

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

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# Practicing Electrical Safety This Spring



**Jon Christensen**  
Operations Manager

As I write this article at the end of March, I am looking at the 10-day forecast and seeing the temperatures not going to be much over 30 degrees, I wonder if spring will ever get here this year. Most of you are probably wondering the same thing. In this article, I want to talk to you about the topic of spring farm safety. I typically write one of these articles every spring but this one, with the late spring is a little bit different. I want to touch highly on complacency and being in a hurry. When we are in a hurry, we do things differently than we would when we are not rushed. I am guessing everyone including us here at the co-op is going to feel the rush this year due to the late spring. In the electric industry we talk about the “rush” all the time. We always try to bring it to the top of our safety conversations. We do this because statistics show that complacency happens a lot when we are rushed, and this is when accidents happen. These accidents can be costly both economically and physically.

I am writing this article to tell you to please take the time this year to be mindful of your surroundings and don't be in such a hurry that you may chose a shortcut or do something you don't usually do. This is when bad things happen. I dread the day that I might receive a call that a piece of machinery is in a line that results in a debilitating injury or fatality. It can happen in a split second and can change lives forever. This

is a common example that happens in the electric industry every year. One accident is too many!

You might be thinking, “Wow, this article is kind of depressing.” Well, that is not our intention. Our intention is to educate everyone that the electricity around you is perfectly safe if we don't get rushed and complacent. We truly want everyone to go home safe every day.

**On behalf of Whetstone Valley Electric please take the time to have a safe and productive year. Be safe for your yourself, family, and friends.**

Another topic that is often asked is why doesn't the co-op bury all the lines and then we wouldn't have to worry about outages. Well, I will try to keep this short. It actually starts back in the 1940s. Cooperatives started to electrify the rural areas. They built power lines in straight lines, going across fields. This was done to be as efficient and economical as possible as they could to get electricity to everyone in a short period of time. This practice has changed over time, and we strive to put lines and equipment in more practical areas now. Another reason we don't bury every line is because of cost. This would directly affect all our members. As you all know, a cooperative is member owned. This type of conversion would directly affect the rates of all our members. As of 2023, one mile of burying overhead lines with underground lines is 50-60 thousand dollars. We do progressively work on this but it isn't feasible to do it all in a short period of time.

We continue to progress in burying lines. If you have any clearance or safety concerns with any of our lines, please call our office at 605-432-5331 and we would be happy to work with you on any concerns you may have.

**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

**WHETSTONE VALLEY  
ELECTRIC**

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Design assistance by SDREA.

# Announcing Youth Excursion 2023 to Bismarck, North Dakota

Calling all freshman and sophomore high school students! Is your parent or guardian an active member-owner of Whetstone Valley Electric? If so, you're eligible to apply for an unforgettable summer experience – Youth Excursion 2023!

If chosen, you will receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Bismarck, N.D., for a youth event unlike any other. From July 24-27, participants will stay on-campus at Bismarck State College. During this time, they will have the opportunity to sightsee, make friends from all across the state and gain a new understanding of where their electrical power comes from.

Once participants arrive on the campus, they can look forward to two whole days of building friendships, taking in the sights of North Dakota's capitol and learning "The Story Behind the Switch." During their stay, students will get to hear from power industry experts and participate in hands-on activities. Students will be given the opportunity to tour the Great Plains Synfuel Plant, Freedom Coal Mine and Antelope Valley Station Power Plant to see where South Dakota's power is generated.

There will also be plenty of time built in for recreation and socializing – students will play games, go on a scenic cruise in the Lewis and Clark Riverboat, visit Rivers Water Park and much more. Participants can look forward to connecting with students from all across South Dakota, building strong friendships and learning from their peers.

