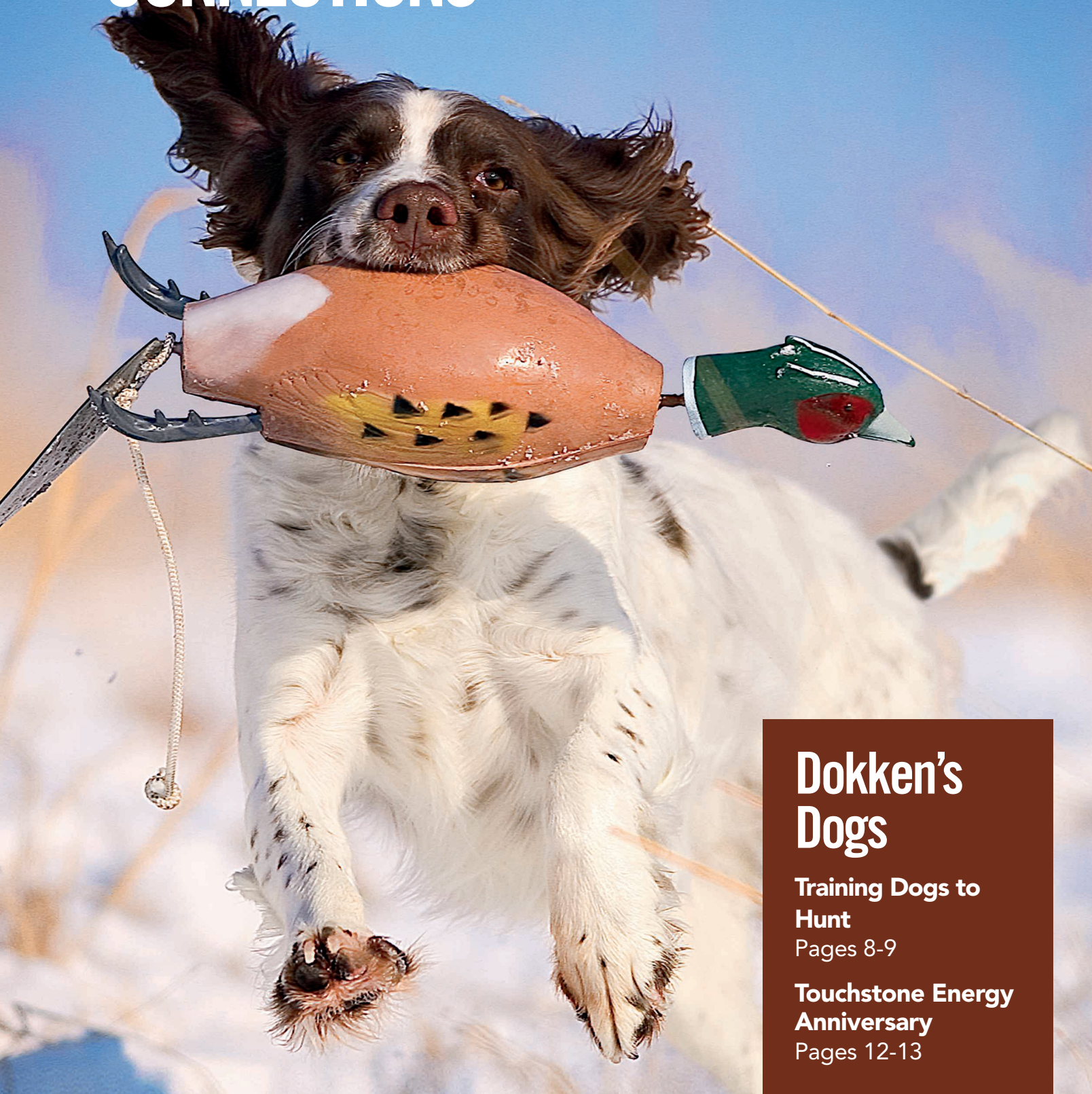


# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Dokken's Dogs

**Training Dogs to  
Hunt**

Pages 8-9

**Touchstone Energy  
Anniversary**

Pages 12-13

# Playing it Safe Online



**Dave Page**  
General Manager

Safety is always part of the job at Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative. In addition to the physical safety of our employees and the public, we also incorporate cybersecurity as part of our safety plan.

In today's world, most of us don't leave the front door unlocked. We protect our homes, loved ones and valuables from intruders with locks, alarms and other security measures. Cybersecurity is no different. It's the practice of protecting other valuables such as your identify, banking and health records and other sensitive information from digital attacks and theft.

In addition to pumpkin-spice lattes, crisper air and Halloween festivities, October is the time of year we recognize Cybersecurity Awareness Month. While taking necessary steps to protect our personal information is a year-round practice, at Whetstone Valley Electric, we use this time to share helpful cybersecurity reminders across our team of employees.

Given our increased reliance on internet-connected devices and gadgets, this month, I'd like to share a few cybersecurity tips and let you know how Whetstone Valley Electric is working to boost our own cybersecurity efforts.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA), an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security that is responsible for strengthening cybersecurity and infrastructure protection, these are the four best ways to keep you and your family safe online.

