

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

Botanical Brilliance

McCrary Gardens at SDSU Turns 60

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Co-ops' Youth Tour Alumni

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The annual Garden Glow celebration at SDSU's McCrary Gardens turns the space into a winter wonderland with festive lights and decorations.

Photo by McCrary Gardens

YOUR CO-OP NEWS

Dear Clay-Union Member,

Starting January 1, 2026, our members will see an increase in electric rates due to higher costs from our power providers, East River and Basin Electric, and rising expenses to maintain safe, reliable power.

After reviewing detailed forecasts and industry changes, our Board of Directors has approved a rate increase for 2026. We are seeing a large increase from our power suppliers, which affects over half of our total expenses. Some members will see a slight change in the facility charge and adjustments to some energy blocks. The facility charge is a monthly charge that ensures reliable service for all members regardless of energy usage. This fee covers essential costs, including:

- Trucks, transformers, power poles, and labor for our distribution system
- System improvements to increase capacity and reliability
- New technologies, such as advanced metering, for better service
- Liability insurance, interest, and taxes

This chart summarizes the changes that will be effective on January 1, 2026.

Residential/ Single Phase	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Facility Charge	\$50.00	\$52.50	\$2.50	per month
1st 1200 KWH's	\$0.110	\$0.125	\$0.015	per KWH
Over 1200 KWH's	\$0.090	\$0.110	\$0.020	per KWH
Small Commercial Three Phase	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Facility Charge	\$75.00	\$75.00	\$0.00	per month
1st 1800 KWH's	\$0.110	\$0.125	\$0.015	per KWH
Over 1800 KWH's	\$0.090	\$0.110	\$0.020	per KWH
Irrigation	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Annual Minimum	\$32.00	\$32.00	\$0.00	per avg KW/season
1st Rate Block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
Excess over 1st rate block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
Demand KW	\$21.00	\$23.00	\$2.00	per KW
Large Power	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Facility Charge	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$0.00	per month
1st Rate Block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
2nd Rate Block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
Demand KW	\$21.00	\$23.00	\$2.00	per KW
Campground & Multi Residential	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Facility Charge	\$50.00	\$52.50	\$2.50	per month
1st Rate Block	\$0.070	\$0.070	\$0.000	per KWH
Demand KW	\$21.00	\$23.00	\$2.00	per KW
Large Power w/Generator	Before 1/1/2026	After 1/1/2026		
Facility Charge	\$125.00	\$125.00	\$0.00	per month
1st Rate Block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
2nd Rate Block	\$0.059	\$0.059	\$0.000	per KWH
Demand KW	\$21.00	\$23.00	\$2.00	per KW
NC Demand	\$2.50	\$5.00	\$2.50	per KW

We understand that rate increases are difficult, and we are committed to keeping costs as low as possible while providing safe, dependable power.

The Board of Directors and Management

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

CLAY-UNION ELECTRIC SPARKS

(USPS 116-800)

Office Hours
Monday through Friday
7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
31321 SD Hwy. 19, Vermillion, S.D.

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POWER FAILURE – 24-hour service In case of Power Failure Call: 1-800-696-2832 or 624-2673

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This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer



The Gift of Membership

*We are grateful for your membership.
May the upcoming holidays bring
you Peace, Love, and Joy!*

Our office will be closed for the holidays on
December 24th & 25th and January 1st.
If you have an emergency please call our 24/7 service at 605-624-2673.

YEAR-TO-DATE FINANCIALS

	September 2025	Year To Date
Number of Consumers Billed.....	3,909.....	3,919 Avg.
Total Revenue	\$702,670.....	\$7,451,999
Total Cost of Service.....	\$762,571	\$7,661,501
Operating Margins	\$(59,901).....	\$(209,502)
Other Margins.....	\$8,740	\$92,972
Total Net Margins.....	\$(51,161).....	\$(116,530)
kWh Purchased.....	5,175,666	60,195,899
Cost of Power	\$407,748	\$4,194,571
kWh Sales.....	5,195,000	57,553,509
Residential Average Usage	1,099	1,302
Residential Average Monthly Bill.....	\$160.....	\$177

So, a Power Line Fell On Your Car...

Driving accidents can happen quickly and easily in the winter months with slick, inconspicuous coatings of black ice, reduced visibility and other weather-related safety hazards.

The important thing is that you know what to do if you find yourself in a collision with a utility pole – because what you don't know can seriously injure or kill you.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is no fire...

Call 911 and remain in your vehicle until help arrives — this is where you are safest. Your vehicle may be insulating you from the electrical current. Once you leave the vehicle and place your foot on the ground, the electricity may take a path through your body and shock you.

Never go off looks; a downed power line may not be sparking or showing obvious signs of being live, but it may still be energized.

If someone attempts to assist you, warn them to stay back until the utility can de-energize the line.

If a power line falls on or near your vehicle and there is a fire...

