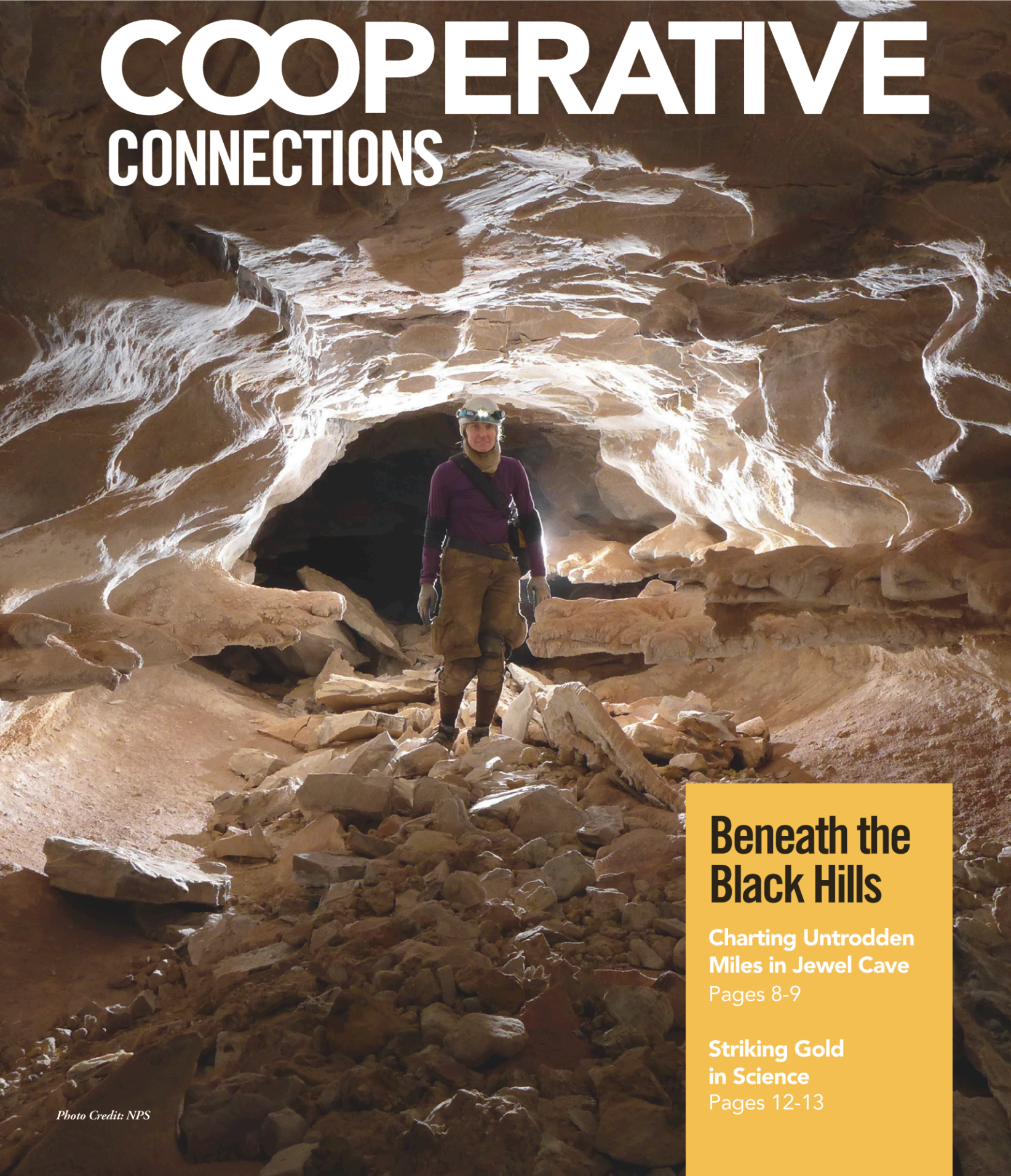




A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC
JANUARY 2024 VOL. 25 NO. 9

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Beneath the Black Hills

**Charting Untrodden
Miles in Jewel Cave**

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Photo Credit: NPS

CEO/General Manager Monthly Newsletter



Chad Kinsley
CEO/GM

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! I hope you have been able to spend time enjoying this holiday season with your family and friends. At your electric cooperative, we especially enjoy this time of year as we get to observe a few additional ways our everyday work helps power your holiday traditions and celebrations such as colorful Christmas light displays, baking cookies or turkeys in the oven, or just staying cozy and warm inside on a cold, snowy winter day.

So talking about holiday traditions, how well do you know the history of New Year's resolutions? Did you know that New Year's resolutions actually date back to 2000 B.C. when Babylonians celebrated New Year's during the spring equinox. This marked the start of their farming season and a common New Year's resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment. By around 46 B.C., the timing of the New Year's celebration shifted to January 1st though by the Romans. However, the tradition of setting New Year's resolutions continues even today with about half of Americans doing so. Based on a Gallop poll, the most common resolutions haven't changed much even since the 1940's. Then and today the top ten resolutions often include losing weight, improving our health, saving money, spending more time with family, and to quit smoking. These are certainly admirable resolutions. Too bad, if you're like me, most of these don't last into February.

