mix. Refrigerate overnight. Shortly before serving, spread some of the cream cheese mixture on a slice of the cocktail rye bread. Top with a slice of cucumber and sprinkle with dill weed.

**Elaine Rieck, Harrisburg**

## CHERI'S SALAD

### Ingredients:

1-1 lb. pkg. veggie spiral noodles  
2 1/2 c. diced ham  
1 c. shredded cheddar cheese  
1 c. chopped celery  
1 bag frozen peas, thawed

### Dressing:

1/2 c. mayonnaise  
1/2 c. sour cream  
1 tbsp. mustard  
1 tbsp. sweet pickle juice  
3/4 tsp. onion powder  
1/3 c. sugar

### METHOD

Cook noodles according to package directions, drain and rinse. Mix ingredients together in a bowl and set aside. Mix until blended and pour over salad. Stir until well blended.

**Jan Antonen, Arlington**

Please send your favorite recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

### **Q: I'm a firm believer that saving energy helps the environment as well as the pocketbook. So, how can I help others improve their energy savings at home?**



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

A: Helping people feels good. Supporting community is sewn into the fabric of your electric co-op, which is guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles that put the needs of members first.

On National Good Neighbor Day, which is Sept. 28, join in the cooperative spirit and help your neighbors, friends and family save at home with these do-it-yourself energy-saving tips.

Tips range in physicality and cost, providing options based on your ability.

#### **CHANGE LIGHTBULBS**

Prioritize changing lights that are used the most, such as incandescent porch lights left on all night. LEDs use about 75 percent less energy and last up to 25 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Some neighbors can't climb step stools or ladders, so help them out if you are able. Be sure to check for overhead power lines when using ladders outside.

#### **SWAP THE FILTER**

Furnace filters should be checked regularly and replaced when they are dirty. Simply writing down the dimensions of the furnace filter can help your neighbor, who can pick up a pack of new ones in the store or order online.

If you find a really dirty furnace filter, don't remove it until you have a replacement. Operating your system without a filter allows dirt and dust in the system to go directly to the heating and cooling components, which can damage the system and necessitate costly repairs.

#### **OPEN THE DAMPERS**

Register dampers allow heated and cooled air to properly circulate throughout the home. If you have a central air heating or cooling system, dampers should be left open. The idea

that closing registers saves energy is a common misconception. If furniture is on top of dampers, move it to a new permanent spot so it does not block air flow.

#### **ADJUST THE WATER HEATER**

Check the water heater and set it to 120 degrees. Use a kitchen thermometer to test the water temperature. At the faucet nearest the water heater, turn only the hot water on and wait until it gets hot. Let the hot water run into a glass and place a kitchen thermometer in it. Wait until it registers the highest temperature. If the water heater is set too high, you can save energy by lowering the setting.



#### **KEEP OUTDOOR UNITS CLEAR**

Clean brush and debris from around the air conditioner or heat pump. If leaves or brush pile up around the outdoor unit of a heat pump or air-conditioning system, it can reduce the airflow, making the system work harder than it should. That uses more energy and can reduce the life of the unit.

#### **REMOVE THE WINDOW AC**

By removing the unit before wintertime, the window can close properly. This prevents heat from escaping and wasting energy. It also keeps the room more comfortable. Window AC units are heavy and awkward. This project is best done with a buddy. Get that person to commit to helping put the unit back next spring.

#### **SHARE ENERGY-SAVING PROGRAMS**

Information is a great way to help, and it's free. Look into programs your co-op offers and share that information with your neighbor. Don't forget to check the U.S. Department of Energy for federal tax credits for upgrades.



# Wordes works to master complexity of the pipe organ

Billy Gibson

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

The many pastimes of Rachel Wordes include popular activities such as dance, soccer and volunteer work through her church.

And then there's the pipe organ. Wordes, a native of Clara City and recent graduate of Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, has been on a quest to perfect her musical skills on this arcane instrument since she joined the music program at Dordt.

She received scholarship support in dance and education, but also received a special private scholarship to study the pipe organ because of her proficiency on piano, her passion for music and eagerness to learn. She sat down at the imposing Casavant organ at Dordt and it was love at first listen.