If your vehicle has caught fire, you must proceed with extreme caution. Again, even if a line isn't sparking, it may still be energized.

To make your escape, jump from your vehicle to the ground, making sure your body is not touching the ground and vehicle simultaneously. Making contact with both would make your body a direct conduit, and you would be electrocuted.

For that same reason, do not assist anyone else exiting the vehicle or accept help exiting the vehicle.

Once you're on the ground, keep your feet together and hop or shuffle away from the scene, at least 40 feet away. As you move, your goal is for there to not be a voltage difference between your feet. You do not want one foot off of the ground while the other foot is making contact with the ground.

Call 911 and warn others to stay away from the scene.

If you come across downed power lines...

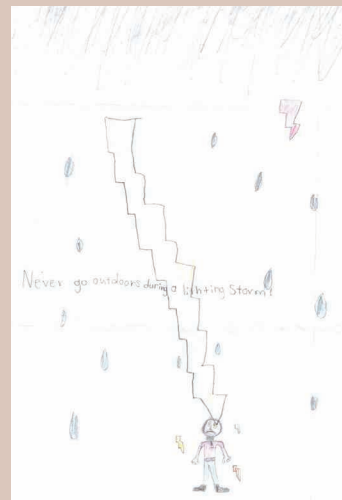
Stay no less than 40 feet away, as the ground can become energized. Never drive over downed power lines – not only do you risk electrocution and damage to your vehicle, but the added tension could pull down surrounding utility poles and create additional hazards.

If you're a first responder at the scene...

Always assume lines are energized. Contact the utility and wait for them to de-energize the lines and give you the all-clear.



"Never go outside during a lightning storm!"



**Josiah Krcil,
Age 9**

Josiah cautions readers on the dangers of going outside during a lightning storm. Great picture, Josiah! Josiah's parents are Andrew and Andrea Krcil from Dante, 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.

Specialty SOUPS

CHEESEBURGER VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients:

1 lb. ground beef
2 lbs. block Velveeta cheese
(2) 12 oz. cans evaporated milk
(3) 10.5 oz. cans cream of mushroom soup
10.5 oz. can cream of celery soup
1 can French style green beans
1 can mixed vegetables
1 can diced potatoes

Method

Brown ground beef. Cut Velveeta into cubes. Put all ingredients into slow cooker. Cook on low six to eight hours, stirring halfway through or cook on high two hours, and then on low another two hours, stirring halfway through.

Wendy Thorson
Northern Electric

DUMPLING SOUP

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
2 tsps. sesame oil
1 cup carrots, shredded
5 green onions, thinly sliced (whites and greens separated)
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/4 cup white miso paste
6 cups chicken vegetable broth, divided
1 lb. frozen mini dumplings
3 cups baby spinach
3 tsps. soy sauce (plus more to serve)
Hot sauce or chili oil to serve

Method

In a large pot, heat the vegetable oil and sesame oil over medium heat. Add the carrots, green onion whites, garlic, and ginger. Cook, stirring frequently, until the vegetables begin to soften, two to three minutes. In a small bowl, combine the miso paste with 1/2 cup broth, whisking until the miso is dissolved. Add the miso mixture and remaining broth to the pot and bring to a boil.

Add the dumplings and bring to a simmer. Heat until the dumplings are heated through, three to five minutes. Stir in the spinach, cooking until the greens are wilted, one to two minutes. Add the soy sauce and green onion greens.

Serve hot with hot sauce or chili oil, and extra soy sauce.

Susan Forma
Union County Electric

PHEASANT CHOWDER

Ingredients:

2 pheasants (thighs and breasts: or only breasts if preferred)
4 celery stalks, sliced
1/2 lb. bacon strips, sliced
1 large yellow onion, diced
4 cups chicken broth
4 medium size Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed
3 cloves garlic, diced
5 tsps. flour
2 cups half-and-half
1 cup parmesan cheese
Salt and Pepper

Method

Put cubed potatoes in a separate pot, cover with the chicken broth, and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes until they are soft.

Slice the pheasant meat, across grain into 1/4 to 1/2 inch strips.

Cut bacon slices into small pieces and put in a Dutch oven on medium heat. Add diced celery and onion and cook until the bacon and celery are cooked through and onions are transparent. Add the garlic and pheasant. The meat should cook quickly because of the small sized pieces. Once meat is cooked, add the flour one tablespoon at a time while stirring the mixture, thoroughly coating the vegetables and meat.

Add the potatoes and broth from the separate pot. Once incorporated, stir in the half-and-half, then stir in the parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. This chowder is ready to eat once heated through, or you can let it simmer on low heat. Flavors should continue to meld.