On a more serious topic, we're in the final stages of estimating what it will cost to operate your electric cooperative in 2024 and we'll review the proposed budget again at the Board meeting in late December. As normal, the Board will review the budget carefully and thoughtfully with a variety of questions, comments, and recommendations as we strive to be as efficient and cost effective as possible. Southeastern has also been fortunate to be one of the fastest growing electric cooperatives in the state, on average adding over 1,000 new members each of the past four years. This strong growth has been a blessing and a key reason we haven't had to raise rates for nearly 7 years now, since 2017. Not many products or services have done this, especially in the past few years.

However, the current macroeconomic environment continues to put upward pressure on nearly all operating costs. For example, the single largest expense is purchasing electricity. This represents about 70 cents of every \$1 on your bill each month, and this alone will increase about 2.5% next year.

Electric cooperatives are also capital intensive, non-profit businesses that need to borrow significant dollars each year. As a result, the higher interest rate environment means we'll have about \$1 million of additional interest rate expense next year. These are just two examples of upward cost pressures. Nearly all of our operating expense categories continue to be impacted by inflationary pressures. In total, Southeastern's estimated 2024 budget proposed to the Board will be \$78 million versus \$74 million in 2023.

With this proposed budget in mind and a cost of service study by the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUCFC), the Board of Directors approved an 8% general rate increase for all rate classes beginning with the March 2024 billing cycles. For the average residential member using 1,200 kilowatt hours (kWh) per month, this equates to a \$9 to \$13 increase per month on average. This is certainly news that I and our entire Southeastern team work hard to avoid. However after 7 years without a rate increase, it's necessary to continue to provide the reliable electric service you expect while also maintaining the financial stability of your cooperative. In a future newsletter, we'll outline additional rate change details for each specific rate class.

We also remain committed to being your trusted energy partner and to help you be wise energy consumers. Many of you already participate in our load management program that allows your electric water heater or space heating equipment to be controlled during periods of peak electric demand. If you're not in this program, I'd encourage you to consider it and to call us to learn more. This program helps reduce Southeastern's cost of purchasing power and the savings are passed along to participating members through lower rates. Another great way to save on your energy bill is through energy efficiency programs. I'd encourage you to check out our website or to call us for more information on these programs as well. Overall, our goal continues to be to operate as safely, reliably and efficiently as possible to provide you the best possible value for your energy needs. Thank you in advance for your understanding and support as well as your involvement in your electric cooperative. As always, please feel free to give us a call anytime with questions or concerns.

Thanks,
Chad Kinsley

Chad Kinsley
chadk@southeastern.coop

November Board Meeting Summary

The Board of Directors of Southeastern Electric Cooperative met in Marion on Thursday, November 16, 2023, with all directors present. Also, present were Manager Chad Kinsley, Attorney Mike Nadolski and staff members John Euchner, Todd Nelson and Jon Wunder.

CFO Jon Wunder reviewed his written report, including the preliminary financial report, NRECA retirement plan changes and preliminary budget results.

Member Services and IT Manager Todd Nelson reviewed his written report, member appreciation days, open positions, Safety Day for First Responders, AMR conversion, NISC mapping and staking conversion, disconnects, past due accounts, bad debt write-off results, cybersecurity and load management.

Operations Manager John Euchner reviewed his written report, close calls, safety meetings, outages, dispatch, construction work plan, services, future services, project updates, pole testing and open positions.

Manager Kinsley reviewed his report and commented on the following topics: staffing updates, market rate load meetings, 2024 goals and objectives, strategic planning, the all-employee meeting, and Basin financials. Manager Kinsley attended the southeast managers meeting, the East River managers advisory committee meeting and the Minnesota Power Systems Conference.

Attorney Nadolski discussed recent topics from cooperative meetings that he had attended.

The board acted on the following motions:

- A motion was made and seconded to adopt Board Resolution #2023-08, Revenue Deferral. Motion carried.

- A motion was made and seconded to authorize Manager Kinsley to execute the farm lease agreement. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to accept and approve the proposed retail rate increase to become effective with the March 2024 billing period. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the amendments to Board Policy 107, Director Compensation and Benefits as proposed. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to select Kost and Carlos Hofer as the SDREA Annual Meeting voting delegate and alternate, respectively, and authorize all directors to attend on behalf of the Cooperative. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to select Ostraat and Kost as the delegate and alternate, respectively, to attend the NRECA PowerXchange meeting. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to set the January board meeting for Thursday, January 18, 2024. Motion carried.

Next regular monthly meeting will be held on Thursday, December 21, 2023, at the Marion office.

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC

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January is National Radon Action Month

Radon is a Natural Danger

About one in 15 homes in the U.S. has radon levels at or above the the EPA action level, according to the National Cancer Institute. You can't see or smell radon, and scientists estimate 20,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. each year are attributed to it.

Radon is produced from a natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. It enters homes, offices, schools and other buildings through cracks in floors and walls, construction joints or gaps around service pipes, electrical wires and sump pits. The Environmental Protection Agency reports elevated levels of radon gas have been measured in every state and estimates nearly one out of every 15 homes in America has elevated radon levels.

