



# Cooperative Connections

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Master Gardener  
Program**

**Growing Master  
Gardeners in SD**

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**Rodeo School is  
in Session**

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# Summer Storms



**Jeff Birkeland, CEO**

jeff.birkeland@wce.coop

Summer is here, along with the threat of severe thunderstorms and tornados. Five years ago, West Central endured the worst summer storm on record. In June of 2016, we gained first-hand experience of what a derecho is and the damage it can cause. A derecho is a large, fast-moving complex of thunderstorms with powerful straight-line winds and can last for hours while covering large distances.

This particular storm started west of Hayes, S.D., and exited the West Central service territory by Oacoma, S.D. It's the only storm I've ever experienced that held its strength for 130 miles and caused severe damage the entire route of the storm. West Central lost 235 distribution poles, 28 transmission poles and had some members without electricity for five days. Generally, thunderstorm damage is isolated to one area, but this storm covered a large area and we called in crews from other cooperatives to help us repair the damage.

The moral of that story is, no matter how much maintenance or preparation a person does, Mother Nature can be quick to show her power and hand you a plate of humble pie.

When an outage happens, our first priority is to safely restore power to as many members as possible in the shortest amount of time. We start by mobilizing our line crews and other critical staff. Every phone line available is utilized to take your outage report calls. The big problems are handled first – like damage to transmission lines, which serve thousands of people.

These problems must be corrected before we can focus on other areas where more localized damage may have occurred. West Central's line crews inspect substations to determine if the problem starts there, or if there could be an issue down the line. If the root of the problem is at the substation, power can be restored to many of our members, depending on the substation.

Next, line crews check the service lines that deliver power into neighborhoods and communities. Line crews repair the damaged lines, restoring power to hundreds of people. If you continue to experience an outage, there may be damage to a tap line outside of your home or business. Make sure you notify us, so crews can inspect these lines. We will do our best to avoid power outages, but sometimes Mother Nature has other plans. Be sure to check West Central's Facebook page on your smartphone for the latest updates during a power outage.

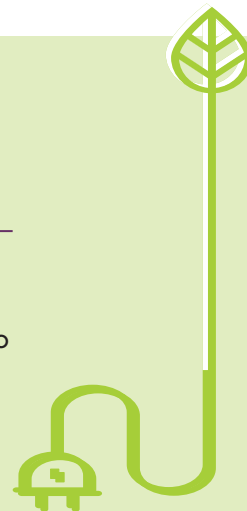
**No matter how much maintenance or preparation a person does, Mother Nature can be quick to show her power and hand you a plate of humble pie.**

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

A dirty filter causes your air conditioner to work harder than necessary.

Remember to change your air filter every month (or every two months) to prevent dust buildup, which can lead to even bigger problems.

Source:  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)



# West Central Electric

## Cooperative Connections

(USPS No. 018-988)

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### Vice President

Kenneth Miller, Draper

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Jeff Birkeland, Murdo

**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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Twitter: @WCElectric; Facebook: [www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectricCooperative](http://www.facebook.com/WestCentralElectricCooperative)

Design assistance by SDREA

# Director Terms Expire

All nominating petitions shall be filed with the Secretary of the Cooperative, on or before the 20th day of July 2021, at the headquarters office of West Central Electric Cooperative, Inc., located in Murdo, S.D. for parties interested in becoming a member of West Central Electric's Board of Directors.

## Directors term vacancies include:

### Zone 2



Jones County  
Town Director  
**Kenneth Miller**

### Zone 3



Jackson County  
Rural Director  
**Jim Willert**

### Zone 5



Stanley County  
At-Large Director  
**Shad Riggle**

West Central Electric's Board of Directors consist of 10 members representing five zones (one town and one rural director for each zone). All director positions are based on a three-year term.

All nominating petitions shall be in such form as prescribed by the Board of Directors, but shall contain a declaration signed by the candidate, under oath, certifying to the membership that he/she possesses the necessary qualifications and is willing to serve as director.

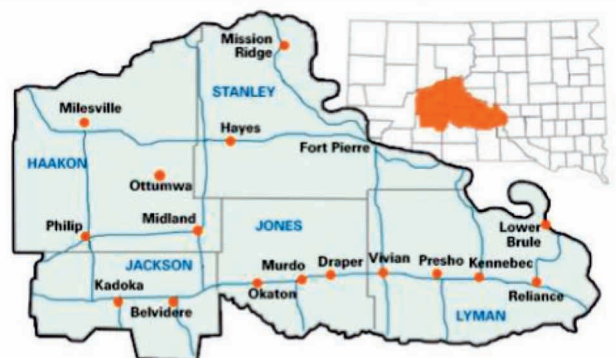
The petition shall be signed by not less than ten (10) members of the cooperative, each of whom shall be required to write their name, address and the date and time of signing.

In the event that more than one nominating petition is filed in any one Zone, a Zone meeting shall be held in each Zone for the purpose of selecting one candidate for director to represent the members located in such Zone as their official nominee.

Each Zone Meeting shall be held in August.

Notice of the Meeting shall be sent to all members living in the appropriate Zone by first class mail or in the West Central Electric Cooperative Connections publication, not less than 10 days before the meeting.

## WCEC Territory



# Eight Tips to Help You Grow Your Garden Safely

Gardening may seem like a safe hobby - and for the most part it is. But it can potentially lead to injury. Emergency rooms treat more than 400,000 injuries each year related to outdoor garden tools, reports the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Trimming trees and tall bushes can take a deadly turn when electricity is involved. Never trim a tree that has grown into a power line. Metal and wood ladders can transmit electricity into your body if you come into contact with a live wire. Instead, ask your electric cooperative to send a professional to trim the tree.