1. Implement multi-factor authentication (also known as two-step verification) on your accounts. The additional layer of protection makes it much harder for criminals to access your information. Even if a hacker obtains your password, they may be unable to access your accounts if multi-step verification is enabled.
2. Update your software. This is one of the easiest ways to protect your personal data. When downloading a software update, make sure it's coming straight from the company that created it. Beware of fake pop-ups that request urgent downloads. Better yet, turn on automatic updates.
3. Think before you click. Most successful cyber attacks start with a phishing email. Don't take the bait when cyber criminals go phishing. Avoid emails (or texts) that look too good to be true, oddly urgent, poorly crafted or include unusual requests.
4. Create strong passwords, using long, unique and complex words or phrases. Consider using a password manager to save time, work across all devices, protect your identity and notify you of potential phishing websites.

### **For the young people in your household**

Just as you would talk with your children about safety in the physical world, discuss ways to stay safe online. Help them understand the public nature of the internet. Young people need to know early on, that what is shared online stays online and is difficult (if not impossible) to take back. Just as you would guard your money or valuables, children need to learn to guard

## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

### WHETSTONE VALLEY ELECTRIC

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#### Visit us at

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Design assistance by SDREA.

## Playing it Safe Online, Continued

their personal information, especially on social networks. As a parent or guardian, help your children learn about and use the privacy and security settings on social networks and gaming sites.

### Keeping the electric grid and your data secure

We're doing our share on the cyber front. Part of offering excellent service is keeping that service secure and reliable. For Whetstone Valley Electric, reliability means repairing wear-and-tear, upgrading our equipment to withstand storms and severe weather, and using technology and best practices to keep our system secure from cybersecurity issues.

We also work together with co-ops across the country to develop new technologies and learn from each other to keep the grid's network secure.

While we can't stop a storm or predict every disruption, as a co-op, we do everything we can to keep the lights on and our members protected. Because if we all do our part, our interconnected world will be safer and more secure for everyone.

## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Did you know using your dishwasher is more energy efficient than washing a load of dishes by hand? To maximize efficiency, wash full loads in the dishwasher and don't block the arms or other parts that move while the appliance is in use.

For additional savings, turn on the "air dry" setting instead of using the "heat dry" setting and use a rinse aid to help dishes dry faster without spotting and streaking.

Source: Dept. of Energy



Touchstone Energy®  
Cooperatives

The power of human connections®



## October is Fire Safety Month

Is your workplace or home fireproof? Each year, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) celebrates National Fire Safety Month in October. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2016, there were 88 occupational fatalities as a result of workplace fires or explosions. This is down from 2015, in which there were 121. While the statistics show that the number of fatalities due to fires or explosions in the workplace is on a downward slope, any number other than 0 is unacceptable and demands the attention from management, safety professionals and employees in every company. Not only do fires present a severe life safety hazard, they also can be detrimental to business success due to the possible destruction of business equipment and facilities. This campaign serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of fire safety awareness in both the workplace and our home lives.

The safety reminders communicated in the workplace can be easily translated to fire safety in the home. Establish a family emergency action plan, discuss escape routes with family members, and locate fire extinguishers in your home. Additionally, conduct a mock fire drill with your family members to ensure you and your loved ones know how to get out safely. During this drill, outline meeting places that are at a safe distance from the home. Designate a neighbor to contact for help in the event of an emergency. Simple exercises such as the aforementioned could mean the difference maker in your family making it out alive in the event of a fire in your home.

Below are key components to ensuring your workplace and home are fireproof:

- **Eliminate Clutter** – Exercise good housekeeping. Clutter can easily become a fuel source in the event of a fire, allowing a fire to spread quickly. Furthermore, clutter can restrict access to emergency equipment and exit routes.
- **Fire Extinguishers** – Maintain the appropriate type and number of fire extinguishers. Conduct monthly and annual extinguisher inspections to ensure they are in good, working condition. Provide training for employees on the correct use of fire extinguishers.
- **Chemical Safety** – Use and store chemicals safely. Read hazard warning labels and safety data sheets

to determine flammability and other fire hazards. Ensure your chemical storage areas provide adequate ventilation for the storage of chemical or other hazardous substances.

- **Waste Control and Storage** – Limit the accumulation of flammable or combustible materials and residues as to prevent the risk for such materials contributing to a fire emergency.
- **Exits** – Ensure emergency exit route diagrams are posted and accessible in all areas of the facility for all employees to easily view. Additionally, ensure means of egress are well-lit with regulated exit signs and free from debris or clutter.

Remember it is always better to be proactive rather than reactive and it is best to alleviate hazards or hiccups in times of peace than in times of chaos. Utilize the above tips to reduce the risk for catastrophe or at least minimize the damage.

*Source: Safety Resources, Inc.*



### Keep cords away from water!

#### Maddy Pannell, Age 12

Maddy Pannell advises people it's not safe to plug in appliances around water. Maddy is the daughter of Scott and Kim Pannell from Sioux Falls, S.D., members of Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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.