Nick Kvernevig
Lake Region Electric

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 2025. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

"Not-For-Profit Means "All for You"

Scott Flood

NRECA

It's hard to imagine what our daily lives would be like without electricity. Every year, our dependence on what travels across poles and wires to our homes and businesses grows. We act as though electricity has always been there, take its presence for granted, and can't imagine life without it. Even the shortest power outage manages to turn our world upside-down.

But 90 years ago, when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the executive order that created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), nobody in America's small towns and wide-open spaces took electricity for granted. That's because most of them didn't have access to it.

As the 19th Century drew to a close, wealthy investors were starting electricity utility companies in cities from coast to coast. Building power plants and installing power lines was costly, so investors focused their effort in places with the highest population density. Few gave any thought to rural America. Built-up areas offered more customers in smaller spaces, which helped those utilities become highly profitable. Running power lines to serve a handful of consumers spread across so many thousands of acres just didn't make economic sense, so most utilities ignored them. After all, they couldn't make as much money serving those places.

Long after their city cousins became accustomed to enjoying the wonders of electric lighting and the earliest home appliances, folks in more remote areas could only dream about the convenience. The REA was created to change that, providing a source of expertise and financing for a new concept in energy: the rural electric power cooperative.

Besides the areas each served, the most important distinctions between those big utilities and the new co-ops involved who owned them and their purpose. As the name implies, investor-owned utilities are owned by people who buy stock in the utilities. The primary goal of those utilities is to make money to distribute to their investors through dividends and generate higher per-share prices to increase those investors' wealth.

Electric cooperatives are built and owned not by investors, but by the very people they serve. They're led by boards of local residents who are elected by their neighbors to represent them and are responsible for acting in the members' best interests.

The primary goal of a co-op isn't to make money, but to provide a safe and reliable source of electricity at a cost the local community can afford. As not-for-profit organizations, they receive their money from members when they pay electric bills, then use most of that money to purchase and deliver electricity. They typically



In 1935, the REA was created to help bring electricity to rural communities, providing a source of expertise and financing for a new concept in energy. Photo Credit: National Archives

set aside some money for the future and emergency needs. And, because they employ local people who patronize local businesses, much of the money they earn stays in the communities they serve, boosting the local economy.

When co-ops earn more than they pay out in wholesale energy and other costs, they keep some the extra money in reserves or return it to their members through what are known as capital credits.

Because co-ops exist to serve their members and not profit-hungry investors, they have an obligation to keep the price of electricity as low as possible. When members spend less for their electricity, they have more money to use on what's important to them.

Co-ops also work to support the area's economic health through activities designed to bring new employers to the community and help existing businesses expand. That's particularly important, because many of the areas served by co-ops face economic challenges. One in four households on co-op lines nationally has an annual income of below \$35,000, making keeping rates affordable a key priority.

When the leaders of investor-owned utilities make decisions, their first thought is how those choices will affect the price of their company's stock. When co-op leaders make decisions, they're focused on doing the best thing for their members. Instead of trying to impress Wall Street, co-ops want to make sure they're meeting your needs for power at the best price possible. That's because they're truly not for profit—instead, they're for you and your neighbors.

Understanding the 2026 Power Cost Rate Increase - Member Q & A

What are the primary drivers behind the rate increase?

- Growth in traditional load,
Commodity price variability,
New rules to require more power generation on
reserve for emergencies,
Continued investments in reliability,
Rate increase from WAPA for our hydro power.

How much will my bill go up?

- Some brackets will see an increase in the facility charge and your power bill will increase based on the amount of power you use x the increase in the kWh rate stated on page 2.

When will the new rates start?

- New rates will go into effect with your January 2026 usage, and will appear on your February 1 statement.

How will this rate increase help ensure reliable electricity for members in the future?

- Investing in new generation and transmission infrastructure, as well as advanced technology, will provide the resources necessary to operate our system efficiently. These investments strengthen reliability, ensuring that members continue to receive dependable electricity for their homes and businesses, now and into the future.





During the annual Garden Glow event, McCrory Gardens in Brookings is transformed into a winter wonderland.
Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

NATURE GROWS & GLOWS AT MCCRORY GARDENS

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

Tucked among the towering pines at the busy corner of 6th Street and 22nd Avenue in Brookings, S.D., you'll find a little plot of botanical paradise.

For 60 years, South Dakota State University's McCrory Gardens has not only served as a mecca for horticulture enthusiasts, but also a versatile, community-focused space for weddings, workshops and other seasonal festivities.

"Here, our mission is connecting people and plants through education, research, discovery and enjoyment of the natural and built landscape," said Lisa Marotz, director of McCrory Gardens.

Working toward that mission, Marotz and staff keep a schedule full of activities for SDSU students and community members with a variety of seasonal events: a spring-time syrup-making workshop where participants are taught to tap trees; the summer-time TuliPalooza where more than 15,000 tulip bulbs are planted in a colorful display; and the family-focused fall festival during Hobo Day weekend featuring horse-drawn hay rides and food trucks.