To be eligible for Youth Excursion, students must be a freshman or sophomore in high school and their parent or guardian must be an active member-owner of Whetstone Valley Electric. For more information, contact:

Whetstone Valley Electric Coop.  
Attn: Stephanie Trevett  
[stepht@whetstone.coop](mailto:stepht@whetstone.coop)  
1101 E 4th Ave, PO Box 512 Milbank, SD 57252  
605-432-5331

**Application Deadline: June 2, 2023.**



# Workplace Safety: Avoid Common Electrical Hazards

Contact with or exposure to electricity is one of the leading causes of workplace fatalities. Follow these tips to avoid electrical injury:

### Overhead Power Line Contact

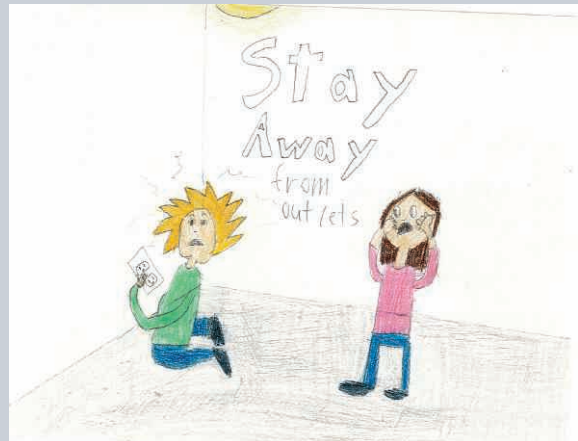
- 46% of all electrical fatalities are caused by contact with overhead power lines
- 57% of overhead power line fatalities were in non-electrical occupations
- Always assume all lines are live and dangerous
- Always look up; be aware of overhead power lines
- Keep yourself and equipment at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines
- Do not touch anything that is in contact with overhead power lines
- Carry equipment, including ladders, horizontally to avoid contact with power lines
- Stay at least 35 feet away from downed lines

### Accidental Contact with Energized Conductors or Parts

- 45% of all electrical fatalities were caused by working on or near energized conductors or parts
- 74% of these fatalities were in electrical occupations
- Always test for voltage before you perform work. Be sure to also test the area around the equipment you are working on to avoid accidental contact with energized equipment
- Always perform a site and risk assessment before conducting work. Hazards exist on and near the equipment you are working on
- When possible, turn off power before conducting work
- Follow proper lockout / tagout procedures
- Avoid complacency. Every job is different, make sure you follow the hierarchy of controls and other electrical safety work practices on every job

### Electrical Safety in the Workplace

- 69% of all electrical fatalities involved non-electrical occupations
- Know when to say when. If you feel unsafe performing a job, say something
- Be aware of potential electrical hazards in the workplace. Avoid electrical rooms and other potentially hazardous areas
- All electrical work should be completed by qualified workers with proper training
- GFCI protection should be installed where electricity and water may come in contact
- Five sources accounted for 92% of all electrical fatalities
  - Overhead power lines
  - Unexpected contact with electricity
  - Working on energized parts
  - Ground faults
  - Damaged wiring



### Power Line Safety

#### Serena Dekrey, age 9

Serena Dekrey, age 9, gives wise advice to readers on electrical safety. She cautions us to be careful around power outlets. Serena is the daughter of Don and Cassandra Dekrey, members of Sioux Valley Energy based in Colman, S.D.

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.



# COMFORTING CASSEROLES

## PHEASANT CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 pheasant  
1/2 cup melted butter  
Bacon grease  
1/2 cup flour  
4 cups milk  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. pepper

### METHOD

Mix flour, salt, pepper, and roll pieces of pheasant in the mixture. Brown in bacon grease. In separate pan, mix butter, milk, and 6 T flour. Stir and bring to a boil. Pour over the pheasant that had been put in a baking dish with bacon laid over it. Bake until tender.

**Gail Klipfel**  
Ellendale, N.D.

## TACO CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 pounds ground beef  
1 package taco seasoning mix  
1 can (16 ounces) pinto beans, drained and rinsed  
1 can (15 ounces) tomato sauce  
1 can (11 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained  
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese  
1 cup crushed tortilla chips

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 400°F. Brown meat in large skillet on medium-high heat. Drain fat. Stir in seasoning mix, beans, tomato sauce and corn. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Spoon into 2-quart baking dish. Sprinkle with cheese and tortilla chips. Bake 5 to 10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve with assorted toppings, if desired.