# PASTA PERFECT

## ITALIAN SPAGHETTI

### Ingredients:

1-8 oz. can tomato sauce  
1-6 oz. can tomato paste  
1 1/2 paste cans water  
1 small onion, chopped  
2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce  
1 tsp. garlic salt  
1/2 tsp. chili powder  
3 shakes cayenne pepper  
1/8 tsp. black pepper  
1 tsp. basil  
1 tsp. oregano  
1/2 to 1 lb. ground beef

### METHOD

Combine all ingredients except ground beef. Cover and simmer 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Brown beef and add to sauce. Serve over cooked noodles. May add green peppers or mushrooms.

**Gail Keating**  
**Flandreau, S.D.**

## GARDEN HARVEST PASTA SHELLS

### Ingredients:

2 tbsps. vegetable oil  
2 medium zucchini, shredded  
1/2 cup finely shredded carrots  
2 cups chopped fresh broccoli  
1 small onion, chopped  
Salt and pepper  
1 lb part-skim ricotta cheese  
2 cups shredded mozzarella  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
1/4 cup grated parmesan  
1 tbsp. dried basil  
27.5 oz. jar pasta sauce  
12 oz. pkg jumbo pasta shells, cooked and drained

### METHOD

Heat oven to 350. In a large skillet heat oil, then saute broccoli, zucchini, carrots, and onions until tender. Season with salt and pepper. Set aside. In a large bowl, thoroughly combine ricotta, mozzarella, egg, parmesan, and basil. Add vegetables and stir to combine. Spread 1 cup of the pasta sauce evenly in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Fill pasta shells with the vegetable and cheese mixture and arrange in the baking dish. Spoon the remaining sauce over the shells. Cover and bake for 45 minutes. Uncover and bake another 10 minutes or until bubbly.

**Faye Chambliss**  
**Murdo, S.D.**

## CREAMY CHICKEN AND BACON PASTA

### Ingredients:

8 oz. spaghetti  
1 1/2 lbs. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch chunks  
2 tbsps. flour  
4 slices bacon  
1 cup milk  
4 oz. (1/2 package) cream cheese, at room temperature  
1 1/2 tsps. basil leaves  
1 1/2 tsps. garlic powder  
1/2 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. coarse ground black pepper

### METHOD

Cook spaghetti as directed on package. Drain well. Meanwhile, toss chicken with flour. Set aside. Cook bacon in large skillet on medium heat until crisp. Drain on paper towels. Set aside. Remove all but 1 tbsp drippings from skillet. Add chicken; cook and stir 4 minutes or until golden brown. Stir in milk, cream cheese and seasonings until well blended. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cut bacon into bite-size pieces. Add to skillet. Place spaghetti in serving bowl. Add chicken mixture; toss well. Serve immediately.

[mccormick.com](http://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.

# How to Insulate Your Attic Hatch

**Q:** I've noticed a draft coming in around my attic hatch, and it makes the room uncomfortable. Can you offer any tips for this?

**A:** You can eliminate drafts and reduce energy waste by properly sealing and insulating your attic hatch. Attic hatches are often overlooked, even if the rest of the attic is properly insulated. It should be noted if your attic access is located in an area you are not paying to heat or cool, such as your home's exterior or garage, there's no need to insulate it.

For attic access points inside the home, it's important to seal them properly with durability and functionality in mind. Attic hatches should be insulated close to the same R-value as the rest of the attic. (R-value is the insulation's capacity to resist heat flow.)

Attic access types vary, but here are a few tips on how to insulate standard and ladder attic hatches.

## Standard Attic Hatches

A standard attic hatch is typically a covered rectangular hole cut into the ceiling. If your hatch is drywall, I recommend replacing it because it is difficult to properly insulate and seal a drywall hatch. They often crumble and crack around the edges, leading to more air leaks.

Ready-made insulated hatches are available online or at home improvement stores, or you can insulate and seal your existing attic hatch. Either way, measure carefully to ensure you create an effective seal.

To improve your existing hatch, replace drywall attic hatches with  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood cut to fit. If you have loose-fill insulation in your attic – as opposed to fiberglass batts – install a dam or barrier that extends two inches above the level of insulation to prevent it from spilling into the house when you open the hatch. Use unfaced fiberglass batt insulation or

plywood to hold back the loose fill insulation.

To insulate the hatch, use rigid foam insulation cut slightly smaller than the plywood attic hatch. Use screws and fender washers to secure the first layer of rigid foam to the hatch. Add layers of rigid foam by taping the edges together one at a time using foil tape. Always wear gloves when using foil tape to prevent cuts. Keep layering the rigid foam until you reach the desired R-value.

Remember to seal any gaps between the drywall and trim, using caulk for smaller gaps and foam sealant for larger ones. Finish the job by applying adhesive weatherstripping around the hatch perimeter. Install the weatherstripping on the hatch itself or on the trim supporting the hatch.

## Ladder Attic Hatches

For attic hatches with dropdown ladders, you'll follow the same instructions: Install a dam, air seal and insulate. Be sure to account for the space of the folding ladder.