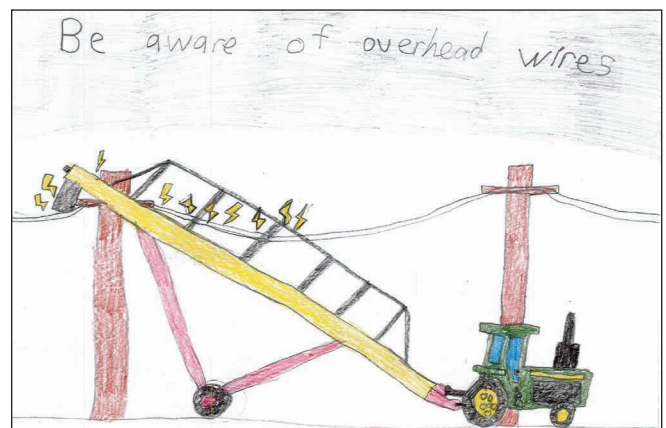
- At least three days before you begin a landscaping project that entails digging, call 811 to have underground utility lines marked.
- Never garden, trim trees or cut the lawn in bad weather. Wet and windy conditions can cause slipping and other hazards. Go inside immediately if you see lightning.
- Outlets protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters should be used for electric tools and trimmers. Never use tools outdoors when it's wet.
- Whenever possible, work in pairs so you're not using electrical equipment when nobody else is around - in case of an accident. And hire a professional if you doubt your ability to complete the job safely.
- Always wear the proper clothing and safety equipment for the task at hand. Gloves, eye and hearing protection, and dust masks can help prevent injuries and illnesses.
- Use the right tools for the job and use them safely. If you are using electric tools, watch where the cord is and unplug tools when not in use.
- Keep garden tools and equipment in proper working order. Equipment that is not maintained properly leaves the door open for potential accidents.
- Stay hydrated, use insect repellent and sunscreen (don't forget your face, neck and ears), and take breaks as needed to rest those hard-working muscles.

## Did You Know?

- All thunderstorms produce lightning.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and can strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.
- If you hear thunder, you're in the danger zone.

### #StormSafety

## KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER



### Be Aware of Overhead Wires

**Carter Intveld, 11 years old**

Carter is the child of Glenn and Darci Intveld of Sioux Falls. 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.



# Dig in to These Dairy Recipes

## Tuna Cheesettes

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ½ c. American cheese          | 2 tbsp. chopped dill pickles |
| 2-3 hard boiled eggs, chopped | ½ c. salad dressing          |
| 1 can (7 oz.) tuna            | ½ tsp. salt                  |
| 2 tbsp. chopped onion         | ¼ tsp. pepper                |

Preheat oven to 350. Mix ingredients and pile on ½ of a hamburger bun to make an open-faced sandwich. Bake for 30 min. Serve warm.

**Ruth Schilberg, Viborg**

## Crustless Cheddar Mini Quiches

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Non-stick cooking spray                            | 1 egg  |
| 1/2 teaspoon olive oil                             | 1/3 cup sun-dried tomatoes, plus additional tomatoes for garnish |
| 1 leek, cleaned and finely chopped (about 1 cup)   | 1/2 teaspoon fresh or dried thyme                                |
| 1 cup reduced-fat shredded Cheddar cheese, divided |  |
| 1 cup fat-free milk                                |  |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Lightly spray a 12-cup muffin pan\* with non-stick cooking spray. Heat oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Cook leeks until softened, stirring frequently, about 5 minutes. Divide leeks among muffin cups and top with 2/3 cup of Cheddar cheese. Blend milk, egg, sun-dried tomatoes and thyme in a blender or food processor for about 20 seconds or until tomato is minced. Pour milk mixture over cheese in muffin cups and top each with remaining cheese. Bake 30 minutes or until tops and edges are browned. Cool in pan for 3 minutes; serve warm or cold. Top with additional pieces of sun-dried tomato, if desired.

\*May substitute with aluminum muffin cups or individual custard cups, if desired.

[usdairy.com](http://usdairy.com)

## Scalloped Eggs and Bacon

- |                                |                                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1/4 cup chopped onion          | 6 hard boiled eggs, sliced      |
| 2 tablespoons butter           | 1/4 teaspoon pepper             |
| 2 tablespoons flour            | 1/4 teaspoon salt               |
| 1 1/2 cups milk                | 1 1/2 cups crushed potato chips |
| 1 cup shredded American cheese | 12 bacon strips                 |
| 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard       |                                 |

Cut bacon strips into 1 inch pieces and fry until crisp. Sauté onion in butter until tender. Stir in flour, gradually add milk and cook, stirring until thickened. Add cheese and mustard stirring until cheese melts. Place half of the egg slices in a greased 10 X 6 baking dish. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Cover with half of the cheese sauce, potato chips and bacon. Repeat layering. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes. Tips: Prepare eggs and bacon the night before and put together the next morning to save time. May also use ham cubes instead of bacon. Double the recipe and use a 9 X 13 baking dish.

**Mary Jo Semmier, Chancellor**

## Very Berry Ice Cream

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 2 lbs frozen berries (raspberries, blueberries, strawberries or blackberries) | 1/2 cup sweetened condensed milk |
| 1 tablespoon honey  | 1/2 teaspoon salt                |

In blender, pulse berries, condensed milk, honey and salt until smooth, scraping down sides. Pour mixture into 5-by-9-inch loaf pan. Freeze uncovered 4 hours, or until set.

**Culinary.net**

Please send your favorite dairy 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 2021. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Four Efficient Cordless Tools for Dad



**Pat Keegan**

Collaborative Efficiency

**Quality cordless tools are usually less expensive if you buy them as part of a set instead of one tool at a time.**

Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen of Collaborative Efficiency write on energy efficiency topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape. For additional energy tips and information on Collaborative Efficiency visit: [www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips](http://www.collaborativeefficiency.com/energytips).

*Dear Pat and Brad: With Father's Day approaching, the kids and I are thinking of getting my husband some rechargeable power tools. Do you have any recommendations? When is the extra cost of cordless worth the investment? – Jesse*

Dear Jesse: Great idea! If your husband enjoys tackling home projects, rechargeable tools are an excellent gift idea.