**mccormick.com**

## CHICKEN, BROCCOLI, AND RICE CASSEROLE

### Ingredients:

1 lb. chicken tenders  
1 cup long grain rice  
1 1/2 cups chicken stock  
1 cup milk  
2 tsps. garlic powder  
2 tsps. onion powder  
1 1/2 tsps. whole rosemary leaves, crushed  
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper  
1/2 tsp salt  
2 cups broccoli florets  
1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

### METHOD

Preheat oven to 400°F. Spread chicken and rice in greased 2-quart baking dish. Mix stock, milk and seasonings in medium bowl with wire whisk until well blended. Slow pour over chicken and rice. Cover with foil. Bake 45 minutes. Remove foil. Stir in broccoli. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake, uncovered, 15 minutes longer or until rice has absorbed all the liquid and broccoli is tender.

**mccormick.com**

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 2023. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

# Necessary Steps for Solar Commissioning



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

**Q:** I'm interested in adding solar panels to my house. What steps do I need to take?

**A:** Getting a solar photovoltaic system installed and operational on your house or property involves working with several parties to ensure a safe and functional system. You need to work with your electric utility, local building department and a solar contractor.

Here are the solar commissioning steps you need to take.

### Do Your Research

If you are considering a solar PV installation, I recommend starting with research. The cost of a residential solar photovoltaic system varies based on your location, the type of components used and the size of the system. With average costs ranging from \$16,000 to \$36,000, installing a solar system is a significant investment for most homeowners.

In my experience, people decide to install solar panels for financial benefit, environmental impact or a combination of the two.

The financial benefit of generating your own electricity is dependent on your energy use, the cost of the system, electric rates, and the specific rules and regulations for your state and electric utility.

Your electric utility can help you understand electric bill rate structures. Many states offer net metering, a billing mechanism that gives the owner credit for any extra electricity the system produces and supplies back to the power grid. If your utility offers net metering, ask about being compensated for excess power generated by your solar PV system.

The environmental benefit of installing a solar system is based on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This benefit is dependent on the type of electricity generation that powers your home. You can check with your utility to learn about its energy sources. This information provides you a better understanding of the type of power your PV system will offset.

You should also reach out to your local building department to learn about the permitting and inspection process.

### Solar Proposals

To find out potential costs and estimated energy production, you need a proposal from a solar contractor. I recommend getting two or three proposals from different contractors to compare system design and cost. You can also request a reference from a previous customer in your area.

Solar contractors work in multiple utility service territories and may not be familiar with the requirements in your state or at your electric utility. I always recommend reaching out to your electric utility before signing a solar installation contract. You want to understand your monthly electric bill costs, as well as the monthly solar system costs, after installing solar.

### Interconnection Agreement

If you commit to a home solar installation, you will sign an interconnection agreement with your electric utility. This contract between you and your utility stipulates the terms of connecting a distributed generation system, such as a solar PV system.

### Permits and Inspections

You or your contractor will work with the local building department for the necessary permitting prior to installation. Once the system is installed, you likely will need final inspections from the building department and the electric utility. Your utility will grant permission to operate prior to energizing your system. Don't assume your local building department will communicate with your electric utility. In my experience, this doesn't always happen.

Because the solar installation process involves multiple parties, preapproval and post inspections, it is important to check with your local utility and building department before committing to a solar PV installation.



Knowing the steps to solar commissioning can take the stress out of your installation.



# A Fun Escape

## Escape Rooms Gaining Popularity for Group Fun

Jocelyn Johnson

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Conquering the riddle draws groups to the growing popularity of escape rooms. This is a relatively new attraction in South Dakota for many merry groups looking for an afternoon of fun.

An escape room is nothing more than a riddle room. It challenges its participants to get out – if they can.