To insulate, build a box to sit in the attic around the hatch. I suggest using wood for the sides tall enough to accommodate the folded ladder. The top of the box will be rigid foam you can remove to get into the attic. Cut the first piece of foam to fit inside the box and the next layer to fit on top of the box. Keep layering until you reach the desired R-value.

To get a good air seal, you may need to remove the existing trim to seal the gap between the drywall and hatch frame. Add weatherstripping to the hatch or the underside of the frame to form a tight seal when closed.

There are several commercially available options for insulating ladder hatches. Remember to check the product's R-value and measure carefully.

If purchasing the required materials to seal and insulate your attic hatch is not in your budget, I recommend weatherstripping the hatch perimeter. While it won't provide the same level of insulation, it's a simple, low-cost option for blocking air drafts.



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group



# Brad Schardin

## A Man of Faith, Family, Fast Cars and Community

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

Four decades ago, Brad Schardin entered the rural electric cooperative world as the Douglas Electric Cooperative Inc. general manager. His success as a leader is something he credits to having a strong supporting cast. Without the help from others working within the various co-ops over the years, he'd be lost.

Those very same people nominated Schardin to be inducted into the South Dakota Co-op Hall of Fame. Schardin was one of the four inductees honored at this year's award ceremony, which was held Aug. 7 in Sioux Falls.

The award is one of the highest honors bestowed on those who have worked to enhance the cooperative idea, its broader acceptance, or the substantial advancement of cooperatives in South Dakota.

Schardin grew up in De Smet and was beginning his teenage years when his father died, leaving him and his mother on their own. That's when Ed and Bill Wilkinson took Schardin under their wing.

"Those guys really taught me a lot," Schardin recalled.

To this day, he helps out at the Wilkinson Ranch, which is located near Lake Preston.

Schardin also made history as an athlete and was the last Black Hills State University Yellow Jacket in recent history to earn 12 varsity letters in his career.

He participated in football, basketball and track from 1978 to 1982. Schardin was co-captain in basketball his senior year and holds the BHSU high jump record of 6' 10". Schardin was a member of the football conference champions in 1979 and track conference champions all four years. The track team also won the District 12 Championship in 1979 and 1980. Schardin was also named the first Walter Dickey

Scholar Athlete at BHSU, according to information from Black Hills State University's Hall of Fame page.

Schardin was inducted into BHSU's Hall of Fame in 2000.

His career in the co-op industry began in 1983. In 1990, Schardin moved to Marion to take over Turner-Hutchinson Electric. Seven years later, he was hired as shared manager of Turner-Hutchinson and Lincoln-Union Electric Company in Alcester. The two cooperatives would consolidate in 2000 to form Southeastern Electric. Three years later, a shared management agreement was entered with McCook Electric and the two cooperatives merged in January 2006.

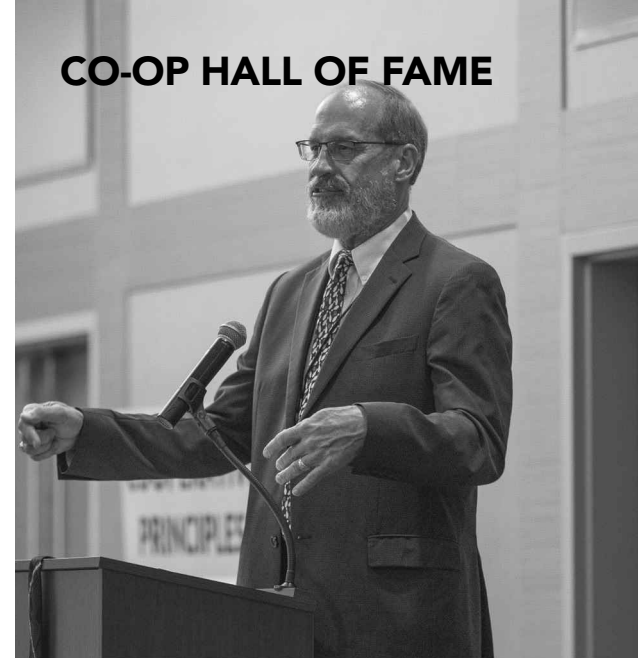
Schardin served six years on the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Cooperative board.

There were difficult times Schardin had to persevere through during his career, specifically when an employee made contact with electricity. Schardin didn't elaborate on the details of the electrocution, but he said his faith kept him going and his commitment to his employees grew even stronger. "That's why having good, meaningful relationships with the employees is so important," Schardin said.

Between his involvement with his local church where he mentors young athletes, Schardin likes to race cars, specifically Mopar, and organizes car shows within his local community.

As if Schardin didn't have enough on his plate, he bought the local bowling alley in Marion about four years ago. The owners were struggling to keep the alley open and Schardin didn't want to see the community take the loss. So he invested his time and money into the business.

"Families in the community shouldn't have to travel all the way to Sioux Falls, spend \$200 to celebrate their child's



birthday, then drive all the way back to Marion. The bowling alley is a place where people can come have birthday parties or spend time with their family for just a few bucks," Schardin said.