Rechargeable cordless tools are worth the investment when the corded version is the least convenient option. For example, a power drill is something you usually move around with and often use outside, so a cordless drill is much more convenient and a worthy investment. On the other hand, a table saw is usually not the first choice of cordless tools because it doesn't need to be moved repeatedly during a home project.

Quality cordless tools are usually less expensive if you buy them as part of a set instead of one tool at a time. And since each line of tools uses a unique battery, you can't mix and match between brands. So, it may cost less in the long run to buy a cordless starter kit with a few helpful tools and a battery, then add tools to the set as needed.

Here are a few cordless tools that the father in your family should love!

- **Power drill** – As one of the most-used power tools, a drill should be everyone's first cordless tool. Using a corded drill can mean constantly moving the cord around furniture, other tools or your own feet, which can be dangerous. Cordless drills are so easy to use, and the technology has improved so they have more power and hold a charge longer. Light-duty drills are smaller and less powerful but easy to use for smaller projects.



- **String trimmer** – A string trimmer is a quick way to trim weeds and grass near walls, bricks and rocks. If your family uses an old gas trimmer around the yard, it's time for a change. Two-stroke engines pollute the air and require regular maintenance. Electric trimmers are more energy efficient and quieter. You can find a variety of models between \$50 and \$150, and it's worth paying a little more to get a highly rated model that will last longer.

- **Leaf blower** – If the father in your family uses a gas-powered leaf blower, you can do him (and your neighbors!) a favor by giving him a cordless leaf blower, which is more energy efficient, much quieter and less polluting.

- **Flashlight** – LED technology is amazing — today's LED flashlights can produce 20 times as much light as the old incandescent ones. And they come in a variety of options, from tiny key chain lights to headlamps to waterproof spotlights. A flashlight can usually give better light than a cell phone, especially if you're working in a tight space like under a sink. A flashlight often comes as part of a cordless tool set, or you can buy a single unit that recharges using a USB port on a charger, a USB wall socket or a mobile phone battery.

Batteries make cordless tools possible. Lithium-ion batteries are more expensive, but they're gaining popularity because they hold a charge longer. They also have a longer life, but they still degrade over time and may need to be replaced in about three years. It's worth buying a reputable brand of cordless tool so you can be confident you will be able to find a replacement battery.

It goes without saying, but these cordless tool gift ideas aren't just for dads. All DIY enthusiasts would enjoy any of these gifts and hopefully put them to good use!



# Heikes Family Farm Rides Wave of New Interest in Community Supported Agriculture

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

After enduring the rigors of running an organically-grown farm for several years, Heidi Heikes was ready to let the place go to seed.

But then the pandemic that pummeled so many industries last year proved to be a boon for the Heikes Family Farm operation. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project was overwhelmed by consumers who suddenly became interested in locally grown produce.

“I was about ready to just pack it in. It takes a lot of work to run a small organically-grown farm,” Heikes recalled. “But then my phone just blew up. I was getting 10 to 15 new shares a day.”

The Heikes Family Farm CSA works on a shareholder arrangement where individuals buy into the farming operation and receive a share of the resulting crop. They also share the risk if the crop doesn’t bring the anticipated yield.



Sam Heikes said he believes Community Supported Agriculture is a trend that’s here to stay.

Following closely behind the new wave of shareholders came a “corporate share” commitment from a local hospital to supply fresh food for both the hospital and the affiliated nursing home. Then the farm was really riding high, feeding 500-600 people through nearly 100 shareholders.

Heidi’s father, Sam, said he believes the trend of community supported agriculture was bound to make its way to South Dakota in a matter of time.

“South Dakota is just catching up with the buy fresh, buy local, farm-to-table movement,” he said. “There’s been a dramatic increase in demand. I think the pandemic made people realize they want to go back to the past. They don’t want GMOs, pesticides and chemicals in the food that they feed their families.”

Sam Heikes spent his career as a production agronomist building up central South Dakota as the nation’s foremost sunflower producer. He returned to the family farm in Vermillion 10 years ago and decided to try establishing a CSA operation. He was in agreement with his daughter that maybe the demand

for organic produce wasn’t as robust as they both wanted to believe.

“I lost money for many years and we were ready to give it up,” he said. “Now we have more shareholders than we could have dreamed of. I think it’s a trend that’s here to stay. It’s great food at a great value. Once people get a taste of what organically-grown produce tastes like, they don’t want to go back to food that’s grown in another region and trucked in from hundreds of miles away.”

Mondays and Fridays are frenetic at the farm. Food distribution typically begins in May and consumers arrive to pick up their produce on Wednesdays from 4 to 7 p.m. and on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For her part, Heidi is happy to have more activity on the farm. She describes herself as a “people person” and noted that the place was getting a bit isolated and lonely. She welcomes the new relationships that have developed since more consumers have discovered the farm. Many volunteers are medical students and athletes from the local university campus who want to make sure they consume healthy diets.

“I love meeting people and eating healthy food,” she said.

Heidi invites more curious consumers to visit [www.heikesfamilyfarms.com](http://www.heikesfamilyfarms.com).



Heidi Heikes was ready to give up efforts to provide organically-grown produce when the pandemic generated new interest in the CSA model.





SDSU Extension Master Gardener Ruth Smith prepares for a local spring plant sale. Photos by Billy Gibson.

# MASTER GARDENERS

## Extension Program Seeks to Spread the Love of Gardening

Billy Gibson

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

Sorry, Walt Disney. The happiest place on earth for Ruth Smith isn't located in Florida or California. It's found in the serene confines of her garden in Pierre, S.D.

A retired educator, Smith experiences relaxation and contentment while growing herbs, vegetables and florals in her terraced backyard garden. After spending a career in public education and dedicating herself to the development and guidance of local students, Smith now finds her bliss by focusing her efforts on cultivating fresh produce and plants.