People who breathe in these radioactive particles, swallow water with high radon levels or are exposed to radon for a long period of time are susceptible to lung damage and lung cancer. Smokers who are exposed to elevated levels of radon gas have a 10 times higher risk of developing lung cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control.

It may take years before health problems appear. Your chances of getting lung cancer from radon depend mostly on:

- How much radon is in your home
- Where you spend most of your time (the main living and sleeping areas)
- The amount of time you spend in your home
- Whether you are a smoker or have ever smoked

Test Your Home

Old homes, new homes, homes with basements and homes without basements can have radon problems. Testing is the only way to determine how much radon is present.

Consider hiring a professional tester. Short-term (2-90 day) and long-term (more than 90-day) test kits are available, with the long-term kit producing more accurate results. The EPA website can help you find a radon test kit or measurement and mitigation professional near you. Do-it-yourself test kits also are available at many local hardware stores.

No level of radon exposure is considered completely safe, however the EPA only recommends reducing radon levels in your home if your long-term exposure averages four picocuries

per liter (pCi/L) or higher. A pCi is a measure of the rate of radioactive decay of radon gas. This decay causes radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs when you breathe.

Reduce Radon Gas in Your Home

The American Cancer Society says a variety of methods can be used to reduce radon gas levels in your home, including sealing cracks in floors and walls and increasing ventilation through sub-slab depressurization using pipes and fans.

The EPA recommends using a state or nationally certified contractor, because lowering high radon levels often requires technical expertise and special skills. Two agencies have set the standard for participants seeking certification:

- The American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists
- National Radon Safety Board

Always test again after the work is finished and then every two years. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated January as National Radon Action Month, a time when health agencies across the country urge all Americans to have their homes tested for radon.



Don't Plant Trees Near Power Lines

Annette Tschetter, Age 9

Annette Tschetter instructs readers to not plant trees near power lines. Annette is the daughter of Ryan and Elaine Tschetter from Revillo, S.D., members of Whetstone Valley Electric.

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.

SOUPS & STEWS

PUMPKIN APPLE SOUP

Ingredients:

3 tbsps. butter
 1 cup finely chopped onion
 2 tsps. pumpkin pie spice
 1 tsp. ground ginger
 1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin
 1 cup chunky applesauce
 3 1/2 cups chicken broth
 3/4 cup heavy cream

Method

Melt butter in large saucepan on medium heat. Add onion; cook and stir 5 minutes or until softened. Stir in pumpkin pie spice and ginger.

Stir in pumpkin, applesauce and broth until well blended and smooth. Bring to boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to low; simmer 5 minutes. Remove from heat. (If a smoother soup is desired, place mixture in batches in blender container; cover and blend until smooth.) Stir in cream. Heat gently before serving, if necessary.

McCormick.com

CREAMY CHICKEN NOODLE STEW

Ingredients:

1/3 cup butter, cubed
 1 med. carrot, shredded
 1 celery rib, finely chopped
 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
 1 carton (32 oz) chicken broth
 1 cup whole milk
 1 cup uncooked kluski noodles or other egg noodles
 2 cups cubed cooked chicken
 1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
 1/4 tsp. salt
 1/4 tsp. pepper

Method

In a large saucepan, heat butter over medium high heat; saute carrot and celery until tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in flour until blended; gradually add the broth and milk. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes. Stir in the noodles. Reduce heat; simmer uncovered, until noodles are al dente, 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the chicken, salt and pepper. Cook and stir until the chicken is heated through. Stir in the cheese until melted. Serve.

Susan Mitzner
 Balaton, Minn.

CHICKEN NOODLE SOUP WITH ROTISSERIE CHICKEN

Ingredients:

1 tbsp. vegetable oil
 1 1/2 cups chopped carrots, (about 1/2-inch)
 1 1/2 cups chopped celery, (about 1/2-inch)
 1 cup chopped white onion, (about 1/2-inch)
 1 tbsp. rotisserie chicken seasoning
 4 cups chicken stock
 4 cups medium egg noodles
 2 cups chopped rotisserie chicken
 1 tbsp. parsley flakes

Method

Heat vegetable oil in large saucepan on medium-high heat. Add carrots, celery and onion; cook and stir 8 to 10 minutes until softened and lightly browned. Stir in Seasoning. Cook 1 minute.

Add stock and egg noodles. Bring to boil. Reduce heat; simmer 8 to 10 minutes until noodles are just tender.

Gently stir in chicken and salt. Simmer 2 minutes longer. Remove from heat. Stir in parsley to serve.

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.

Tips to Stay Warm and Save Energy This Winter



Miranda Boutelle
Efficiency Services
Group

Q: My winter energy bills are typically higher. Can you offer advice on how to lower bills during colder months?

A: Colder weather can increase energy use and bills since heating accounts for the highest wintertime energy consumption in most homes. The amount of energy used to heat your home depends on your equipment, how you use it and the efficiency of your home's shell – the building components that separate the indoors from the outdoors.