His commitment to community, one of the cooperative principles, is apparent in all aspects of his life.

Chad Kinsley will take over as Southeastern's new general manager. Kinsley graduated from South Dakota School of Mines and Technology with a bachelor of science degree in electrical engineering and has held diverse leadership roles in the manufacturing, medical device, and utility industries. Kinsley previously was the vice president of operations for Black Hills Energy.

Schardin said he believes Kinsley will do a fine job in the role and gave praise to the employees, Southeastern members and the board of directors for their commitment to delivering affordable, reliable energy.

"Brad's main focus is the cooperative member," Schardin's hall of fame biography states. "His greatest concern is how a decision will affect the member at the end of the line, always asking if it will ultimately benefit members with improved reliability and will be worth the cost. Brad holds himself to the highest standards. Having begun his cooperative career at a small co-op, Brad has continued to consider effects on smaller co-ops when collaborating with other distribution cooperative managers, East River, and Basin Electric, and is likely to speak up when he feels it is necessary. Brad lives by the cooperative principle of commitment to community."

# FOR THE LOVE OF HUNTING DOGS

Source: Travel South Dakota

## A Successful Hunt May Depend on Your Dog

**Shannon Marvel**

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

With numerous television appearances and A-list clients under his belt, Day County resident and Lake Region Electric Cooperative member Tom Dokken has become one of the premiere hunting dog trainers of our time.

But you won't hear the modest pro brag about himself. Instead, Dokken gives credit to the hard work and the innate capabilities of the dogs themselves.

The 70-year-old Minnesota native has been professionally working with dogs over the last 50 years at his training facility, Dokken Oak Ridge Kennels, Inc. in Northfield, Minnesota.

It's one of the largest gun dog training kennels in the region.

His love for hunting alongside a canine

companion harkens back to his teenage years when he'd tag along to go hunting throughout the country with his friend and his friend's Labrador Retriever, Charlie.

"We were probably 16 years old when we started hunting together. He had a lab and I didn't have one. We hunted with that dog just about every weekend."

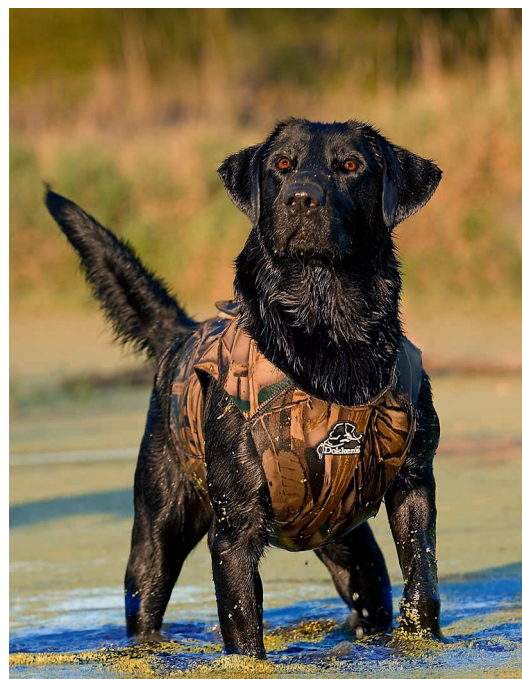
After a few years, Dokken decided it was time to get his own dog.

And to that dog goes all the credit, in Dokken's eyes.

"I started training her then I started running field trials. I did really well, not because of me, but I had a good dog who did

really well on a national level," he recalled.

After that, Dokken was hooked and knew training dogs was what he wanted to do for a living. He's since established



An adult black lab out hunting



himself as one of the top hunting dog trainers in the world, even bolstering a line of dog training products – Dokken Dog Supply – which is carried in sporting good stores across the country.

“That’s just as a result developing products we wanted for training themselves,” Dokken said of his supply company.

Some of the dogs Dokken has trained have hunted under some big names, including President George W. Bush and country music legend Hank Williams, Jr., along with many major professional athletes.

But it takes some prying to get that kind of info out of the humble Dokken, and he’s quick to emphasize that everyone that he does business with is treated the same, no matter what.

“Every customer is important. One person doesn’t get treated different than the other,” Dokken said.

His facility employs four full-time trainers, as well as office staff.

When Dokken isn’t training one of the 350 hunting dogs that come to his Minnesota training facility each year, he’s at home with his wife, Tina, in Day County.

“My wife and I live north of Webster. That’s our connection with the area. I’ve hunted down in the Lily area for years. We’ve had our place here 18 years or better,” Dokken explained.

“My mom’s family homestead is down in the Selby area, so as kids we’d be back on the farm for a good portion of the summer,” he added.

Dokken said his business trains pretty much any of the sporting, pointing and flushing breeds. But in the Upper Midwest, the more popular breed tends to be the Labrador Retriever.

Dokken has a special place in his heart for labs, which he described as a hardy breed able to withstand the punishing winter conditions known to challenge hunters in South Dakota during pheasant season.

And in South Dakota, pheasants are

king, according to Dokken.