Wordes read a history of the vaunted Casavant organ written by Dr. Joan Ringerwole, who described it as having voice and breath and taking on the qualities of a living being. The massive organ has 2,865 pipes, 57 ranks, 37 stops and 32 pedals.

"The appeal to me is that the pipe organ is like a palette you can use to paint a musical picture," Wordes said. "Every one is different and has its own unique tone and timbre."

Throughout her college career, Wordes taught piano and pipe organ lessons, led summer music camps, participated in recitals and distinguished herself in her ability to play and teach.



Rachel Wordes plays an organ at St. Bavorkerk in Haarlem, Netherlands. The instrument was built in the early 1700s and was played by Handel and Mozart.

During two weeks last spring, she was selected to take part in a pipe organ tour across the Netherlands. She has also traveled with her fellow Dordt College students and faculty to Europe for the opportunity to play 24 famous and historic pipe organs.

"The Netherlands trip was remarkable," she said. "We got to play two or three pipe organs a day. We had some pieces picked out and played in the style represented during the time the organ was made, going all the way back to the 1300s. It was kind of like driving a car that's not yours. They're all different with

different tones, temperaments, character and personality. I learned a lot."

Knowledge is something Wordes is more than eager to share. In 2019, she spent the summer teaching music in La Entrada, Honduras. During the first five months of 2022, Wordes worked with students in Managua, Nicaragua, and recently returned there with a year-long commitment to teach English and music at a local private school.

Her career goal is to teach English as a Second Language (ESL).

"I love to teach and watch students expand their skills," she said.



# Sunflower commodity prices are making farmers smile

**Billy Gibson**

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

It's hard to keep from smiling when you're driving past a field of golden sunflowers in full bloom during the late summer months.

Wall Drug billboards, old red barns and shiny grain bins are no match for the attention of motorists along I-90 when the sunflowers are bursting forth in all their spectacular yellow splendor stretching far into the horizon.

The subject of many aerial and terrestrial photographers across the region, sunflowers have a special appeal as they grow tall in the field and seem to greet the day leaning forward with a positive energy that exudes joy and optimism.

The current sunflower commodity market certainly has given farmers a reason to smile. South Dakota farmers raised nearly 600,000 acres and more than 1 billion pounds of sunflowers

last year, ranking second only to North Dakota for sunflower production. In fact, for the past decade the Dakotas and Minnesota have alternated the top three spots in their friendly competition depending largely on the vagaries of weather patterns. At least 75 percent of the U.S. commercial sunflower production has taken place in those three states.

About 1,000 of those South Dakota acres were grown by Brad Schecher, a fourth generation farmer who also rotates wheat, corn, flax and soybean crops on his 3,500-acre spread located near Bison in the northwestern part of the state, one of the hot-bed regions for sunflowers.

Schecher took over the family farm from his father nearly 10 years ago and said the military conflict in Ukraine and other economic factors have converged to form a "perfect storm" that has constricted international supplies and created a favorable environment for the

current global sunflower oil market. Commodity prices have broken all-time records by soaring 60 percent compared to a year ago.

"It's as good as any of the 10 years I've been involved in it," Schecher said. "Ukraine was the largest producer of sunflowers and the largest exporter of sunflower oil on the world market with about 50 percent of the overall market, but a lot of their crop has been destroyed or confiscated by the Russian military. That's one of the things that have driven prices up, and it's been good for the farmers."

High prices and high returns are keeping Schecher interested in raising sunflowers, but sometimes he has his doubts. Especially when he gets tired of fighting the fires, a battle that all sunflower farmers are bound to face at some point.

Schecher said that for all the eye appeal sunflowers hold, it's not always easy to bring in the crop. He explained that reaping the high-yield, high-oleic variety that he grows for the sunoil market can cause fires to break out during the combining process in the





Brad Schecher farms roughly 1,000 acres of sunflowers near Bison. *Photo by Brooke Schecher*

fall. The elevated oil content of the plant - ranging anywhere from 38 to 44 percent - along with the dust that's created during combining can result in a combustible mixture that is sometimes ignited by the presence of static electricity.

To make sure he's prepared, Schecher keeps a battery-operated leaf blower aboard the combine at all times.