Across the state, there are 10 businesses that offer this activity for fun. Black Hills Escape Rooms, located in downtown Rapid City, is one that opened in 2016. They accommodate five escape rooms, each with a distinctive scenario, entertaining guests with a storyline full of unique hints. The story of each room varies along with the difficulty level.

Ryan Comer, manager of Black Hills Escape Rooms, said the activity attracts groups looking to celebrate birthdays, family get-togethers, bachelorette parties and more. Businesses also rent out the rooms for employee team-building exercises

or holiday parties. Comer stated summer is the busy season for these groups, but Christmas is also busy with people looking to conquer the holiday themed escape rooms.

“People get addicted to these rooms,” said Comer. “It’s all about how adventurous you are and who’s in your group.”

Yet, despite the extra precautions and supportive group effort, a few still get anxious about being trapped.

“The main fear that some people feel when getting into one of these escape rooms is claustrophobia, which might detour some people from even wanting to try it,” said Comer. “But here, we always leave one door open for them to leave at any time. At other places, you might get locked in until you solve

the puzzle or the time ends.”

Each group is given one competitive hour to escape but is offered two hours to solve the riddle in every room. Two people is the minimum number of required participants and eight is the highest recommend number. Yet, Comer said four to six participants per room was the sweet spot for each of their escape rooms.

“Really though, it’s not about the number of people you bring, it’s who you bring,” said Comer. “I’ve had a group of two people make escapes in record time and groups of eight who couldn’t find a way out.”



Friends put heads together to solve their riddle and escape the room.



TUCKER KRAFT



# SMALL TOWN, BIG DREAMS

Kraft refuses to go down amongst a group of Redbird defenders.

## Tucker Kraft's Road to the NFL

**Frank Turner**

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With a population of 500 residents, Timber Lake, S.D., may seem similar to many small-town communities across the state. The town is known for its scenic beauty, outdoor recreational opportunities, and rich history. However, what really sets Timber Lake apart from the rest is a homegrown NFL prospect: Tucker Kraft.

At an impressive 6-foot-5 and weighing 254 pounds, Kraft has proven himself to be South Dakota's latest up-and-coming football star. Ask any fan of college football and they will tell you that Kraft has the size and skill set to make waves on a professional level.

Luckily, Kraft's talents haven't gone unnoticed. During his latest breakout season as SDSU's All-American tight end, Kraft left an impression on NFL

scouts with his ability to outrun opponents, snatch incredible catches and charge through multiple tackles. A top contributor in nearly every game, Kraft led the Jackrabbits to their first-ever FCS National Championship. The historic season quickly cemented Kraft's place as a top tight end in the NFL Draft.

Kraft recalls the moment everything fell into place: "I just realized that when I had the ball, no one could touch me," he said. "I knew after that season that I was completely capable of playing with the pros."

Timber Lake High School head football coach Ryan Gimbel says he is not surprised to see his former stu-



Tucker Kraft



dent and player on the doorstep of the NFL. Countless hours in the weight room and gym, he said, revealed Kraft to be a student-athlete with incredible drive.

“Seeing the raw natural talent of Tucker spoke for itself and what he could accomplish, but he also had the dedication to take it to that next level,” said Gimbel. “To me, it wasn’t a surprise, and that was our running joke when he left high school – ‘I’ll see you playing on Sundays.’”

Kraft’s journey to the NFL, however, was not without its fair share of adversity. Growing up in Timber Lake, Kraft lost his father to a plane crash when he was only 12 years old. Kraft overcame the childhood tragedy with his two brothers and mother by working tirelessly on and off the field. Honoring his father’s legacy, Kraft followed in his father’s footsteps to become an All-American college star like his father had done before him.

“My brothers took a big part in raising me after my dad died,” said Kraft. “My mom, my aunts and uncles all played a role, but I pride myself on getting a lot of things done independently.”

Steely determination has carried Kraft to the highest level of football, and not even dramatic injury has been able to slow him down. In November Kraft officially declared his name in the NFL draft. Kraft’s friends and family cheered him on as he showed off his incredible strength and skill on national television at the NFL Combine. There, Kraft proved his ability to play alongside the likes of Dallas Goedert, Riley Reiff and South Dakota’s other pro footballers.