“As far as population of pheasant – up in our area the weather sometimes knocks them back a little bit. Last year we had rain in December, which is a little bit of a factor when it comes to pheasant numbers,” Dokken said.

“The further south and west you get, the population changes too. Regardless, South Dakota numbers will always be top in the U.S.”

Hunters who have a dog in their arsenal have a much greater advantage over those who do not. For one, they can flush birds out of thick cover and, unlike the average human, have an absolute blast doing so.

“Without a dog – if you’re a pheasant hunter – you’re not going to have the ability to get the birds up and get them out of higher and denser cover. Finding birds that you’ve shot is going to be a real challenge as well. A dog is a great conservation tool as well,” Dokken said.

From a training standpoint, Dokken advises dog owners to start teaching their hunting partners good habits when they’re really young.

The earlier the training begins, the more success you’re setting the dog up for down the line.



Dokken with two adult labs

“Try to buy the best bloodlines that you can because if you do, in most cases your success rate just gets higher.”

Dokken says it boils down to three things: teaching, repetition and reinforcement. For the human, practicing patience is crucial.

“A majority the time the dog is not in the wrong, it’s that the dog can’t understand what you want,” he said.

The entire job is a dream for Dokken and his team, and one he hopes to continue for decades more to come.

“It’s what we do,” he said. “It’s a labor of love.”



Source: Travel South Dakota

# Samuel Waldner is Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week

We are pleased to announce Samuel Waldner has been named Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week for the week of Oct. 29, 2023 – Nov. 4, 2023.

Samuel is the son of Ronnie and Amanda Waldner of Stockholm, SD and currently a senior at Waverly-South Shore High School.

Samuel participates in All-School Plays. He is a science fair winner and a National History Day winner. He is a member of the National Honor Society and is enrolled in multi-dual credits. He has plans to attend Dakota State University.

Mrs. Abby Kwasniewski, a teacher at Waverly-South Shore, nominated Samuel for the award.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and Dakota News Now have joined together to recognize the achievements of high school seniors throughout the region. Touchstone Energy

Scholar of the Week has been celebrating the achievements of high school seniors since 2002. Recipients are highly motivated high school seniors who excel in the classroom and community. This program was founded on the four pillars of Touchstone Energy: Integrity, Accountability, Innovation and a Commitment to Community.



Samuel will be featured on Dakota News Now during the 6:00 PM news on Monday, Oct. 30, and again on Dakota News Now morning news on Tuesday, Oct. 31 between 6-7 a.m.

For more information on the program please call Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative at 605-432-5331.



## 16th ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE

**OCT. 1 - 31, 2023**  
**MONDAY - FRIDAY**  
**8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.**

Help us stock the local food pantry for the upcoming winter!

All members can drop off non-perishable food items at the Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative office in Milbank, S.D.

You will get your name put into a drawing for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit at WVEC in honor of National Co-op Month.



## DO YOU HAVE CAPITOL CREDIT MONEY COMING TO YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW? WE ARE LOOKING FOR PAST CONSUMERS!

The following list contains the names of former Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative members, whose capital credit checks were returned to us. Please review the

list and contact us if you are listed or know the contact information for anyone listed.

Call 1-605-432-5331 or 1-800-568-6631.

Ackerman, Dawn  
Barse, Donna  
Barse, Stan  
Barse, Stan Jr  
Brown, Allen Jr  
Kampeska, Tonya  
Cadotte, Nicole  
Cilliers, Johan  
Crawford, Bethel  
Decoteau, Amber  
Demarce, Craig  
Dockter, Betty  
Donnell, Jaime

Dorsch, Michael  
Duggan, Shirley  
Dumarce, Samantha  
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German, Glenn Sr  
Harder, Kim  
Hart, Louis Jr  
Haynes, Heidi  
Healy, Carol  
Herbert, Margaret  
Jutting, Lori  
Kelway, Ronald  
Keoke, Levi

King, Cedric  
Kleinsasser, Paul  
Kottke, Jody  
Kurten, Bernard  
Labelle, Jessica  
Laducer, Steve  
LaFontaine, Britney  
Mackey, Bill  
Max, Crystal  
Melchert, Katherine  
Mendlik, Gladys  
Mercado, Lorae  
Meyer, Nancy

Meyer, Vernon  
Miller, Theresa  
Monnens, Andreanna  
Parker, Naomi  
Prins, Maynard  
Radtke, Arthur  
Raymond, Caroline  
Redday, Ann  
Redwing, Gerri  
Redwing, Norman  
Renville, John  
Renville, Saleine  
Renville, Rochelle  
Rinkenberger, Kari  
Robbins, Katherine  
Roberts, Colleen  
Robertson, Carissa  
Robertson, Georgia  
Rodingen, Michele  
Rodlund, Dimitria  
Royer, Sarah  
Running Hawk, David  
Schmidt, Mike  
Seaboy, Danny  
Shank, Jay  
Shepherd, Della  
Shepherd, Helen  
Smith-Hill, Christina  
Squirrel Coat, Kardsten  
Tucholke, David  
Veen, Nicole  
Weigand, Allen  
Wells Fargo Home Mortgage  
White, Arlene  
Zamarron, Margarita





## Touchstone Energy Celebrates 25 Years with Commercial Debut

**Frank Turner**

[frank.turner@sdrea.coop](mailto:frank.turner@sdrea.coop)

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives is encouraging member electric cooperatives and their member-owners to pop some popcorn, settle in, and join them in celebrating the organization's 25th anniversary on Nov. 29, when they'll debut their

newest line of 2024 commercials.