She even confesses a proud affinity for something that most people absolutely abhor – weeding.

"I actually like weeding. I like tending to the plants and bringing them up with some tender loving care," Smith said. "I always tell people this is my happy place. Some people like to take a boat out on the river or go hunting. This is what we like to do."

The "we" Smith refers to includes her husband, Mark. Both enjoy gardening and both have been through the Master Gardener program administered by South Dakota State University Extension.

As current president of the Prairie Potters Master Gardeners Club based in Pierre, Smith is an enthusiastic proponent of serving as an ambassador for horticulture education both locally and throughout the state. She and Mark completed the training

and course work required to become Master Gardeners about 10 years ago, although Mark is currently on "inactive" status.

The goal of the program is to turn gardening enthusiasts into expert volunteers who share their research-based knowledge with community members across the state.

Since the program's inception in 1985, more than 400 Master Gardeners have logged nearly 80,000 hours of volunteer service answering questions from the public and hosting community programs.

It's that public interaction that interests Smith. She enjoys attending local farmer markets, plant sales, workshops, school programs and other community events.

"The fun part is getting out among people and helping them solve



Mark Smith repairs a retaining wall in front of his home in Pierre.



## Master Gardener Clubs in SD

Club Name	Area
Brookings Area Master Gardeners	Brookings
Coteau Prairie Master Gardeners	Watertown
Custer County Master Gardeners	Custer
Dakota Prairie Master Gardeners	Miller
Fall River Master Gardeners	Hot Springs
Garden Gate Master Gardeners	Winner
Harding County Master Gardeners	Buffalo
Huron Area Master Gardeners	Huron
Minnehaha Co.	Sioux Falls
Missouri Valley Master Gardeners	Yankton
Northern Hills Master Gardeners	Spearfish
Pennington County Master Gardeners	Rapid City
Perkins County Master Gardeners	Bison
Prairie Partners Master Gardeners	Aberdeen
Prairie Potters Master Gardeners	Pierre
South Central Master Gardeners	White River

any problems they're encountering and giving them suggestions on how they can get better results for their efforts," she said. "We love to have conversations with people and we're not afraid to say we don't know something. We can always find out the answers and get back with them."

So, what's the question she gets asked the most? "Hmmm. It's probably, 'Something is wrong with my tomato plants. What should I do?'"

Rhoda Burrows is a horticulture specialist with SDSU Extension and works frequently with Master Gardeners. She said interest in the program has grown since the pandemic struck in March of 2020. While participants weren't allowed to attend in-person events as representatives of the program through most of last year, online teleconferences were held with many new prospects joining in.

"It's just such a fun group to work with," she said. "They're so enthusiastic and they have a deep hunger for knowledge and a heart for helping out each other in their communities. After the pandemic when people were restricting their movements, they discovered that gardening can be a good, wholesome family activity. Gardening is a source of fresh produce and more people are appreciating the benefits of healthy eating."

More information about the Master Gardeners program can be found by visiting [www.extension.sdstate.edu](http://www.extension.sdstate.edu). Those interested in becoming part of the program can contact SDSU's Extension Master Gardener Coordinator Aimee House Ladonski at 605-782-3290.

## McCrory Gardens is an Inspiration for Horticulture Hobbyists

Gardeners are typically passionate self-starters and don't require much outside motivation. But McCrory Gardens is an ideal place to go for those gardeners looking for an ounce of inspiration over the summer months.

Created in 2012 on the Brookings campus of South Dakota State University, McCrory Gardens features a 25-acre garden and 45-acre arboretum along with a 9,300-square-foot Education and Visitor Center.

While visitation was down in 2020, McCrory Gardens is expecting a busy summer and welcomes gardening enthusiasts to see the ever-changing display of flowers, vegetables, herbs and more.

New to the facility this summer is a Native American medicinal garden area, a "three-sisters" garden with beans, corn and squash, as well as a pollinator garden designed to attract bees and butterflies. Professors and instructors from the Native American studies department collaborated as consultants on the project.



McCrory Gardens is open to visitors on Wednesday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"There is always something new that's growing and blooming, and we have numerous annual beds that are planted each year," said Director Lisa Marotz.

What is expected to be a spectacular summer will culminate in the annual Garden Party held each year on the first Friday in August. While plans are still being finalized, past events have included food vendors, live music, games and free admission for the day.

"Pretty much everything we have is in bloom at that time. We want to invite everyone to come out and see what we have to offer," Marotz said.

McCrory Gardens is a privately-funded \$4.2-million facility that was the vision of founder and SDSU professor S.A. McCrory.

Last August, McCrory Gardens was named as a benefactor of an endowment from the estate of Frank and Mildred Denholm. A gift of more than \$422,000 went to the gardens while an additional gift of the same amount went to The South Dakota Agricultural Heritage Museum, which is hosting an exhibit entitled, "Electrifying Rural South Dakota," through Sept. 1.