"There really is always something to see — just maybe not always what you expect," said Kathryn Bowar, an SDSU ag science

student and McCrory Gardens intern from Hoven, S.D.

Bowar says the space is increasingly popular for students looking to take a break from busy campus life to study, hang out with friends, or just enjoy time alone in a tranquil, outdoor environment surrounded by nature.

"I grew up as a ranch kid and adjusting to city life was overwhelming at times," Bowar added. "Coming to McCrory Gardens was a breath of fresh air and helped me recenter in the beauty of nature."

The garden's hallmark event is the regionally renowned Garden Glow, which transforms the dormant grounds into a winter wonderland with bright and festive Christmas lights and decorations.

"Garden Glow is a way that we are able to bring thousands of people to a botanical garden in South Dakota in December," Marotz said with a laugh. "We started out in 2015 when about 51 people came. Last year we were up to about 13,000, so it's grown a lot in popularity."

At the upcoming Garden Glow, visitors will meander through the reindeer meadow, travel across the life-size "Candy Land" board, warm up with a stop at the hot cocoa hut and peek inside Santa's summer-time home while exploring all the garden has to offer.

And there's been a lot of change over the garden's 60-year history, from new flowerbeds and gardens to patios and memorials.

But despite that, Marotz says she and her staff work to ensure the original vision of the garden and the contributions of those who worked before her are preserved.

Rather than tearing out and replacing sections of the gardens, the staff update and add to the space, with each parcel of the 25-acre garden bearing the fingerprints of past enthusiasts who cultivated, researched and appreciated the flora that make the Midwest beautiful.

"We have visitors comment that they now know what heaven looks like," Marotz said. "That's what people feel here: sanctuary and peace."



Lisa Marotz – McCrory Gardens Director since 2016 – with intern Kathryn Bowar, who is beginning her third fall working at the garden.
Photo by Jacob Boyko

With bright, blooming flowers, McCrory Gardens is the perfect stop for migrating butterflies and other helpful pollinators.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Many area visitors recognize this cottage as the 1928 Lawson Gas Station in Lake Preston, which was moved to McCrory Gardens in 1996 and renovated in 2024.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



Each cactus in the cacti garden is dug up each fall and moved into a greenhouse on campus before being replanted in the spring.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



The 1991 Sioux Quartzite rock garden and 2013 waterfall are a favorite fixture in the garden — and the site of numerous summertime marriage proposals.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



A labyrinth of pathways and trails lined with mature trees and vines give garden visitors a sense of exploration — even though they're right in the middle of Brookings.
Photo by Jacob Boyko



During the Garden Glow event, the East Terrace Lawn and Gazebo becomes The Enchanted Forest. Marotz notes this was the site of the first Garden Glow in 2015 — miniscule compared to today's expansive decorating.

This winter, Garden Glow is open 5-9 p.m. from Dec. 6, 2025 through Jan. 6, 2026.

Photo submitted by McCrory Gardens

60TH ANNIVERSARY THE MCCRORY STORY

*Photos submitted by
McCrory Gardens*

1964

The S.D. Legislature approves funds to construct Bailey Rotunda and Wagner Hall on the site of SDSU's Horticulture-Forestry Gardens. Samuel A. McCrory, head of the horticulture department at SDSU, advocated for a research garden filled with S.D. flora that would also serve as a learning center for students. McCrory passed away March 10, 1964.



1966

The new horticulture garden is formally dedicated "McCrory Gardens" to honor the late department head.



1977

McCrory Gardens receives the prestigious All-American Display Garden Award. The Garden is now designated to receive and showcase winning plant selections each year.



1979

McCrory Gardens is named on a list of the top 10 small gardens in the U.S. by ARCO Travel Club Magazine.



1988

The first annual Garden Party is held to fund the maintenance and operating costs of the garden.



1994

The late Gov. George Mickelson is honored in the newly-constructed Mickelson Grove.



2012

The new Education & Visitor Center is dedicated.



2025

McCrory Gardens celebrates its 60th anniversary!

BATTERY DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING

Steff Joven

NRECA

Batteries are part of everyday life – from the ones in our TV remotes and flashlights to the big ones that power electric vehicles and even energy storage systems used by electric utilities. But when batteries are disposed the wrong way, they can leak harmful chemicals, catch fire and waste valuable materials that we need to recycle.

Globally, electronic waste (also known as “e-waste”) is one of the fastest-growing types of trash. In 2022, people worldwide threw away more than 62 billion kilograms of it. In the U.S. alone, that adds up to 21 kilograms (about 46 pounds) of e-waste per person each year. Yet only about 22% of that waste is recycled properly.

The good news: safe disposal and recycling options are available, and you can help make a difference.