It's important to know how your home is heated so you can make informed decisions on your energy use. It also helps you prepare for upcoming bills and avoid surprises that impact your budget. A forced-air furnace is the most common type of heating system and is fueled by natural gas, propane, oil or electricity. Heat pumps are growing in popularity and available for forced-air systems. If you have a forced-air system, check the filter regularly and replace when it's dirty. Ductless heat pumps, or mini-splits, boilers, radiant heat, baseboard heaters and electric resistance heaters are other common heating system types.

If you don't know what type of system you have, find the model number of your equipment and look it up online. You'll find information about the kind of system, how efficiently it operates and recommendations for servicing it, which can improve system efficiency.

We use energy to make our homes comfortable. The easiest and lowest-cost way to save money on heating is to keep your thermostat as low as your comfort will allow. The closer your home's temperature is to the outdoor temperature, the less energy is used.

The U.S. Department of Energy recommends a thermostat setting of 68 degrees in the winter while you are awake and lower when you are

asleep or away from home. Keep in mind that setting the temperature too low can cause pipes to freeze or moisture issues in some geographic locations.

Adding an additional layer of clothing, slippers or a hat can keep you comfortable in a cooler home.

Do you use electric resistance space heaters to heat a room or small section of your home? If so, you may see an increase on your electric bill. For example, let's say you use a 1,500-watt electric space heater to warm your living room while you watch TV or read a book. Operating that space heater for two hours a day at the U.S. average electricity rate of about 16 cents per kilowatt-hour will cost you about \$15 a month. Operating that same space heater for 12 hours a day will cost you about \$90 a month.

If you choose to use space heaters, use them safely. Keep them three feet away from anything flammable, do not leave them unattended and plug them directly into the outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.

Just as we put on a windbreaker to keep cold winds from blowing through a sweater, your home also benefits from blocking air movement. Air sealing can make a big improvement in the comfort of your home as well as provide energy savings. A common air sealing practice is applying weatherstripping to exterior doors and windows. You can also seal around plumbing penetrations to help eliminate drafts. A gap often exists between the drywall or wood and the plumbing pipes and drains. Filling these gaps with expanding foam can reduce drafts in bathrooms and kitchens.

Cold, windy winter days are the perfect time to find opportunities for air sealing. Rattling doors or moving curtains can indicate air leakage. Air leakage can occur where two different materials come together, like drywall and trim work. Cracked plaster and gaps in drywall can also cause drafts. Sealing the gaps saves energy and improves comfort.

As outdoor temperatures dip this winter, take a few proactive steps to maintain comfort in your home and keep your energy bill in check.



Jerry Hammerquist, middle, receives the Rural Neighbor Award.

Jerry Hammerquist

Honoring a Cooperative Leader

Shannon Marvel

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It's a small wonder why someone like Jerry Hammerquist would win the 2023 Rural Neighbor Award, sponsored by Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. He's a community rancher who values his neighbors.

"Well it's pretty easy in our neighborhood to be a good neighbor because we've got good neighbors. We help them, they help me," Hammerquist said.

"There's nothing like having good neighbors, I'll grant you. We have the best neighborhood in South Dakota."

Hammerquist lives and ranches on the farm his grandfather first homesteaded in Caputa about 140 years ago.

When his father passed away in 1960, Hammerquist was a senior in high school.

"I got my classes changed so I could work on the ranch, then I started working for neighbors and sale barns. My wife got to working for the attorneys. And we got on with the federal U.S. Attorney. Without her, I wouldn't have made it. We ended up

having two kids, seven grandkids, and one great grand kid. Caputa is where I grew up. I'm still here," Hammerquist said.

Hammerquist got his start in the cooperative world when he was asked to be on a committee to find a candidate for the election in his area.

"I could not find any, so I was told to put my own name in – not thinking a thing about it," Hammerquist recalled.

He won the 1984 election. Back then, Hammerquist said things were simpler.

"We didn't have any complaints, it was very easy to start out with. Then I got to be an officer, and we grew like crazy," he said.

For almost four decades, Jerry has faithfully served as a board director for West River Electric Association for an impressive 39 years, 20 of those years as board chairman.

Hammerquist said it was an interesting time when he was the chairman of the Action Committee for Rural Electrification fundraiser. During that time, Hammerquist was able to get many people to donate to the fundraiser.

"I had a little trouble cooking the egg sometimes. It was a very good experience for me," he said.

Hammerquist not only manages a thriving ranch but has been a valued member of the Elks Club, Central States Fair, Western Junior Livestock Show, and the Western South Dakota Buckaroos.

He's served as a past president and director of the Pennington County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service Farmers Home Administration.

Currently, he holds the position of president on the Rapid Valley Water Conservation District Board and has previously led Rushmore Electric and chaired Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) on behalf of the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

He's also been recognized with significant community agricultural awards, including the Catalyst Club Good Neighbor award in 2010 and Ag Producer of the Year in 2018.

He's a recipient of the Black Hill Stock Show Hall of Fame/Silver Spur Award.

His advice to those who follow in his path is to remember that you're member owned.

"The customers do come first. And the employees," Hammerquist said. "It was all a real learning experience."