# Battery Technologies and the Future

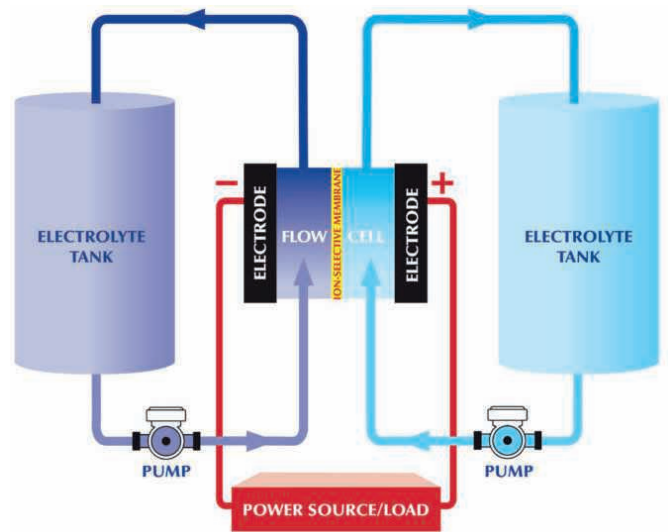


**Kit Talich**

kit.talich@wce.coop

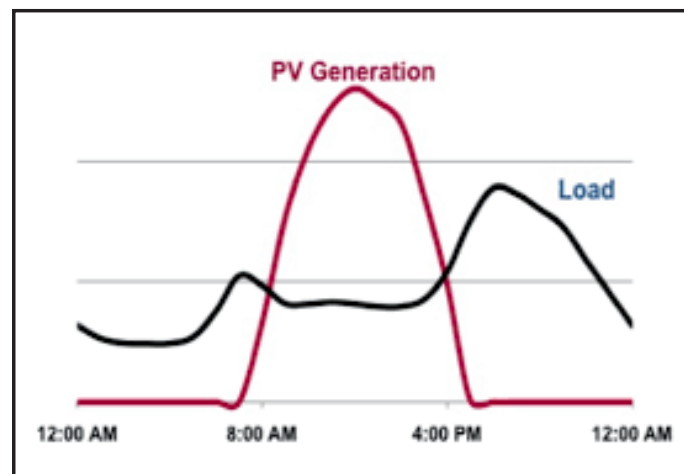
We are all familiar with the single-use alkaline batteries that we have used for decades in our various gadgets, remotes, flashlights, kids' toys and the like. We are also quite familiar with rechargeable batteries such as the old lead-acid batteries in cars or the newer lithium-ion batteries in phones, cordless tools and even cars. We may not be aware of the exciting, and in some cases, scary, future of batteries in our world.

Taking you back to science class (sorry!) a battery has an anode (-) and a cathode (+). The electrochemical reaction causes elements (and electrons) to move from one electrode to the other. This reaction is what provides the energy you get out. In the single-use batteries, once the electrochemical reaction happens there is no way to reverse the process and the battery must be disposed of.



In rechargeable batteries, we can reverse the reaction by applying energy in the reverse direction to move those elements back to the original electrode. Every time this process happens a small portion of the elements stick and do not return to their original home resulting in a slightly lower battery capacity. After a number of these cycles, there is enough of the stuck elements that the battery cannot be recharged.

Today much of the development of batteries focuses on electric cars and energy storage from renewable generation sources. Renewable energy sources, or “green



energy,” are considered intermittent generation due to the limited time they can generate.

For example, solar only generates during the day and can fluctuate quickly based on cloud cover. This fluctuation, combined with the fact that peak generation from these sources does not



## Battery Technologies Continued

match up efficiently to peak demand, requires other generation (usually gas turbines) that can be rapidly dispatched to pick up the load when renewables cannot serve the entire load. One way around building that gas turbine is if that renewable energy could somehow be stored and then released when needed during peak times.

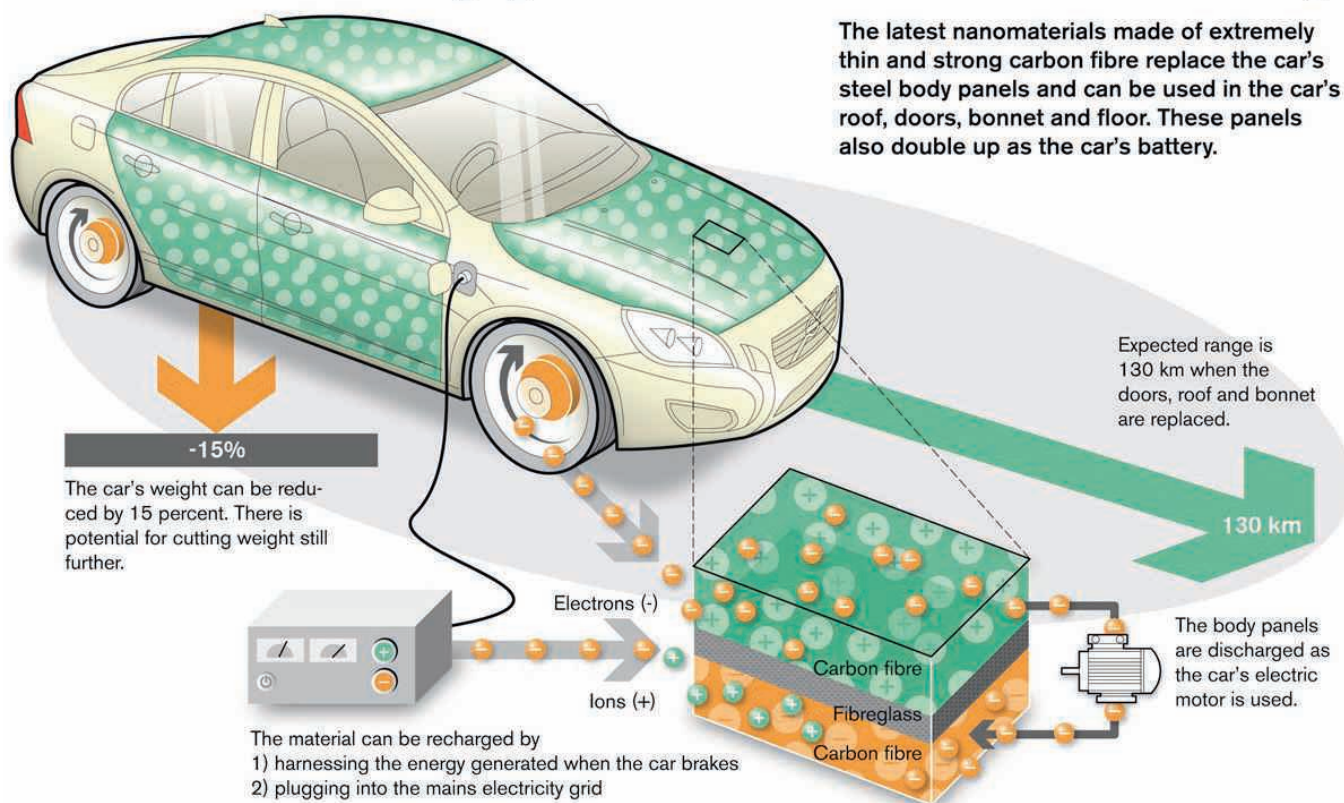
According to Forbes, battery storage, smart grid and energy efficiency companies bought in \$8.1 billion just in corporate funding in 2020, which is an 113 percent increase over 2019! Tesla alone spent almost \$1.5 billion on research and development of batteries; Samsung spent another \$710 million. With all that investment, there are developments with many interesting things happening:

- **Flow batteries** – uses a liquid with chemicals dissolved in it and each is pumped through a membrane. This type is easily scalable, has a low maintenance cost, and has no fire danger.
- **Nanowires** – latest developments demonstrate 200,000 charging cycles with no degradation to capacity or corrosion. Could it be the start of an infinite life battery?

- **Wireless charging** – charging from Wi-Fi or using ultrasonic frequencies with no need to plug in or in close proximity to a base.
- **Including energy storage into items** – including structural panels on cars that store energy and paper-like foldable batteries that can be integrated into clothing and other wearables.
- **Alternative elements** – A lot of research is going on pairing many other materials (instead of lead or lithium). Materials such as sulphur, silicon, graphene, foam, aluminum, carbon, sodium, zinc, manganese, tungsten and nickel. All with the same goals in mind: higher energy storage density, faster charging and safer operation.

If large amounts of energy storage can be achieved, it would greatly help manage today's diverse generation mix. Knowing there is enough energy stored in batteries to handle the peaks makes it much easier to manage the electrical grid.

## The car's body panels serve as a battery







A student at the Korkow Rodeo School learns the "lift, charge and stay back" method of saddle bronc riding under the watchful eye of former champion Chad Ferley. Photos by Billy Gibson

# Class is in Session

## Rodeo School Teaches Youngsters the Basics of the Sport

**Billy Gibson**

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

Jeff Reis saw that his son was in big trouble, so he quickly hurled himself over the heavy metal railing and sprinted across the rodeo arena toward the bucking chute.

That's where Casey, a high school senior bull rider and student at the Korkow Rodeo School, was getting set for his final run of the day. But things weren't proceeding as planned. While Casey was going through his preparations, the agitated bull began climbing up the railing and turning toward the unwelcomed antagonist straddling his back.

Casey was able to get a grip on the top rail of the chute and the spotters eventually pulled him free, but not before his father had gotten halfway across the arena floor.

"Bulls have done this before, but I haven't seen one get that high or be able to turn the way this one did," Jeff recalled. "When it spun and belly rolled and started pulling Casey away from the spotters, I panicked because I thought something truly catastrophic was about to happen."

Thanks to the spotters and handlers and his own quick reflexes as a multi-sport

athlete, Casey escaped the few seconds of terror injury-free. The recalcitrant animal got everyone's attention and made a big scene, but it did nothing to diminish Casey's grit and determination. Even his father was a bit surprised at what happened next.

Casey made it clear he wasn't nearly finished with that bull.

"I couldn't believe his mentality after that," Jeff said. "He was shook up, but he went out and got a new spur strap that had broken off, fixed all of his equipment, got his rope back on and rode that same bull."

Lots of lessons were learned during that dust-up, but then that's the purpose of the Korkow Rodeo School. Having completed its 36th year in April, the school is one of the oldest and most established of several similar schools operating across the state that offer instruction to hundreds of eager young riders and future champions.

Jim Korkow, owner of the Anchor K Ranch east of Pierre, said the school tends to separate those who are genuinely interested in rodeo from those who "might want to go looking for a set of golf clubs."



Jeff Willert preps a saddle bronc student for the youngster's first ride.

Though last year's school was canceled, dozens of students of various ages and skill levels returned to the Anchor K this time around to learn the basics of saddle bronc, bareback and bull riding, and also ways to stay safe.

Korkow's son T.J. runs the annual three-day school, which is led by a team of skilled riders and instructors as well as a physical trainer and other highly-experienced support staff. Each year the school attracts dozens of riders from several different states.

Instructor Chad Ferley is a two-time PRCA World Champion saddle bronc rider and five-time NFR qualifier from Oelrichs who has participated in the event



**SD HS Rodeo Assn.  
Regional Qualifying  
Rodeos:**

June 4-6 - Huron,  
Highmore, Buffalo, Wall  
June 11-13 - Watertown,  
Winner, Dupree, Sturgis