The historic milestone will commemorate a quarter-century of Touchstone Energy's drive to establish a universal brand – seen on t-shirts, logos, and even soaring hot air balloons – for co-ops nationwide. Select commercials from the lineup, which will feature on the Touchstone Energy website, will highlight the local South

Dakota prairie landscape and local co-op employees with Sioux Valley Energy.

Touchstone Energy Board of Directors President and Sioux Valley CEO Tim McCarthy said he is glad to see South Dakota being represented on a national scope. "We are excited to be celebrating this historic milestone," said McCarthy. "Touchstone Energy continues to be an invaluable resource for co-ops in South Dakota and throughout our nationwide network."

Touchstone Energy's journey began 25 years ago when a group of movers and shakers recognized the need for an outward-facing organization that would connect the image of



co-ops across the nation. Although individually small, cooperatives from all around the nation believed a unified brand would broaden and strengthen their presence. Together, these co-ops owned and operated more distribution lines than any other sector in the electric utility industry and served more than half of the American landmass. On Nov. 26, 1998, 17 founding co-ops established Touchstone Energy, powering through a time of regulatory uncertainty.

“In the late ‘90s, there were some revolutionary things happening in the energy industry,” said Jana Adams, executive director of Touchstone Energy. “The cooperatives really wisely said: as individual entities we are small, but if we come together and create a recognizable brand, we will have a better opportunity to compete in this evolving energy landscape.”

From the start, Touchstone Energy was set on making an impression. By purchasing six iconic Touchstone Energy branded hot air balloons and sponsoring notable events such as the famous NASCAR Talladega 300 race, Touchstone Energy quickly transformed into a nationally recognizable brand.

To date, Touchstone Energy’s membership has grown to nearly 700 co-ops, which now reaches more than 30 million member-owners across 46 states. Along with this remarkable growth, Touchstone Energy has enhanced its services, including advertising, social media management, and web development, among others. Over time, Touchstone Energy’s wide range of services, said Adams, have become a crucial communication resource for their membership.

“Our first national ad was in the early 2000s, and to this day, we run advertisements in every single zip code served by a Touchstone Energy cooperative,” said Adams. “We are

constantly innovating and giving our cooperative members the opportunity to highlight the great work they do and the achievements they have.”

Looking back on the last quarter century, Adams said Touchstone Energy is thrilled to connect to its original roots and celebrate its longstanding service to co-ops across the country.



Touchstone Energy celebrates 25 years while producing new commercials in South Dakota.



“We encourage everybody to join us on Nov. 29 for our 2024 national ad premier and to celebrate the 25 years behind us, but more importantly the many years ahead of us where we continue to work together,” she said.





# HOMES OF STEEL

Mike Adolph, left, checks in with an employee during a break from construction on Aug. 22 in Watertown. *Photo by Shannon Marvel*

## REED Fund Helps Finance Summit-Based Manufacturer

**Shannon Marvel**

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On the northwestern edge of Watertown, just east of Jefferson Elementary School, a sea of hard hats, brightly colored safety materials, utility trucks, commercial vans, and lumber piles spans across several blocks.

It's hard to differentiate between the houses under construction as most contractors rarely deviate from the methods they've relied on for years. Especially when framing a house.

But one construction crew's telehandler towers above the rest. The steel trusses and wall panels hoisted into the air are also not typically seen in residential construction, but using steel in lieu of timber is just as effective.

And thanks to financial assistance through the Rural Electric Economic Development (REED) Fund, Skyview Construction is able to provide steel

trusses and wall panels to the local home building industry.

Contractors usually use the platform framing method, which allows the use of dimensional lumber pieces instead of the larger, natural wood pieces which are harder to come by in the supply chain.

Lumber used in construction has become more difficult to secure and more expensive.

That's why the owners of Skyview Construction, LLC in Summit decided to manufacture trusses and beams out of steel themselves then use those

products to build homes.

But that required purchasing two very expensive pieces of equipment.

After visiting with American Bank and Trust about ways to finance the new venture, Skyview Construction owners Mike, Jackie, and Gerry Adolph reached out to Dave Eide, the general manager of Codington Clark Electric Cooperative to see if their business qualified for REED funding.

Eide was happy to help.



Gerry Adolph, Mike Adolph, and Jackie Adolph stand in the doorway of a townhome built with steel members that the family manufactured themselves.

*Photo by Shannon Marvel*



The REED Fund worked with American Bank and Trust to help secure financing that offered Skyview Construction a loan with more amicable terms.

Codington-Clark Electric provides financing through REED to help business start-ups and expansions, create and retain jobs and assist communities with facilities, services and infrastructure needs.