"I have to keep blowing the combine off when I get to the end of the field to keep a fire from breaking out," he said. "You can see the accumulated piles of dust start glowing red-hot, and you can usually smell it and get it put out before it gets out of control. It's a hazard that you just have to contend with. Sometimes it can happen two or three times a day, especially when it's dry conditions."

Other farmers, such as Lance Hourigan of Lemmon, S.D., have addressed this common problem by investing in after-market solutions. Hourigan reached northward across the state border and recruited Stelter Repair out of New Leipzig, N.D., to manufacture an air tower to help

Estimated number  
of sunflower acres

**600,000**

planted in South  
Dakota in 2021

reduce the risk of fire during harvest time. Resembling a chimney, the device draws in air from above the combine where there is much less dust and debris billowing from the threshing process, and blows the air over the engine to help it stay cool and clean.

While Schecher focuses on the high-oil variety that represents about 80 percent of the market, there are other varieties grown for silage, birdfeed and other uses. Confection sunflowers, grown mostly in the eastern part of the state, are those found bagged up on convenience store shelves, the kind loaded with an assortment of flavors and

seasonings and meant for chewing.

While sunflowers are native to the continent, their history in North America can be traced to American Indian tribes in present-day Arizona and New Mexico. Archaeologists have found that these tribes domesticated the crop as early as 3000 B.C. The seed was ground or pounded into flour for cakes, mush or bread. Some tribes mixed the meal with vegetables such as beans and squash. The seed was cracked and eaten for snacking, while the oil was squeezed from the seed and used in making bread.

Non-food uses included purple dye for textiles, body painting and other decorations. Parts of the plant were used to treat snakebites. The oil was used on the skin and hair, and the dried stalk was used as a building material.

Today, agricultural scientists are exploring new uses for the plant while also figuring out how to provide protection from wireworms and other threats. Meanwhile, bullish farmers are keeping their eye on the global markets while exuding the same sense of sunny optimism associated with the sunflowers they work so hard to raise.

# Local student participates in Youth Excursion

Local student Emma Hunt joined a group of 14 high schoolers from throughout South Dakota for the 2022 Youth Excursion to learn how electricity is produced and distributed.

The group's schedule of events included a tour of Basin Electric Power Cooperative headquarters (Bismarck, N.D.), one of the nation's largest generators of electricity serving more than three million homes, businesses and farms across nine states.

During the headquarters tour, Basin CEO Todd Telesz spoke to the students and explained how the organization was created by a group of electric distribution cooperatives in 1961 and has grown into a mammoth power generator with more than \$7 billion in assets.

The students were curious about current industry issues such as nuclear energy, renewable power, career choices, electric vehicles and more.

"We're keeping pace with the rapid changes taking place in the electric utility industry," he said, "but you and your generation are going to be the ones who have to provide the leadership to make sure the electricity we need continues to be safe, accessible, affordable and environmentally responsible."

Telesz also touched on the key differences between electric cooperatives and other types of businesses: "Our members are our owners and they determine the long-term success of their cooperative. The members vote for those individuals who will represent them on the board, and the board members also belong to the cooperative. So, everybody at every level of the organization has an interest in providing safe, reliable power."

Telesz closed by mentioning the many career paths available in the electric energy sector, including engineering, finance, cybersecurity, renewable technology and many more. Several Basin Electric staff members were on hand to answer specific questions about the organization and the power industry.

The students also made a side-trip to Beulah, N.D., to tour the Antelope Valley Station power plant, the Freedom Coal Mine and the Dakota Gasification Co. facility.

They also explored the Bismarck State College campus and stopped at the National Energy Center of Excellence where they participated in a safe driving simulation and learned how electricity is moved from a generation facility across the regional power grid by regional transmission operators.

The students were sponsored by West Central Electric and eight other electric distribution cooperatives, and the event was



Above, Emma Hunt visits the Antelope Valley Station, and at right pilots the Lewis and Clark paddle boat based in Bismarck.

organized by the South Dakota Rural Electric Association (SDREA) based in Pierre.

"Electric cooperatives are committed not only to providing safe, affordable power, but also to providing opportunities to educate our future leaders," said event organizer Jocelyn Johnson of SDREA. "We need to make sure our young people have an understanding of where their power comes from and the complexities of providing grid-scale electricity that's not only affordable but accessible around the clock."