**State HS Finals Rodeo:**

June 15-19 - Ft. Pierre, SD

**National HS Finals Rodeo:**

July 18-24 - Lincoln, NE

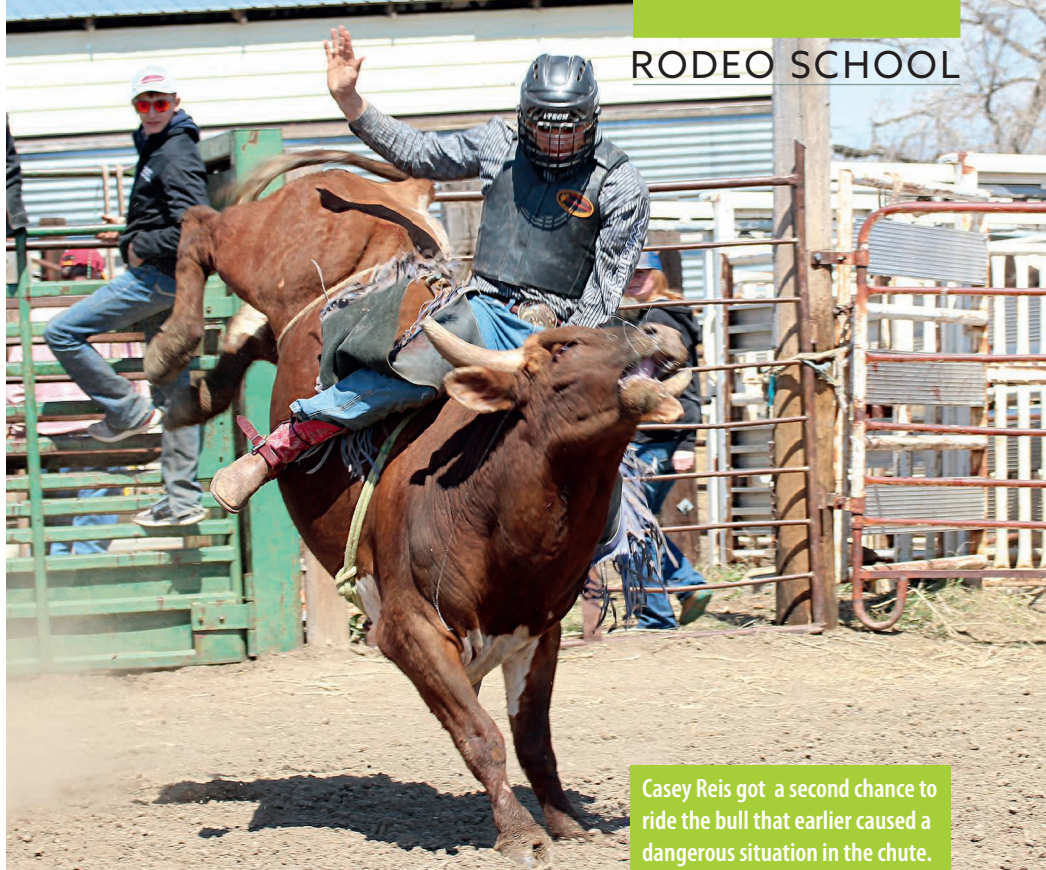
for the past 12 years. Ferley, a member of Black Hills Electric Cooperative in Custer, said students don't leave the school ready for the pro circuit but are there to learn the basics... at least after the initial shock wears off from that maiden voyage that takes the young rider from zero to 90 in a split second.

"After their first ride, they always say it was a whole lot faster than they thought it was going to be," Ferley said. "At first, most of them just black out. We're here to give them the basics, talk to them after each ride and tell them what they did wrong and what they did right, and give them the information they can apply and practice on down the line as they ride more horses."

Fellow instructor Jeff Willert is a PRCA World Champion saddle bronc competitor, five-time NFR qualifier and member of West Central Electric Cooperative. He said he enjoys passing on to youngsters all the tips and tricks that he learned throughout his successful rodeo career.

"With bronc riding, we tell them to lift, charge and stay back," he said. "But things happen so fast, and it's hard for them to pay attention because as soon as that chute opens, they lose their train of thought. You just try to drill things into their head and they eventually get it. It's trial and error. The more you ride, the more you learn."

Ken Korkow said throughout more than three decades of operating the school, one particular student stands out among all the others. An uninitiated 42-year-old gentleman from Alaska came to the ranch



Casey Reis got a second chance to ride the bull that earlier caused a dangerous situation in the chute.

with the intention of checking off an item from his bucket list of things he'd never done before, Korkow recalled. Organizers always make a point to match the stock with the rider's level of experience, so the instructor set up the non-traditional student with a black angus pasture bull.

"He managed to stay on it for longer than I thought he would," Korkow said. "The instructor blew the horn at six seconds when he saw the guy was about to come off, but he blew it early just so he'd think he made it the whole eight seconds. But all the kids who were around got excited for him and went out there and cheered for

him and gave him high-fives. It was quite a moment I'll always remember."

While some express concern about the future of rodeo in the age of youngsters getting more involved in technology, Willert said he doesn't share that concern.

"It can be rewarding from many stand-points," he said. "There are still a lot of kids who don't spend all day playing video games. They see the value of hard work and the farming and ranching lifestyle and they respect the culture. They understand that while some things may be difficult, it's all worth it when you can walk away knowing that you've stood up to the test."



A young rider hangs on just before getting thrown to the ground.



Video games can have a negative impact on teenagers but the technology can also help students learn valuable, marketable skills.

## Experts See Potential for Both Good and Bad with Video Games, but Suggest Moderation

**Billy Gibson**

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

Many parents who have a teenager and a video game console under the same roof have asked themselves the same question: What kind of effect is video gaming having on my child?

When video games made their way out of the arcades and into the living rooms and bedrooms of millions of American households, there was great concern that the games were growing more violent and all of that virtual gore was warping teenage minds.

It seemed every real-world episode of violent behavior exhibited by minors could somehow be traced back to the influence of the gaming culture. But after decades of academic studies, observations and rapidly changing technology, a more evolved and nuanced understanding of recreational video game activity – and its potential impact on developing minds – has emerged.

The landscape has changed so significantly, in fact, that the World Health Organization

– the same group that once alerted parents to the more sinister aspects of pathological video gaming and declared that “gaming disorder” exists – has announced its endorsement of gaming as a useful way for families to face the COVID-19 lockdown. That endorsement came with one important caveat, however: all things in moderation.

Lesley Atkins is a member of the family therapist team at Rising Hope 605 in Burke and also a member of Rosebud Electric in nearby Gregory. Atkins has three children of her own, including a 15-year-old and a 10-year-old, and has worked with many parents and teens to help them gain control over their use of electronics and their total daily exposure to screens of all kinds.

Her best advice to concerned parents is first to recognize that more studies are confirming that video gaming can in fact be addictive and to watch for signs indicating the teen is having trouble pulling away from video screens, smart phones, tablets and other electronic devices.

She also advises that it's imperative for parents to practice what they preach as



Therapist Lesley Holmes recommends moderating screen time for all family members.

teens tend to model the behaviors of the adults around them.