Battery Types and How to Dispose of Them

Not all batteries are the same, and how you get rid of them depends on their components. Some batteries can be recycled easily, while others can be dangerous if tossed in the wrong place they may leak toxic chemicals or even start fires. That’s why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends following local rules or using national collection programs like Call2Recycle, Earth911 or drop-off bins at hardware stores to make sure batteries are handled safely.

Single-use batteries are designed

to be used once, then replaced. These include alkaline and zinc-carbon batteries – the common AA, AAA, C, D and 9-volt sizes used in remotes, flashlights and other small devices. Some areas allow these batteries to go in household trash, but recycling is always the better choice. Button or coin batteries (used in watches, hearing aids and car key fobs) are often lithium-based. These should never be thrown away in regular trash or recycling bins, because they can spark fires. Instead, cover the battery terminals with tape or seal them in small bags, and take them to a certified recycling facility.

Rechargeable batteries power many of our everyday devices – cordless tools, phones, laptops, cameras and even scooters. Types include nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd), lithium-ion (Li-ion), nickel-metal hydride (Ni-MH), nickel-zinc (Ni-Zn) and small sealed lead-acid batteries. While these look different, they all share one rule: never throw them in the trash. They must go to a recycling facility. For devices with built-in,

non-removable batteries, recycle the entire device, making sure the battery ends are taped or bagged to prevent sparks.

Automotive and large batteries are more powerful and require special care. Lead-acid batteries, found in cars, boats, motorcycles and ATVs, contain lead and acid, which are hazardous. These should always be returned to a retailer, repair shop or a local hazardous waste program. Larger lithium-ion batteries – like those in electric vehicles (EVs) and home or utility-scale energy storage systems – are even more complex. They should only be handled by dealers, repair shops or the manufacturer. These should never be discarded in curbside waste or recycling.

Proper battery disposal is less about danger and more about opportunity. By recycling, we can recover valuable materials, reduce waste and support reliable energy systems in our communities. With a few simple steps, each of us can do our part – and together, we can keep our homes and community a little cleaner and safer.

If you have questions about battery disposal, check out programs like Call2Recycle or Earth911 for guidance.



**THE COUNTRY
COOKIN'**
cookbook

RECIPES NEEDED

Help us create
another great
cookbook by
submitting your
favorite recipes.

Your recipe could
be featured in the
42nd volume of
East River Electric's
Country Cookin'
cookbook!



Submit to be
entered into
a drawing for
1 of 2
\$100 Visa
gift cards

Submit recipes to
graphics@eastriver.coop
or contact your
local co-op
for more
information.

BUCKMAN PROMOTED TO LEAD LINEMAN



We're proud to announce that Nick Buckman has been promoted to Lead Lineman as of November 1st!

Nick began his career in 1999 with Clay-Union as an apprentice lineworker. Because of his hard work, dedication, and a commitment to excellence, he earned the title of Journeyman Lineman and has

consistently proven himself to be a valuable member of our team.

Nick's leadership, experience, and work ethic make him a perfect fit for this new role. Please join us in congratulating Nick on this well-deserved promotion!

Congratulations, Nick!

Director Sought for District #5

Jim Ryken District #5 resigned his position on the Clay-Union Electric Board as of April 8, 2025. Thank you Jim for over 36 years of dedicated service.

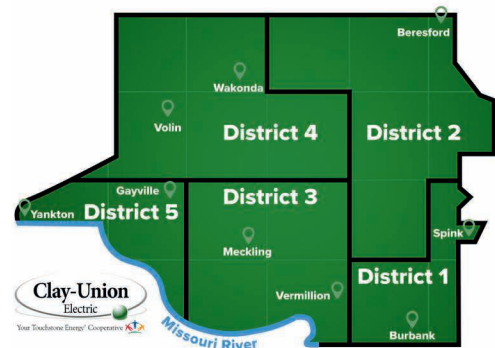
Clay-Union Electric By-Laws state that the Board of Directors, by a majority vote of the remaining directors, shall select a new director to fill the vacant director position, provided however, that the successor meet the following qualifications of office.

A. No person shall be eligible to become or remain a director or hold any position of trust in the Cooperative who:

1. Is not a member in good standing and bona fide resident in the area served or to be served by the Cooperative and of the district they are to represent; or
2. Is in any way employed by or financially interested in a competing enterprise or a business selling electric energy or supplies to the Cooperative, or a business primarily engaged in selling electrical or plumbing appliances, fixtures or supplies to the members of the Cooperative;
3. Has been convicted of, plead guilty or no lo contend-ere to, or received a suspended imposition of sentence for any felony offense;
4. Attends less than two-thirds (2/3) of the monthly board meetings during the past year;
5. Was employed or whose spouse was employed by the Cooperative during any time within the past five (5) years;
6. Is currently employed by the Cooperative or has an immediate member of the family employed by the Cooperative;
7. Lacks the capacity to enter into legal contracts or otherwise meet the requirements of the office.