Hunt said she enjoyed learning about electric cooperatives and the power industry: "Most people don't really know where electricity comes from and they don't know the process. To get to see that up close was really cool," she said.

Visit [youtube.com/watch?v=zE4bx6OAnO4&t=2s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=zE4bx6OAnO4&t=2s)







## June Storms

Clockwise from top: Contractor crews repair two miles of H-structure transmission lines damaged during the storm; high winds forced poles to lean in Kadoka; approximately 250 distribution poles were in need of replacement or repair; the storm also caused damage to underground infrastructure.





# CHISLIC FESTIVAL

Roger and Lori Pietz claimed the New Age Nosh Award at last year's Chislic Festival in Freeman. Photos by SD Chislic Festival

## Step inside the Chislic Circle for unique food and lots of family fun

**Billy Gibson**

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

In a world already rife with scads of dander-raising hot-button issues, add chislic to the list. It seems that anytime more than a few cocksure chislic chefs gather around a grill, controversy can't be too far away.

The bickering typically begins with picking the proper protein. Opt for the traditional scrumptious cubes of mutton or lamb, or take a risk and go hog-wild with pork or maybe buffalo? How about swinging farther to the edge with venison, goat, beef or chicken? Dare we add emu to the list?

At least one restaurant is sending the chislic cosmos into spasms by serving up plates of (gasp) "fish-lic."

The plethora of opinions surrounding the preparation of chislic starts with the choice of meat and springboards from there into seasonings, cooking methods and even serving techniques. Grilled,

deep fried or air fried? Fork, toothpick or skewer? Don't get a chislic enthusiast started on the sauce selection.

Many people and various cultures have a strong attachment to their particular favorite types of food, but South Dakota's desire for chislic is unusually intense – especially for those who dwell within the Chislic Circle.

If the name Chislic Circle evokes images of a secret society that conducts mysterious midnight rituals around a raging bonfire deep in the forest, well, it's not quite that. It's more of a clever marketing concept, and an effective one for community leaders who take pride in their chislic lore. In fact, everyone is invited to come inside this circle.

At the center of the Chislic Circle lies Freeman, S.D., with the chislic realm falling inside a 100-mile radius and including communities such as Kaylor, Menno, Hurley, Marion, Bridgewater, Emery and others. The Circle was spun into creation in 2018 when a small

but passionate contingent of chislic connoisseurs decided to celebrate and demonstrate their pride in their unique culinary heritage.

Andrea Baer was part of that early chislic cadre. She said the catalyst came when chislic was officially declared the "state nosh" by the Legislature four years ago.

"Before then, when you mentioned chislic outside of the area, there was hardly anyone who knew what you were talking about," said Baer, who is a native of Turkey Ridge still living on the farm her forebears from Denmark settled several generations ago. "It's something that's very unique to the area and we





like to celebrate it.”

That celebration has taken the form of an annual event that’s been recognized by tourism officials as one of the state’s fastest-growing festivals with an estimated 10,000 attendees last year after a pandemic pause in 2020. Organizers were expecting up to a couple thousand for the inaugural event in 2018, but four times that many showed up. The following year, the party was moved from the Freeman softball field to the more spacious 40-acre Prairie Arboretum.

This year’s festival was held on July 30 with the usual food vendors touting their unique savory recipes, libations, live music, a family-friendly kid zone, bingo, dancing, a cornhole competition, 5K run/walk, helicopter rides and other forms of family-oriented fun.

Festival board member and chislic expert Ian Tuttle also presented, “From Russia with Love: The History of Chislic” at the nearby Heritage Hall Museum and Archives.

Tuttle enjoys telling the story of how chislic arrived in the late 1800s with a particular group of immigrants described as “Germans from Russia.” A group of German Mennonites and Hutterites originally fled religious persecution in the 16th century and migrated eastward through the Russian Empire where they raised crops and sheep.

They chopped the meat into small pieces, cooked it over a fire and called it “shashlik,” a word for “skewer” rooted in the Turkic languages of Central Asia. The word is a close cousin to the more widely known “shish kebab.”

Eventually, those migrants found their way to present-day southeastern South Dakota and made sure to bring their shashlik with them. Those residing



inside the Chislic Circle generally recognize Johann Hoellwarth as the individual who introduced chislic to the Dakota Territory. Born in 1849 to a German Lutheran family in the Crimea, Hoellwarth settled just outside of where Freeman is today and was laid to eternal rest in the town.