“I was kind of star-struck walking in,” said Kraft. “Sitting down with the head coaches of the NFL franchise, you realize that you are at this level now. This is a job interview.”

The NFL Combine, however, will

not be the last of Kraft’s time on national television. Ranked as the sixth top tight end, Kraft’s eyes are set on the draft in April. And, although he hails from somewhere small, Kraft plans to loom large on the field as a starting player with great potential.

“I want to go to a team that’s going to use me, whether I’m on the line of scrimmage in the trenches with the big guys or catching balls and getting yards after the catch. I want to make an impact on a team, day one.”

Whatever happens in April, Kraft’s hometown is ready to cheer him on. According to Gimbel, most of Timber Lake is ready to don colors and jerseys that they are not used to wearing to support their hometown kid.

“The buzz in our town has just erupted,” said Gimbel. “Our community, school, and family friends – they all want to see him be successful in the opportunity that he has worked for.”



NFL prospect Tucker Kraft evades a tackler, leading SDSU to a 31-7 win last November against the Illinois State Redbirds.

# Whetstone Valley Electric 81st Annual Membership Meeting March 23, 2023

The 81st Annual Membership Meeting of the Whetstone Valley electric Cooperative, Inc. was held on Thursday, March 23, 2023 at the Milbank High School Theater in Milbank, SD. Registration opened at 6:00 pm and voting polls opened when a quorum of 50 members had registered. Two candidates ran for the open Director position for District 2; Kent Frerichs and Matt Cameron both of Wilmot.

At 7:00 pm, voting was closed, and the meeting was called to order by President Bill Tostenson.

President Tostenson stated that 211 voting members had registered, and more than 50 members were present, creating a quorum.

Tostenson invited everyone to stand for the singing of the National Anthem. The anthem was led by Shaylee Schuchard and Nadia Thue.

Tostenson invited Pastor Barb Mckewin, of Parkview and Tabor United Methodist Churches in Milbank and Big Stone to give the invocation.

Following the invocation, Tostenson introduced the Board of Directors, former directors, former employees, and special guests. He offered special thanks to outgoing Director, Dale Jensen for his 15 years of service to the co-op.

Tostenson called on Secretary Strasser to give notice of the meeting and present the minutes of 2022.

Secretary Darren Strasser affirmed that the Notice of Annual Meeting had been mailed to the membership and the unapproved minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting had been delivered to those attending.

Tostenson called for a motion to waive the reading of the Notice of Annual Membership Meeting and to approve the minutes of the 80th Annual Meeting as

presented. A motion from the floor was seconded and carried.

Tostenson pointed out that the Financial Statement and Treasurer's report was included in the material delivered to those attending. A motion from the floor to approve the Treasurer's Report was seconded and carried.

Tostenson noted that capital credits in the amount of \$7,749,497 have been returned to members and that \$478,248 has been approved for the 2022 general retirement to be credited to members in May.

Tostenson called on the Cooperative's General Council, Harvey Oliver, to announce the election results.

Mr. Oliver announced that Districts with open seats were 1, 2, and 5. He reported that the elected Director for District 2 was Matt Cameron. Oliver also reported that only one candidate for districts 1 and 5 were submitted: Dave Behrns and Bill Tostenson respectively. With no other members nominated for these districts, the candidates were duly elected.

Tostenson called on Whetstone Valley General Manager Dave Page for his report and to introduce the employees.

General Manager Page welcomed the members to the Annual Meeting

of the Cooperative. Page reported that Whetstone has 1,460 miles of power line and that some of plant is 70 years old or more. He discussed the importance of continual replacement of aging infrastructure to maintain resiliency and reliability of the electric system. He reported that nearly \$2 million is invested each year for new construction and line replacement. He also reported on technology improvements that include updated mapping, metering and outage management systems.