If you live in District #5 and would like to be considered, please submit a letter of qualifications and why you are interested in serving on the Clay-Union Board of Directors to:

Clay-Union Electric
%Chris Larson
P.O. Box 317
Vermillion, SD 57069





The 2006 Youth Tour group takes a photo on the Albert Einstein Memorial in Washington, D.C.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan

YOUTH TODAY. LEADERS TOMORROW.

South Dakota's Youth Tour Continues to Inspire Leadership Years Later

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdsrea.coop

Each summer, a new group of South Dakota teens will board a plane for Washington, D.C., full of excitement for the trip of a lifetime. They're part of the South Dakota Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, a weeklong experience that connects rural students to the people, places and ideas that shape our country.

The Youth Tour began after a 1957 speech by former Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson, who encouraged electric cooperatives to send young people to the Capitol so they could "see what the flag stands for." Since South Dakota sent

its first group in 1963, more than 1,300 students have made the trip.

During the trip, students visit landmarks like Ford's Theater, the National Archives and the U.S. Capitol. They meet members of Congress, make friends from across the country and see firsthand how decisions made in Washington affect people back home.

For many, the most meaningful part of the trip happens long after they return. The experience lights a spark that shapes how they view their communities and their roles within them.

Two of those alumni, Kevin Larsen and Andi Fouberg, still carry lessons from their Youth Tour experiences today.

Kevin Larsen

Kevin Larsen remembers applying for Youth Tour in 2006 as a junior from Howard High School to represent Central Electric Cooperative.

"I've always been a history nut," he said. "My parents, like a lot of farmers, weren't made of money. This was a chance to go see the nation's capital, and I figured, why not apply?"

Once he decided to apply, he approached his high school English teacher, who helped him polish his essay, which landed on the desk of longtime Central Electric Cooperative General Manager Ken Schlimgen. "Lo and behold, the legendary Ken Schlimgen gives me a call," Larsen said. "And the rest is history."

Larsen now serves as the public information officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society in Pierre. He is also active in local organizations and community leadership roles, serving as president of the Pierre Kiwanis Club, incoming exalted ruler for the Pierre Elks Lodge, and in 2025

he ran for a position on the Pierre City Commission, only to come short by a handful of votes.

“These types of trips instill a passion for civics, and I think they mean a lot more for rural South Dakota kids,” Larsen said. “I’m from the middle of nowhere, Canova, South Dakota – a lot of people don’t even know where that is. The nearest town from our farm was six miles away, and that town is 100 people if everybody’s home. I think the opportunity to travel means more coming from somebody that was raised on a farm.”

He laughs when he thinks back to the trip. He keeps in touch with one of his roommates from that week. “You build connections you don’t expect,” he said. “One of the guys I roomed with ended up being a friend of my wife’s, and years later he attended our wedding.”

Larsen also credits his former Youth Tour Director, Brenda Kleinjan, for making the trip a success. “She was so passionate about the places we visited,” he said. “We weren’t just seeing historic monuments; we were learning what they meant.”

For Larsen, that week in D.C. helped set him on a lifelong path of leadership. “That trip really instilled that leadership ability and finding that inner voice to apply for something you might not think would ever happen,” he said. “When I sent off the essay in high school, I would have never imagined in my wildest dreams that I’d get an all-expenses-paid trip to D.C. We even ate well, too.”

Andi Fouberg

When Andi Fouberg applied for the Youth Tour, she was a high school student from Letcher. “I’m pretty sure my best



Kevin Larsen
2006 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo



Andi Fouberg
1994 Youth Tour Alum
Submitted Photo

friend went the year before, and I thought that seemed pretty cool,” she said.

Also representing Central Electric Cooperative, she joined the 1994 Youth Tour, a year she remembers vividly for an unusual reason.

“The night before we left was when O.J. Simpson went on the white Ford Bronco run through Los Angeles,” she said with a laugh. “We watched it on TV in the hotel in Sioux Falls because we met there and stayed the night before we all flew out together.”

The trip instilled an early passion for civic life in Fouberg. After college, she moved to Washington, D.C., and spent 10 years as Sen. John Thune’s communications director.

“Youth Tour was what prompted me to want to be in D.C. at some point,” Fouberg said.

While working for Sen. Thune, Fouberg would regularly meet new Youth Tour students visiting the Capitol every year in June.

“I’d see these students walking the same halls I once toured, wide-eyed and curious, and I’d think, that was me,” she said.

Now, Fouberg leads the South Dakota State University Alumni Association as its president and CEO. She credits that early trip with showing her what public service and connection can look like.

“The trip had an impact on me wanting to be out there and be part of that environment,” she said. “It made me want to be part of the process and feel like you are part of the government machine, but in a way that helps people.”

Reflecting on it now, she believes the experience gives students from small towns something they might not otherwise see.