Each year a panel of seven fearless judges takes on the task of naming the festival’s “best chislic.” For the past two years the top Traditional Division Award has gone to Kyle Sturzenbecker and his squad of Sheep Flockers.

Sturzenbecker said he and his fellow chef Josh Goehring don’t characterize themselves as competitive, but he also isn’t about to give away any trade secrets.

“You don’t have to do a whole lot. I just let the flavor of the meat speak for itself,” he said. “Honestly, I never

thought I’d win. I just like to cook good food that people enjoy eating.”

In 2021, the non-traditional New Age Nosh Award was claimed by Roger Pietz, owner of the Pietz Kuchen Kitchen. The establishment is mostly known for its rich custard dessert, but for the festival Pietz decided to go in a different direction and put together a tangy chislic pizza.

Ultimately, the Chislic Festival is about celebrating family, honoring the past and preserving the rural lifestyle.

“The tradition of chislic comes not from cities, the wealthy, or the privileged,” Baer said, “but from the rural, hardworking farm tradition of the people who settled this area. We thrive on the rural, while building the region through vibrant community.”



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## Anglers get hooked on fly fishing for fun and sport

**Billy Gibson**

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Tall tales, small tales, long tales, short tales...Buddy Seiner is interested in hearing any fishing tale you'd like to tell.

While he's partial to fly fishing, Seiner is passionate about fishing in all of its forms. And he offers an open invitation to anglers of every ilk to share their stories of fishing adventures enjoyed with friends, family members or in the presence of one's own company.

Seiner started [www.fishstories.org](http://www.fishstories.org) after his grandfather passed away and he realized there were no audio or video recordings of the many outings they took together casting flies and chatting about whatever popped into their minds in the moment.

Several years ago, Seiner stood on the main stage during a TED X speech in Rapid City and explained his purpose in creating the website. Soon after, he began hauling in a mess of fish stories submitted by avid anglers from far and wide. Today, the archive holds more than 400 sagas of lunkers that were landed, the big ones that got away and precious time spent with loved ones in the great outdoors.

"I believe all fish stories need to be told," said Seiner, who works as a communications consultant based in Pierre. "I used to fish a lot with my grandpa and I realized I'd never hear his voice again after he passed away. He was full of wisdom and had a great sense of humor. I had some regrets about not recording him, so I started this project as a way for people to preserve those cherished voices and to preserve the memories."

Seiner observes that many people are in some way connected with fishing, whether they pursue it themselves or know someone who likes the feel of a rod and reel. He has found that the stories submitted to the site feature not only intriguing narratives of reaching the day's limits under clear cerulean skies but they also reveal relationships that run deeper than the deepest river channel. Some describe disastrous events.

One of those is the story of an outdoors escape that quickly turned tragic. A young woman tells how she lost her husband to an accident while the two were ice fishing on a frozen lake in Minnesota.

While there are stories of heartache and loss, Seiner said most tales tend to trend toward the positive. He has his own fond memories of how his uncle introduced him to fly fishing

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Part art and part skill, fly fishing is an increasingly popular pastime across the region. *Photo by Travel South Dakota*

26 years ago and how he started tying his own flies as a college student.

“My Uncle Dwaine gave me a rod and I went in the back yard and started practicing. He always told me I’d enjoy it and he was right,” Seiner said.

It was at Bear Butte Creek near Sturgis that Seiner landed his first trout. He was casting for a brown trout beneath a willow tree. The fish went for the dry fly – a blue wing olive – and both the fish and Seiner were hooked. The fish was landed and released but Seiner’s love of the sport has never waned.

Fly fishing is growing in popularity across the region as more anglers discover the adventure and what many describe as the therapeutic benefits of casting flies out across the water. Though fly fishing is often associated with the clear, cold, fast-running streams found in the Black Hills area, Seiner said there is a wide range of options available depending on an angler’s tastes and preferences.