Page discussed the changes the electric industry is experiencing, highlighting a shift to more wind and solar electric generation. He also discussed new types of electric loads that will impact the demand for energy in the future. He also reported changes in material lead times and the cost of equipment are increasing, stating that it can take more than a year to receive some items.

Page reported that electric rates at Whetstone Valley have remained the same for more than six years and that they are not



Manager Dave Page (right) presents Diane Berkner (left) with the \$500 cash prize she won in the drawing.





Director Bill Tostenson (right) presents Macy Mueller (left) with a cash prize after she won a drawing.

expected to increase in 2023.

He pointed out that wholesale power costs from East River Electric and Basin Electric Cooperatives have not increased for several years. He also reported that local costs have been controlled, in part by leveraging exceptionally low interest rates for capital infrastructure investments. Page reported that resulting excess margins produced by power cost credits from Basin and East River Electric were deferred to 2023 to delay the need for an anticipated

rate adjustment.

Manager Page discussed the nature of not-for-profit electric cooperatives and the allocation and return of equity to its members. He stated that sufficient rates are required to support the return of equity in the form of capital credits.

Page concluded his report and thanked the Board of Directors for their commitment to the cooperative and their communities. He thanked them for the time they invest to keep abreast of changes

within the electric industry and regulatory matters.

Page introduced the employees. Those attending showed their appreciation to the team of employees with applause. He presented milestone service awards to Journeyman line technician, Luke Kovel for five years of service, Journeyman line technician, Tristan Hall for five years, Journeyman line technician, Brian Davis for 10 years, and Operations Manager, Jon Christensen for 15 years of service.

Page announced that this year's Whetstone Valley / Basin Electric \$1,000 scholarship was awarded to Carter Phinney.

Manager Page expressed his appreciation to East River for technical services they provide to Whetstone.

President Tostenson called for any unfinished or new business from the floor. With no further business, and a motion and second from the floor, President Tostenson adjourned the meeting.

Tostenson announced that there would be no tour of the Basin Electric facilities in 2023 and that future tours are being planned.

There was a drawing for \$50 for children 13 years of age or younger in attendance.

Another drawing for \$100 was held for those 14 to 18 years of age in attendance. The winner was Macy Mueller.

The winner of the \$500 cash drawing was Diane Berkner of Milbank.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET.

*We salute you.  
We thank you.*

**Let us remember those who courageously  
gave their lives this Memorial Day.**

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

The location of your thermostat can impact your HVAC system's ability to maintain an ideal indoor temperature. For maximum accuracy, thermostats should be placed in the center of the home, away from air vents, plumbing pipes and exterior doors. Avoid placing items like lamps and televisions near your thermostat, which can cause the HVAC to run longer than necessary. Avoid installing thermostats in rooms that tend to feel warmer or colder than the rest of the home. Do not place furniture in front of the thermostat, which can block air flow and result in inaccurate readings.



# ELECTRIC SAFETY IN ACTION

In a controlled demonstration, Journeyman Lineman Brady Gaer uses life-size equipment on the high voltage demonstration trailer to educate students about electricity.

## Empowering the Public to Stay Safe

**Frank Turner**

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Electric safety is a topic that South Dakota students are excited to engage with. They often ask questions like, “What should you do if your tractor equipment touches a power line?” or “How can birds sit safely on a power line?” or even “What does it look like when something comes in contact with high voltage?”

These are some of the most popular questions Oahe Electric’s Chief Financial Officer Valerie Marso has not only been answering but also demonstrating for more than 20 years.

“They always just have tons of questions,” said Marso. “It’s always fun to hear what they come up with next.”

It’s not just for entertainment, however. Oahe Electric and its employees are committed to realizing their goal of zero accidents at home and at work. Part of preventing tragedy starts with educating the public, especially youth, on how to stay safe around electricity.

In the last year alone, Oahe Electric traveled to nine different schools and led demonstrations for more than 900 students. For Marso, verbal communication is only half the battle when it comes to educating students

about electric safety. The real impact, she said, comes from showing them.