JEWEL CAVE



Jewel Cave's walls glisten with a coating of calcite crystals coating that give this cave its unique name. *Image credit: NPS*

BENEATH THE BLACK HILLS

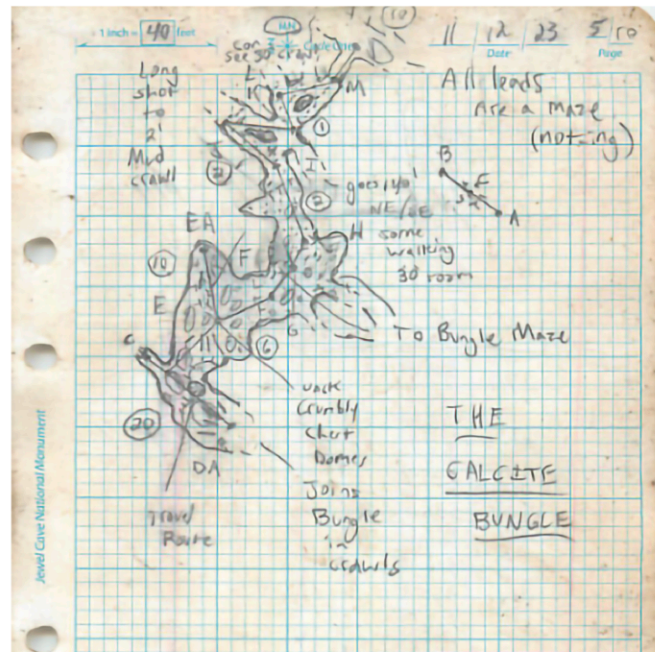
Charting Untrodden Miles in Jewel Cave

Frank Turner

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In the depths of the Black Hills lies an immense domain of underground caves renowned for their untouched beauty, enticing tourists with the opportunity for stunning photography and expert-led tours. Digging a little deeper, however, reveals that many of these unsuspecting attractions are actually home to a vast network of rooms and passages where no human has ever set foot before. Jewel Cave National Monument, located west of Custer and celebrated for its unique, crystal calcite coating, is one such subterranean cavern that continues to be a frontier of exploration.

Jewel Cave has thousands of miles of unexplored passages, crawlways and chasms that await discovery, making it one of the largest cave systems in the world. The immensity of Jewel Cave and others like it in the Black Hills has inspired multiple



A field sketch from the four-day Veterans Day weekend expedition. *Image credit: NPS*

generations of ambitious cave explorers who have devoted years of their lives to mapping out new areas of these underground expanses.

Despite their efforts, only a small fraction of Jewel Cave has

been navigated and mapped, leading to new cave discoveries being recorded even now.

Recently, a group of National Park Service volunteer cave explorers, led by volunteer Chris Pelczarski, expanded the known limits of Jewel Cave in an expedition over Veterans Day weekend of this year.

In total, their journey lasted four days. Bringing only what they could carry, the small group of cavers wriggled through miles of passages without natural sunlight or ready supplies to ultimately be the first to step into what was previously untrodden terrain.

To achieve their goal, the volunteers tackled the 3-D maze that defines the Jewel Cave network, hiking and climbing steep underground terrain. Despite the challenge, Pelczarski said the ending discovery made the whole journey worthwhile. When discovering something new, the challenge pales in comparison.

“The experience of pushing the edge of something is very unique,” said Pelczarski. “When entering a new space, it weighs on you that it’s the first time that a human has ever interacted with that space. As explorers, we have an incredible amount of responsibility because we are the ones who share that story with others and set the tone of that space.”

In total, the explorers discovered and charted just over one mile of new passages during their Veterans Day expedition, uncovering new passages and even a distinctive split in the rock their group named ‘Fruit by the Foot,’ due to the volunteer group garnering a “fruitful yield” of discovery from the rock formation.

The broader work of these cavers has led to several breakthroughs over the years, including the discovery of Jewel Cave’s first cave lake, Hourglass Lake.

“In 2015, our explorers got to a point where the lowest part of the cave dipped into the Madison Aquifer. It was Jewel Cave’s first cave lake,” said Michael Wiles, Chief of Resource Management at Jewel Cave National Monument. “Since that initial discovery, 12 more lakes have been

found within Jewel Cave.”

With the possibility of discovery around every corner, Wiles regards volunteer explorers like Pelczarski as torchbearers in a continuing legacy created by the many cave explorers that came before them, including South Dakota caving legends Herb and Jan Conn and Wiles himself.

“Herb and Jan are icons in the Black Hills area and throughout the world because they were the first to document and map the cave back in 1959,” said Wiles. “They fell in love with the cave and it really captured their imagination.”

Together, Herb and Jan discovered the first 70 miles of Jewel Cave. Building from Herb and Jan’s initial discoveries, Wiles, with the help of volunteers like Pelczarski,

has been involved in the mapping of an additional 150 miles of cave since the Conns retired.

To date, 218.8 miles of Jewel Cave have been discovered. However, Wiles explained that barometric airflow studies indicate that the cave could be up to 14,000 miles long, and only 3% of the cave’s estimated total length has been mapped and discovered.

“Jewel Cave, for practical purposes, isn’t going to end,” said Wiles. “We know that the cave is hundreds if not thousands of miles long and that, alone, is exciting.”

With only a fraction of the total cave discovered, it’s evident that several years of cave discoveries lie ahead.