“Growing up in Letcher or any small community in South Dakota, I don’t know that civic engagement is something you naturally imagine yourself doing without exposure from something like Youth Tour,” she said. “Without exposure to Washington D.C. through something like that, I probably would not have pursued that path. It all had its roots in Youth Tour.”



Kevin Larsen (left) takes a photo with Youth Tour friends at the FDR Memorial in 2006.
Photo by Brenda Kleinjan

Clay-Union Electric Corporation Board Meeting Summary

SEPTEMBER 2025 • VERMILLION, SOUTH DAKOTA

The board meeting was called to order on September 22, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. by board President Tom Larsen. The meeting was held in the conference room at the Clay-Union Electric Headquarters.

In attendance were Tom Larsen, Sara Schulte, Chris Kinney, and Mike Slattery. The board seat for District #5 is vacant. Attending staff members included Chris Larson, Beth Bottolfson, Alan Gauer and Jackie Williams.

Agenda (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the agenda with the addition of consideration of the retirement of Capital Credits.

Visitors to Be Heard – None

Approval of Minutes from the August Board Meeting (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the August board minutes held on 8/29/25.

Approval of Minutes from the August Executive Session (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the August executive session minutes held on 8/29/25.

Check List & Electronic Funds Transfer – The board reviewed the EFT/ACH payments, and the monthly check list as presented.

New Members and Refunds (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the new members, refunds and credit deposits as presented.

Early Retirement of Capital Credits (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the Early Retirement of Capital Credits as presented.

Contracts (Action) – A motion was made seconded and carried to approve the Electric Service Contract as presented.

Policy Review – None

Work Order and Special Equipment Summary – None

REED Loan – None

Management Reports:

A. Manager's Report – Manager Larson provided reports on the monthly activities:

August Board Meeting – The date of October 24, 2025, was set as the next regular board meeting to begin at 8:30 a.m.

East River REED/MAC - The REED Board met on September 2nd for the monthly meeting via video conference. The MAC did not meet because of the East River Annual Meeting.

SD Line Patrol - The event was held on September 6th and 7th and hosted by B-Y, Union County and Clay-Union.

NRECA Region 6 meeting - The NRECA Region 6 meeting is September 23-25 in Madison, Wisconsin. Manager Larson will be the delegate.

East River Annual Meeting - The East River Annual Meeting was

on September 3rd at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Sioux Falls. **Clay County Fair** - Our member/community appreciation event was August 8th as part of the Clay County Fair.

- 442 meal tickets were turned into the 4-H concession stand. A check for \$2,210 plus \$86 from the dunk tank will be presented to the 4-H leaders.

City of Vermillion – Manager Larson reported that a payment from the City of Vermillion for the Heikes Track Electric Buyout was received.

Eide Bailly Master Agreement (Action) – A motion was made, seconded and approved to authorize General Manager Larson to sign the Master Agreement of Understanding after suggested changes are made.

SDREA Budget – Manager Larson discussed the SDREA budget that was presented to the managers group via video conference. Director Larsen then discussed the action taken by the Board of Directors before approving the budget.

Midwest Annual Meeting (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and approved to authorize attendance to the meeting December 9-11, in Denver, CO.

Economic Development – A discussion was held regarding several economic development concerns/opportunities in our service territory.

Capital Credit Retirements (Action) – A motion was made, seconded, and approved to retire capital credits for the year 1996 in its entirety for approximately \$400,000.

B. Administrative Report – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Billing Activity
- Energy Rate for 2026 & Financial Forecast
- Treasury Direct Loan Advance
- August 2025 Financials
- Work Orders & Upcoming Inspection

All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.

C. Operations Report – Operations Manager Gauer reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Monthly department work summary
- New Service
- Retired Service
- August Outage Report
- Damage to Clay-Unions System
- Service Upgrades
- Wiring

All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.

Financial Report – Manager of Finance and Administration Bottolfson reviewed the following reports with the board:

- Actual to Budget
- Balance Sheet
- Interest Income
- Irrigation Sales 2020-2025
- kWh Sales Report

- Large Power
- Line Loss
- Operating Statement
- Power Bill
- Summary of Purchased Power
- Wiring Income & Expense

All reports were posted to the website earlier for board review.

Legal Report – None

Strategic Planning – None

Safety Meeting Minutes – The September Safety Meeting Minutes were posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

Cyber Security – The August Cyber Security report from East River IT was posted to the website for the board to review and was discussed during the meeting.

Video and/or Meeting Reports –

- East River Report
- East River Financials
- Basin Reports

Calendar – The board reviewed the October 2025 calendar.

Executive Session – The board went into Executive Session at 11:26 a.m., Executive Session was adjourned at 12:31 p.m. There was no action taken.

Wage and Compensation Plan (Action) - A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve the Total Compensation Package for all employees other than the General Manager as reviewed with Manager Larson by the Board of Directors.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried to approve compensation for the General Manager as determined by the Board of Directors.