The Adolfs were able to secure the funds through the REED Fund to purchase the machine that will form the steel members for the rafters, floor trusses, and walls, and the rotating telehandler that will be used to place the components on-site.

That was in January. Within the last month, the Adolfs and their crew of around nine men completed construction of four twin home units using the wall panels and trusses they manufactured right on their own property in Grant County.

Jackie and Mike reflected on their journey into the steel manufacturing and construction industries.

The couple wanted to start a construction business after going through the extensive process of building a group of townhomes and their own home a few years ago.

Mike's mother, Gerry Adolph, is also an owner of Skyview Construction.

The family has been in the seeding and erosion control and real estate investing business together for the last 18 years, and agreed to expand into the housing industry.

They had planned to build with wood, but the soonest the equipment and necessary supplies could be delivered was at least three years down the road. It also would've cost at least \$3 million.

"So how it went down, we were going down the wood side pretty hard. Like we were going to put

in a big fancy factory with robots and everything," Mike said. "And then the equipment cost so much and it would've put us three years out. I didn't want to wait three years. Then someone asked if we had looked into steel. So we looked into the steel and it made sense."

The program the Adolfs use to manufacture the steel wall panels and trusses maps out the design and provides a detailed view of the project.

"It labels each piece and even tells you how many nails or screws to put in each connection and where to put them for that design," Jackie explained.

Their existing employees would also work as laborers for the construction outside of the seeding and soil erosion season.

The software allows the workers to assemble components without any guess work.

"While we have an experienced building supervisor, the guys that are installing it, they really don't have much construction experience. They've never done this. But it's laid out so well by the software," Mike said.

"The biggest thing with steel is they can do this with minimal experience."

The steel parts are manufactured at the Adolph's shop in Grant County.

Once the structure's design has been completed within the software, steel is ran through a machine and manufactured into the proper stud or truss material.

"Our goal right now is to do a whole house in a week or two— print it, assemble the components in the shop, and then send it out to the jobsite and have it up in a couple of days," Jackie said.

"We're hoping when we get to the single-family homes, it's going to be a little bit quicker," Mike added.

Eide noted how the insulation used with steel framework is at a higher rating and uses a Zip system, creating a more energy efficient temperature control system.

"This is just a really cool project and the owners provide the market with a product that no one else had before," Eide said.

To learn more about the REED Fund, go to [www.reedfund.coop](http://www.reedfund.coop).



Jackie Adolph points to a label on one of the steel components, which was generated by the design software to ensure the pieces are properly assembled. Photo by Shannon Marvel



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.

**SEPT 22-23**  
**Holiday Arts & Crafts Fair**  
 9 a.m.  
 Davison County Fairgrounds  
 Activity Center  
 Mitchell SD  
 605-359-2049

**SEPT 22-24**  
**Coal Springs Threshing Bee**  
 Meadow, SD  
 605-788-2229

**SEPT 23**  
**German Fest**  
 Webster, SD  
 605-380-0588

**SEPT 23**  
**Springfield Dakota Senior Meals Fall Festival**  
 9 a.m.  
 Springfield Community Building  
 Springfield, SD

**SEPT 24**  
**Annual Bazaar & Fall Fest**  
 4-7 p.m.  
 St. John the Baptist Catholic Church  
 Wagner, SD

**SEPT 30**  
**Day of Wellness**  
 10 a.m.  
 Sturgis Armory  
 Sturgis, SD

**SEPT 30**  
**Mission Quilt and Bake Sale**  
 Zoar Lutheran Church  
 Revillo, SD

**SEPT 29-30**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-941-4958

**OCT 6-7**  
**Holman Acres Pumpkin Fest & Vendor Show**  
 Philip, SD  
 605-441-1060

**OCT 7**  
**Spirit of Dakota Award**  
 Huron Event Center  
 Huron, SD  
 605-352-6073

**OCT 12-19**  
**"In Flanders Fields" Art Exhibition & Silent Auction**  
 Vermillion Public Library  
 Vermillion, SD

**OCT 14**  
**Oktoberfest**  
**Leo Lonney Polka Band**  
 6 p.m.  
 Menno, SD  
 605-660-1839

**OCT 19-21**  
**Fall Fundraising Rummage Sale**  
 Spearfish Senior Center  
 Spearfish, SD  
 605-642-2827

**OCT 21**  
**Fall Festival**  
 11 a.m.  
 18473 U.S. HWY 83  
 Onida, SD  
 605-788-2229

**OCT. 28-29**  
**Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association**  
 Ramkota Hotel Exhibit Hall  
 Sioux Falls, SD  
 605-731-9155

**NOV 11**  
**Sisseton Area Merchants & Crafters Holiday Extravaganza**  
 Sisseton, SD  
 605-698-7425

**NOV 12**  
**Lutefisk, Lefse & Meatball**  
 4-7 p.m.  
 Trinity Lutheran Church  
 Chamberlain, SD  
 605-730-0553

**NOV 24**  
**Parade of Lights**  
 7 p.m.  
 Dakota Avenue  
 Huron, SD  
 605-788-2229

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