Volunteer cave explorer Dan Austin sketching a passage of Jewel Cave. Using coordinates to draw a survey line in the book, Austin draws the cave walls around the line to represent the cave walls around him, adding additional notes as needed. *Image credit: NPS*

Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week

Congratulations to Parker Lessman on being chosen as the Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week winner for the week of December 3, 2023 – December 9, 2023. The scholar of the week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now Television, Southeastern Electric Coop and other local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that honors accomplished high school students.

Parker is active in the Parker School district participating in Track, 4-H, FFA, Basketball, Quiz Bowl, Math Club, Choir, NHS President, and is the Vice President of the Student Council.

As a Scholar of the Week, Parker was featured in a weekly segment on

Dakota News Now and received a \$250 scholarship from Southeastern Electric Coop. Parker is also now eligible to receive a \$1,000 scholarship or one of two \$500 scholarships that will be given away next spring at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are local, active members of their communities, dedicated to building our communities and improving our way of life. Since the Scholar of the Week program began, more than \$80,000 in scholarships has been awarded to more than 530 students. The program is a great partnership between



local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives and their members and truly captures the commitment that electric cooperatives have to the communities they serve.

Southeastern Electric Cooperative Scholarship Program 4 - \$1000 and 5- \$500 will be awarded

What is the Rural Electric Cooperative Scholarship Program?

The program is designed to encourage and recognize the academic achievements of the children of rural electric cooperatives. Four (4) \$1000 and five (5) \$500 scholarships will be awarded. The scholarship must be used for educational costs, and the student must enter college in the fall of the school year of which the scholarship is given. Checks will be made payable jointly to the student and the college and must be endorsed by both parties. The scholarship will be paid in August.

Who is Eligible to Receive the Scholarship?

Dependent children of Southeastern Electric Cooperative

members are eligible. Also eligible are the natural or adopted children of a Southeastern Electric Cooperative member. The applicant must also be a U.S. citizen.

The applicant must be a student who is planning to enroll in a full-time undergraduate course of study at an accredited, two-year, or four-year college, university, or vocational/technical school. Scholarships will be awarded without regard to other awards, loans, or financial assistance the applicant may have obtained.

Previous Southeastern Electric scholarship winners are not eligible.

How are the Recipients Selected?

Awards are based on academic excellence which includes but is not

limited to the following criteria: Grade point average, (with transcript) work experience, participation in school, community activities. A statement by the student explaining his/her educational and career goals, and a written recommendation by a third party. (ACT/SAT and Accuplacer test scores are not required to be eligible for a scholarship.)

What are the Recipient's Obligations?

Except for the requirements outlined in this brochure, no obligations will be imposed upon the student as a scholarship award winner. Other than payment of the scholarship, no obligations or liability are assumed by Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

Preparing for the Winter Season

In the Upper Midwest, we're used to harsh winters. And as your local electric cooperative, Southeastern Electric is prepared to face whatever Mother Nature throws at us: ice, snow, wind, or frigid temperatures. We're here for you through it all to provide you with reliable power at an affordable price. That doesn't mean we won't face challenges – but Southeastern Electric prepares for harsh weather in several ways to make sure we have the highest reliability possible.

To enhance energy security and resilience, a diverse mix of energy sources is essential. We often refer to this as an “all-of-the-above” generation strategy. Our generation mix includes a combination of coal, natural gas, wind, hydropower, and soon solar energy. Dispatchable generation that can be turned on when needed includes coal, natural gas and hydropower. Non-dispatchable, or intermittent, resources like wind and solar are only available when the wind is blowing, or the sun is shining.

Southeastern Electric cooperative is connected to large power suppliers like East River Electric Power Cooperative, Basin Electric Power Cooperative and the Western Area Power Administration. Those entities are part of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP) – a regional transmission organization responsible for balancing the grid in our region. SPP officials have analyzed the probability of energy shortfalls this winter and have concluded that there is little chance of energy shortfalls.

“There were no region-wide concerns identified that we are not capable of resolving,” said SPP Senior Vice President of Operations Bruce Rew during a recent winter preparedness and emergency communications meeting hosted by SPP. “We are, however, continually performing studies to

assess system changes and to develop ways to mitigate problems should any study indicate the potential for those to occur.”

According to SPP, the operations analysts who have studied grid conditions for this upcoming winter season say with 98.5 percent certainty that the region will have enough energy available to meet demand under normal, expected winter conditions, and even with a 5 percent increase in electricity demand SPP will have a 97% chance of having sufficient generation to serve consumers. That means while there is still a chance that extreme weather conditions could cause concern; the probability is very low that we could experience power interruptions this winter because of a lack of generation capacity.

Your Electric Cooperative network has also taken steps to prepare for extreme weather conditions by investing in our electric distribution system, putting an ever-increasing number of miles of line underground, designing a well-connected transmission system so energy can be efficiently transported reliably, and making sure we have an all-of-the-above generation strategy that doesn't rely on just one type of generation technology. We've also installed technologies throughout the system that can detect problems, an energy management system that can reduce energy usage during peak times, and we winterize our equipment, so it holds up even in the harshest conditions.