“The visuals and the noise that the high voltage makes really lands in a way that you just can’t convey with words,” said Marso. “It can scare the students a little bit, but I think it gives them a healthy respect for electricity.

Co-op across the state, including Oahe Electric, use three different interactive safety demonstrations to hone their message about safety: Power Town, Co-ops in the Classroom and the high voltage demonstration trailer.

One of the most popular, Power Town, is a small-scale, tabletop model of a few quaint houses attached to a small power grid. The miniature electrical system shows students how electrical current moves through



various items they may encounter in their daily lives, presented in a fun and easy-to-learn format. Line-workers, who work on the real equipment every day, lead the demonstration and teach students about personal protective equipment worn by co-op employees to complete their jobs safely.

Co-op in the Classroom is yet another powerful initiative South Dakota co-ops engage in to promote safety across the state. Working in conjunction with East River's Education and Outreach Program, co-ops meet the students where they are in the classroom to teach local youth the importance of respecting electricity through hand-on lessons that engage and excite the audience.

Lastly, the high voltage demonstration trailer is a portable unit that carries life-size equipment from events to local schools. It's a demonstration that always leaves an impression. Within a safe environment, students get to see actual equipment, such as utility poles, electrical conductors and distribution transformers, in action. Each hour-long demonstration shows what can happen when objects such as animals, trees, ladders and even fruit come into contact with power lines.

"This is equipment that our linemen work on every day, so they are comfortable showing these students how energy works," said Marso.

These demonstrations not only

entertain, but also promote a healthy and safe environment for co-op members and the public. During one of Oahe Electric's latest outreach events, Marso recalled listening to a small group of kids talk about how they sometimes sit on "the green boxes." They were referring to underground transformers. It became a teachable moment that left an impact on both the students and teachers.

"We told them to never touch them," she said. "You never know what going on in there, and it's always better to be safe than sorry. It was at least one person who took something home and actually used it. Moments like that show we are really making an impact with these students."



Oahe Electric Power Supply Specialist Steve Long teaches electric safety using Power Town, a miniature model used in safety demonstrations.



# SEWING MEMORIES

The Farmers' Daughters' Sewing Museum is located in Vermillion, S.D.

## Take a Stitch Back in Time

Jocelyn Johnson

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A stitch in time saves family memories and sews history together at The Farmers' Daughters' Sewing Museum just outside of Vermillion, S.D. A mom and five daughters hold a passion for sewing and for the history of household sewing machines.

Collecting domestic vintage sewing machines began more than 20 years ago for Sally Abild who visited

auctions with her mom, Evelyn Hanson. There, they found various vintage sewing machines and began collecting them.

"I would see these vintage machines that were being sold for little or nothing," Sally said. "I hurt, in a way, for the families because I thought, 'These are a part of their history.' If I had my grandmother's or my mother's sewing machine, I would be extremely happy to have it."

She purchased 20 machines, not

knowing what to do with them, but wanting to preserve them. They were first stored in an old farmhouse before eventually moving to a milking barn, which was homesteaded by Sally's husband – Dick Abild's great grandfather. The barn was renovated and opened as a museum in 2017.

The museum's collection of sewing machines grew with contributions from her sisters.

"They would come across machines I had never seen in the Midwest," Sally said. "In the bigger cities, there was more money in the mid-1800s when sewing machines started to pop up. You would find a bigger selection in those areas that you didn't find in rural areas."



Sally and her sisters, Gloria, Marie, Linda and Geri, carefully researched the history of each machine they owned, putting them in order and fixing them up. Today, visitors to The Farmers' Daughters' Sewing Museum are able to view more than 120 vintage machines along with treasured family mementos. Sally's family has a legacy of sewing their own clothes. She remembers her great grandmother making dresses from feed sacks and her mother, Evelyn, would sew clothes for the family on her treadle machine, since electricity wasn't available on the farm until the 1950s.

"I had to learn how to sew growing up," Sally said. "If I wanted something new, I had to learn how to make it for myself."