“We have a lot of water that’s prime for fly fishing,” he said. “It’s a sport Buddy Seiner started [fishstories.org](http://fishstories.org) to preserve fishing tales and memories like those he has of his late fishing pal, Lucy.

that’s new to a lot of people and it’s gaining momentum. You can catch anything on a fly rod. You can go for trout and fish the stock dams out west, you can sight-fish for walleye or channel catfish in the clear waters of the Missouri River, you can fish the glacial lakes in the northeast or fish for carp out near Yankton.”

Whether they go for carp or brown trout, many fly fishers take an interest in maintaining and preserving the habitat for future generations to enjoy.

Seiner serves on the board of a group called Black Hills Fishers and works

with folks like Hans Stephenson of Dakota Angler and Outfitter in Rapid City to promote the sport of fly fishing, support conservation and educate the public on how to preserve the environment.

“Fly fishing is so much fun,” he said, “but if we don’t do what we can to protect our woods and waters, it will be a tragedy. We need to stay committed to preservation and conservation, and I’ve found that most people who enjoy the outdoors are very conscientious. We want people to have fishing stories to share for generations to come.”





## REGISTER TO WIN!

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**SEPTEMBER 1-5**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
*Photo Credit: SD State Fair*

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.

**AUGUST 24-28**  
**Corn Palace Festival**  
604 N Main St., Mitchell, SD,  
605-995-8430

**AUGUST 24-28**  
**Kool Deadwood Nites**  
Citywide, Deadwood, SD,  
605-578-1876

**AUGUST 25-28**  
**Steam Threshing Jamboree**  
Prairie Village, Madison, SD,  
605-256-3644

**AUGUST 26-27**  
**Hill City Wine, Brew and BBQ**  
Elm St., Hill City, SD, hillcitywine  
brewandbbq.com

**AUGUST 26-27**  
**Sizzlin' Summer Nights**  
Main St., Aberdeen, SD,  
605-226-3441

**AUGUST 26-28**  
**Hot Air Balloon Festival**  
Various Locations, Hot Springs, SD, fallriverballoonfest.com

**AUG. 30-SEPT. 4**  
**Sturgis Mustang Rally**  
Thunderdome, Sturgis, SD,  
sturgismustangrally.com

**SEPTEMBER 1-5**  
**South Dakota State Fair**  
890 3rd St. SW, Huron, SD,  
sdstatefair.com

**SEPTEMBER 4**  
**Dakota Five-O**  
City Park, Spearfish, SD,  
dakotafiveo.com

**SEPTEMBER 8-11**  
**S.D. State Senior Games**  
Watertown, SD, 605-491-0635  
or 605-753-3668

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**605 Black Hills Classic**  
Lions Park, Spearfish, SD,  
605-274-1999

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**Germanfest**  
Fawick Park, Sioux Falls, SD,  
siouxfallssistercities.com/event

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**Insect Festival**  
McCrory Gardens, Brookings, SD, 605-688-6707

**SEPTEMBER 10**  
**Sidewalk Arts Festival**  
Main Avenue, Sioux Falls, SD,  
605-367-6000

**SEPTEMBER 16-18**  
**South Dakota Film Festival**  
Capitol Theatre, Aberdeen, SD,  
southdakotafilmfest.org

**SEPTEMBER 17-18**  
**Northeast South Dakota Celtic Faire and Games**  
37925 Youth Camp Rd.,  
Aberdeen, SD, 605-622-0144

**SEPTEMBER 23-24**  
**Hops and Hogs Festival**  
Citywide, Deadwood, SD,  
605-578-1876

**SEPTEMBER 23-25**  
**HNIRC Championship of Champions**  
Stanley County Fairgrounds,  
Fort Pierre, SD, horsenations  
indianrelay.com

**SEPTEMBER 24**  
**Great Downtown Pumpkin Festival**  
Main Street Square, Rapid City,  
SD, 605-716-7979

**SEPTEMBER 24-25**  
**Menno Pioneer Power Show**  
Pioneer Acres, Menno, SD,  
mennopowershow@yahoo.com

**SEPT. 29-OCT. 1**  
**Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup & Arts Festival**  
Custer, SD, gfp.sd.gov/buffalo-roundup

**SEPT. 30-OCT. 1**  
**Oktoberfest**  
Citywide, Deadwood, SD,  
605-578-1876

**OCTOBER 7-8**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show**  
Philip, SD, 605-441-1060

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