Adjournment – There being no further business, a motion was made, seconded, and carried, to adjourn the meeting at 12:34 p.m.

Thomas Larsen, President

Sara Schulte, Secretary

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

To maximize your fireplace's efficiency, always keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper is like an open window, allowing warm indoor air to escape and cold air to enter. Consider installing a fireplace insert, which improves heat output by circulating warm air into the room rather than letting it escape up the chimney. Also, burn only seasoned hardwood to ensure a hotter, cleaner burn. Regularly clean and inspect your chimney to maintain safe and efficient operation.

Source: energy.gov



Outage Reports

Cause	Date	Time	Township	Members
Animal	9/1	6:00 p.m.	Volin	9
UG Fault	9/2	3:30 p.m.	Gayville	3
UG Fault	9/2	7:45 p.m.	Meckling	8
Member Caused	9/17	5:30 p.m.	Meckling	1
Animal	9/30	10:30 a.m.	Star	6

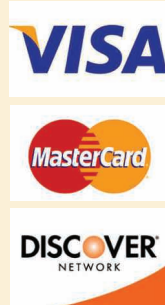
Office Hours and Due Dates

Our office hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Please remember your **PAYMENT DUE DATE is the 20th of EACH MONTH**. Your payment must ARRIVE in our office on the 20th to avoid any penalties. Please allow mailing time as we go by the received date, **NOT the postmark**. If the 20th falls on a weekend or holiday, payment is due the following business day. If payment is still not received by the first of the following month, a \$30 collection fee will be applied and a disconnect notice will be mailed. If disconnection for nonpayment occurs, all past and current energy charges, a reconnect fee and sufficient credit deposit will be required before the meter can be reinstalled.

FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE, WE ALSO ACCEPT THESE PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Online Billing:

www.clayunionelectric.coop
Set up your user profile to manage your account, pay your bill and receive billing notification emails.



Bank Draft: Have your payment automatically deducted from your checking or savings account on the due date.

Recurring Credit/Debit Card: Have your payment automatically deducted from your card on the due date.

By Phone: Call in your credit/debit card payment.

In Office: We accept cash, check, money order or credit/debit card.

By Mail: Send check or money order with your payment slip.

Drop Box: Located on the right side of our main entrance at 31321 SD Hwy 19.

There are no additional fees to use any of the above payment methods.

Collection Fee \$30
Trip Charge-Reconnect Fee
During Business Hours..... \$75
Dishonored Payment \$40

Delinquent Accounts (gross rate)
10 percent on the first \$200 plus 2 percent on the balance.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at the Black Hills Stock Show & Rodeo to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



NOV. 25-DEC. 26
Christmas at the Capitol
8 a.m.-10 p.m. (holidays included)
Pierre, SD
605-773-3178
christmasatthecapitol.sd.gov

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.

NOV. 29
Gregory Mid-Winter Fair
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Gregory Memorial Auditorium
Gregory, SD
605-830-9778

DEC. 1-30
Trees & Trains Exhibit
SD State Railroad Museum
Hill City, SD

DEC. 2
SunCatcher TRA Chilli Cook-off & Dessert Silent Auction
841 E. St. Patrick St.
Rapid City, SD
info@suncatchertra.org

DEC. 4
Parade of Lights
6-7 p.m.
Vermillion, SD
605-624-5571

DEC. 5
Kimball's Hometown Holiday
Main Street
Kimball, SD

DEC. 5-6
Christmas in the Hills
Mueller Center
Hot Springs, SD
605-890-2974

DEC. 5-7, 12-14
Mighty Corson Players Humbug
Dec. 5-6, 12-13: 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 7, 14: 2:30 p.m.
Corson, SD
www.mightycorson.com

DEC. 6
Hometown Christmas
All Day
Milbank, SD
605-432-6656
milbanksd.com/chamber

DEC. 6
KJAM Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Madison, SD
605-256-4514

DEC. 6
Holly Jolly HoeDown on Ice
Fort Pierre Expo Center
Pierre, SD
605-289-1334

DEC. 7
KCBA Hometown Christmas
10 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Kadoka City Auditorium
Kadoka, SD
605-488-0151

DEC. 13
Parade of Lights
5:30 p.m.
Aberdeen, SD

DEC. 14
A Poker Alice Christmas
2 p.m.
Gayville Music Hall
Gayville, SD
605-760-5799

DEC. 14
Celebration of the St. Lucia Tradition
3 p.m.
Dalesburg Lutheran Church
Vermillion, SD
ron@dalesburg.org

DEC. 15
Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers
7-9 p.m.
H.S. Performing Arts Center
Mitchell, SD

DEC. 21
Bethlehem in Brule County
5 p.m.
Ag Building
Pukwana, SD
605-730-0553

Note: We publish contact information as provided. If no phone number is given, none will be listed. Please call ahead to verify the event is still being held.