The Farmers' Daughters' Sewing Museum is one of three vintage sewing museums in the United States. "We collect domestic vintage machines – meaning our machines were the first to be used by families in the home and were made of all metal," Sally said. "A machine that has



Sally Abild and her family pose outside of the Farmers' Daughters' Sewing Museum.

plastic in it is not a vintage machine."

One of the oldest domestic, vintage machines on display at the museum is one by Elias Howe, who made the first official patented and manufactured sewing machine in 1846.

"We also have a Singer Model 12, which came out after the Civil War," she said. "Isaac Singer sold them door-to-door to families and was credited with coming up with the first payment plan – allowing up to 10 years to pay for this machine. It's said that Singer's Model 12 was the machine that clothed a nation."

The most unique machine that Sally favors, however, is a Wilcox and Gibbs that came about it the mid-1800s.

"It's a small, chain-stitch machine that was loved by many women back then," Sally said. "They could easily take it

from house to house, and it was easy to use. It's also the symbol we use for our museum."

Most vintage sewing machines tended to be family heirlooms, which were passed down from generation to generation.

"Many women who visit the museum have a machine that was passed down to them by their mothers or grandmothers and want to find out more information on them," Sally said. "Men love to visit too to learn more about the mechanics of these machines."

Sally revealed the transition from vintage sewing machines, made with metal, to newer sewing machines, made with plastic, began when America gave Japan two Singer patents after World War II. Japan capitalized on this and managed to perfect a design that they sold in America for a third of the cost. To compete with this, Singer began to put plastic parts into their machines and before eventually going out of business in 1988. Consequently, the age of vintage sewing machines ended when the convenience and affordability of plastic was introduced.



Evelyn Hanson instilled the love of sewing and vintage machines in her five daughters.



May 28, 2023  
**Back When They Bucked**  
 Days of '76 Arena  
 Deadwood, SD  
 800-344-8826

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.

**MAY 6**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
 Lake Farley Park  
 Milbank, SD  
 605-432-6656

**MAY 17**  
**Norwegian Independence Day**  
 6 p.m.  
 Vivian, SD  
 605-222-3296

**MAY 20**  
**Buggy Museum Open House**  
 10 a.m.  
 Stockholm, SD  
 605-938-4192

**MAY 20**  
**Booth Day**  
 10 a.m.  
 Booth Fish Hatchery  
 Spearfish, SD  
 605-642-7730

**MAY 20**  
**Frühlingsfest and Spring Market**  
 1 p.m.  
 Main Street Square  
 Rapid City, SD  
 605-716-7979

**MAY 25**  
**Wine Walk**  
 5 p.m.  
 Downtown Businesses  
 Aberdeen, SD  
 605-226-3441

**MAY 26-28**  
**Hidden Treasure Heritage Festival**  
 Lead, SD  
 307-259-4484

**MAY 27**  
**Back When They Bucked All-Day Rodeo**  
 9 a.m.  
 Days of '76 Event Complex  
 Deadwood, SD  
 605-717-7642

**MAY 27**  
**Norwegian Constitution Day**  
 11 a.m.  
 Lake Norden, SD  
 605-874-2171

**JUNE 3**  
**Health Connect of South Dakota: The Human Race 5K**  
 9 a.m.  
 Sertoma Park  
 Sioux Falls, SD

**JUNE 11**  
**River Honoring Community Potluck**  
 5 p.m.  
 Clay County Park River Shelter  
 Vermillion, SD  
 605-670-0540

**JUNE 16-18**  
**Fine Arts In The Hills Show & Sale**  
 Main Street  
 Hill City, SD  
 605-574-2810

**JUNE 18**  
**Father's Day Fishing**  
 10 a.m.  
 Palisades State Park  
 Minnehaha County, SD  
 605-594-3824

**JUNE 21**  
**2023 McCrossan Boys Ranch Golf Classic for Kids**  
 Central Valley Golf Course  
 Hartford, SD  
 605-339-1203

**JUNE 28-29**  
**Farley Fest**  
 Lake Farley Park  
 Milbank, SD  
 605-432-6656

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