“I see this on a regular basis, where I have to remind the parents that if you want your





child to cut back on screen time, you're going to have to cut back too," Atkins said. "You may tell your teen to get off Instagram or TikTok, but then you stay up watching Netflix all night and you find yourself sleepwalking all through the next day. If you expect them to get out a board game and be content to play with that, then you have to be willing to do the same."

Atkins said it's also essential that parents hold their teens accountable, monitor their screen time, and make sure there are consequences for violating the rules that have been explained to them. Teens can also be empowered by giving them choices, such as telling them how much screen time they will be allowed, but then leaving it up to them whether they spend that time watching TV, playing video games or scrolling through social media account.

Parents, or even grandparents, may not be happy with the fact that youngsters are being raised in an increasingly virtual environment that grows more inescapable and threatens to further tighten its grip on modern society, but Atkins suggests the best response is not to fight it, but to manage it effectively.

"You can't really think about taking technology away, you just have to manage it. From a teenager's point of view, if you try to take it away, you're taking them away from a large part of their social interaction with their friends, their peer groups and their social standing," Atkins said. "Like it or not, in today's world trying to disengage with technology puts you at a disadvantage, and we all want our kids to have an opportunity to succeed in life. These days,

if you don't have a social media presence, it's almost like you're hiding something, like there's something wrong with you. The key is setting healthy limits on it and managing it well."

Not all video games focus on brutal acts of violence and mayhem, Atkins noted. One of the reasons the World Health Organization has altered its position on video games is because many developers have found creative ways to use video games to improve useful skills that can help teens prepare themselves for various careers. Atkins points out that many medical procedures are done with the use of robotics and require good hand-eye coordination. There are also many types of training simulators that allow tech students, for example, to learn how to control and operate heavy machinery or farming equipment before actually getting behind the real controls. If they prefer, they can compete against their peers to keep interest level high.

Young people interested in agriculture, for instance, can bale hay, apply fertilizers and harvest crops by using virtual farming programs. While these simulators may not have the high-speed action as Grand Theft Auto or Call of Duty, they're effective in transferring certain manual skill sets from a recreational to a practical application and improving overall cognition. Teachers and instructors are finding plenty of use for these virtual training programs as the video series called Farming Simulator has sold more than four million copies and the market continues to expand at a rapid pace.

The time to call for help, Atkins said, is when a teenager – or an adult – starts

## The Positives and Negatives of Video Games

**Researchers are discovering there can be both positive and negative effects of video gaming:**

### POSITIVES

- Uplifts mood, strengthens social skills
- Boosts creativity
- Develops problem-solving skills
- Improves attention, situational awareness and working memory performance
- Enhances hand-eye dexterity
- Develops strategic planning and management of resources

### NEGATIVES

- Over-stimulation of the sensory system
- Aggressive behavior
- Association with negative values
- Poor social development
- Mental and physical health risks
- Academic concerns

having a difficult time pulling away from the screen, or starts exhibiting real-time anti-social behavior. Other signs to look for include lower academic performance, increased physical ailments such as carpal tunnel syndrome or a stiff neck and poor appetite and poor hygiene.

"If someone starts fighting and getting very emotional when they don't get their screen time, it's probably a good idea to seek help before the situation gets out of control," Atkins said.

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

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**May 21-23**

Annual Sound of Silence Tesla Rally, Downtown, Custer, SD  
605-673-2244

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**May 21-23**

State Parks Open House and Free Fishing Weekend, All State Parks and Recreation Areas, SD  
605-773-3391

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**May 22**

Frühlingsfest and Spring Market, Main Street, Rapid City, SD  
605-716-7979

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**May 22**

La Framboise Island Bike Race, Steamboat Park, Pierre, SD  
605-224-7054

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**May 31**

PPQG 25th Annual Quilt Show, Harding County REC Center, Buffalo, SD  
605-641-5591

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**June 3-5**

Annual Black Hills Quilt Show and Sale, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD  
605-394-4115

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**June 3-6**

Wheel Jam, South Dakota State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD  
605-353-7340

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**June 4-5**

State BBQ Championships, South Dakota State Fairgrounds, Huron, SD  
605-353-7354

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**June 4-6**

Black Hills Blues Stomp and Swamp Romp, Rush No More RV Resort and Campground, Sturgis, SD  
605-347-2916



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**June 4-6**

Lake Andes Fish Days, City-wide, Lake Andes, SD  
605-487-7694

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**June 5-6**

18th Annual Wessington Springs Foothills Rodeo, Wessington Springs Rodeo Grounds, Wessington Springs, SD  
605-770-5720

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**June 5-6**

Siouxland Renaissance Festival, W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD  
866-489-9241

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**June 12**

Yankton Ribfest, Downtown, Yankton, SD  
866-260-2134

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**June 18-19**

Czech Days, Lidice Street, Tabor, SD  
605-463-2478

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**June 17-20**

South Dakota Shakespeare Festival, Prentis Park, Vermillion, SD  
605-622-0423

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**June 18, 25**

River City Friday Nights, Downtown, Chamberlain, SD  
605-234-4416

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**June 18-19**

Wild Bill Days, Main Street, Deadwood, SD  
605-578-1876

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**June 19**

605 Summer Classic Beer and Music Festival, Cherapa Place, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-274-1999

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**June 19**

South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation Prime Time Gala, Denny Sanford PREMIER Center, Sioux Falls, SD  
605-945-2333

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**June 19-20**

Aberdeen Arts in the Park, Melgaard Park, Aberdeen, SD  
605-226-1557

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**June 25-27**

Annual Main Street Arts and Crafts Festival, North River Street, Hot Springs, SD  
605-440-2738

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**June 30-July 4**

Annual Black Hills Roundup, 300 Roundup Street, Belle Fourche, SD  
605-723-2010

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**July 2-4**

Sitting Bull Stampede Rodeo, Various Locations, Mobridge, SD  
605-845-2387

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**July 10-11**

50th Annual Brookings Summer Arts Festival, West Highway 14 and 1st Avenue, Brookings, SD  
605-692-2787

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.