Although the chances of power interruptions this winter are minimal, we are very concerned about the future of generation assets on the grid. The retirement of a number of dispatchable generation units across the country, combined with rising energy demand as sectors of the economy are increasingly

electrified, will impact the reliability of the grid. The potential for federal regulatory mandates could force electric cooperatives to close coal or natural gas plants, which will certainly have a negative impact on the reliability of the power grid. Some parts of the country are predicting dire circumstances this winter because fewer coal and natural gas plants will be generating electricity. We are working with our lawmakers and regulatory officials to stem the tide of premature retirement of these assets because a reliable and resilient energy generation system is vital to meet the heightened demand during the winter season.

We will continue to use and advocate for a diverse energy mix, upgrade infrastructure when needed, and implement winterization measures. As always, your cooperative is working to keep your power reliable and affordable while we maintain a robust energy delivery system that ensures a stable and secure energy supply throughout the winter months and beyond.



The Sanford Underground Research Facility partners with more than 2,000 scientists from more than 200 global institutions and universities, enabling groundbreaking research across multiple disciplines.

STRIKING GOLD IN SCIENCE

Unearthing Research at the Sanford Underground Research Facility

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Years ago, the Homestake Mine in Lead, South Dakota, lured prospectors with the promise of riches during the gold rush era. Yet today, the site where miners once delved for gold now hosts scientists pursuing their own discoveries, not for gold, but for discoveries in particle physics and dark matter at the Sanford Underground Research Facility.

The mine's transformation into a

state-of-the-art research facility really began in 1970 when Raymond Davis Jr. began what is now known today as the Homestake experiment, a research project that would forever change the entire landscape of western South Dakota. Seeing beyond the precious metal, Davis envisioned the Homestake Mine as the perfect location to conduct research on the illusive neutrino particle. Conducting neutrino research underground was a crucial component of the project because the deep

environment of the mine shielded his experiments from cosmic rays, allowing for more accurate detection of neutrinos. While the Homestake Mine was still in operation, Davis worked among the bustle of mining activities to conduct research, which led to groundbreaking discovery in neutrino research and ultimately to a Nobel Prize in 2002.

As Davis concluded his groundbreaking neutrino research, a chapter was closing for the Homestake Mine. According to the facility's website, Homestake was North America's largest and deepest gold mine at the time of its closing, producing approximately 41 million ounces of gold in its 126-year lifetime. When the mine was decommissioned in 2002, it threatened to not only leave a vast cavern in the earth but also a significant void in the local economy. Davis's success, however, prompted South Dakota's leadership to step in at a critical moment and

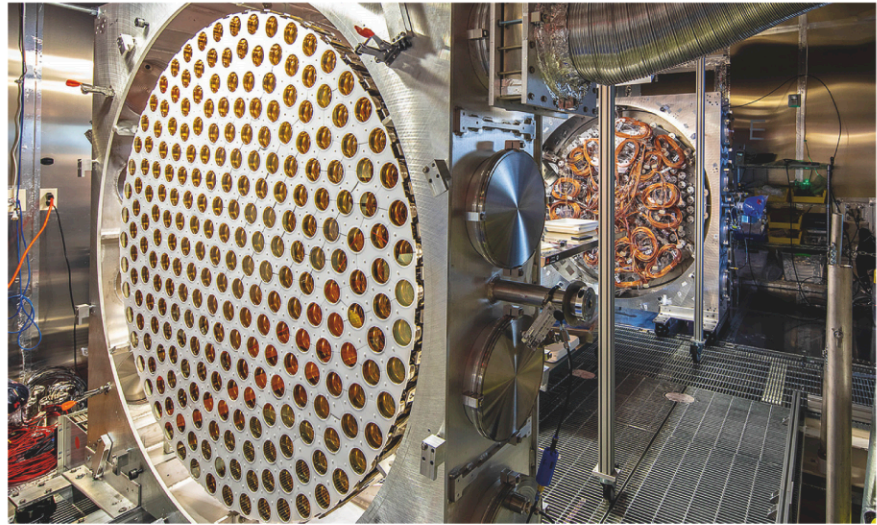
repurpose the mine into a bastion of scientific research.

Mike Ray, Media Relations Manager at Sanford Underground Research Facility, reflected on the state's response to the mine's closure. "Those in leadership at the time saw that this mine was closing and the terrible economic impact that the closure was going to have on the northern hills and this community, but they saw a light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

The light at the end of the tunnel became the Sanford Underground Research Facility. To advance one of South Dakota's most ambitious projects, the state secured a \$70 million donation from philanthropist T. Denny Sanford and a land donation from Barrick Gold Corporation, the mine's owner. The state then established the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority, which contributed an additional \$40 million to realize the project. These donations paved the way forward to begin construction on a space for some of the most advanced science projects ever made.

The herculean effort, Ray explained, was not only to mitigate the negative economic impact of the mine's closure but to create something even more impactful for South Dakota and its residents. Today, the Sanford Underground Research Facility collaborators include over 2,000 scientists from over 200 institutions and universities worldwide. It is expected to garner an estimated \$2 billion net economic impact in South Dakota by 2029.

Beyond its economic contributions, the lab holds potential for groundbreaking discoveries across various disciplines, including projects researching biology, geology, engineering or particle physics. Notably, the lab is currently home to LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector and DUNE, the Deep



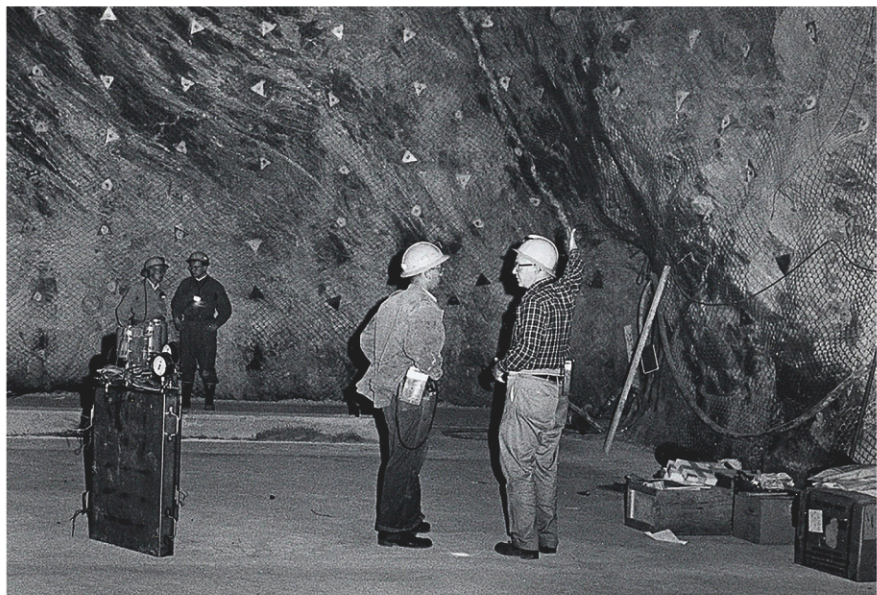
An array of the LUX-ZEPLIN, the world's most sensitive dark matter detector.
Photo Credit: Matthew Kapust, Sanford Underground Research Facility.

Underground Neutrino Experiment, among several other significant projects. While LUX-ZEPLIN and DUNE are distinct projects, both seek to provide fundamental insights into our current understanding of the laws of physics.

"There are so many examples of how fundamental research can take decades to lead to innovation," Ray said. "The beauty of this is that we don't always know where this research will

take us, but if we don't do this kind of exploration, we will never know the applications of these far-reaching projects."

Regardless of the outcome, the Sanford Underground Research Facility will continue to not only preserve the historic legacy of South Dakota's Homestake Mine, but also place South Dakota at the forefront of discovery and innovation for years to come.



A historic view of the Davis Cavern that hosted Ray Davis's Nobel Prize-winning solar neutrino experiment. The cavern has since been expanded and its walls have been coated with shotcrete, a type of spray-on concrete, to accommodate research on dark matter.

Photo Credit: Anna Davis, Sanford Underground Research Facility.



Shown in front of the True Dakotan building on Main Street in Wessington Springs are newspaper/print shop staff (left to right) Delia Atkinson, Office Manger; Kristi Hine, Editor/Publisher; Cathy Perry, Proofreader; shop dog Lincoln. Among the oldest buildings in Jerauld County, the building has always been a newspaper and/or print shop. Constructed in 1915, the True Dakotan recently underwent a complete renovation after a fire in June 2020.

SMALL TOWN NEWSPAPERS

Connecting Communities

Shannon Marvel

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Rural, small-town newspapers are an important cohesive element that keep communities together.

Many of South Dakota's community newspapers have faced economic difficulties, yet their dedication to their mission is what drives them to find innovative ways to persist.

According to South Dakota NewsMedia Association's Executive Director David Bordewyk, a combination of factors have made it difficult for small, community newspapers to thrive

as they once did in decades past.

"There's a lot of advertising that used to be in traditional media that has moved into a digital realm such as Google, Facebook and other platforms. That's been a huge disruption. Then there's the whole thing about the internet and how people consume information," Bordewyk said.

The pandemic had a major impact on the newspaper business and accelerated online advertising.

Inflation has also increased production and postal service costs considerably, which has made it tough for small, rural newspapers to balance their books and maintain profits.

"Almost all of our community newspapers rely on a postal service to deliver the newspaper to subscribers. And we've seen a 40 percent rise in postal rates over the last three years," Bordewyk said.

How do newspapers deal with that?

Some newspapers have done a good job of capturing that digital market, Bordewyk said. Others have really gotten aggressive at increasing their prices, with some having to increase subscription rates from \$40 to \$80 per year.

Regardless, there's value in a community newspaper.

Who else is going to consistently cover city council and county commission meetings, or local school activities and sports? Kristi Hine knows that value well.

Hine is the publisher and editor of the True Dakotan, a weekly newspaper that covers local happenings in Jerauld County, based in Wessington Springs.

"Newspapers play such an important role to keep communities together," Hine said.

"We cover everything from local government to high school sports to features. I just did a feature about these women who did a Christmas village exhibit at the county courthouse. It's peeling back the layers and truly telling the community's story. Without the local newspaper, there's no one to tell that story. Larger outlets may come cover a story if you have a tornado or your sports team is doing really well, but it's the community newspaper that'll be listening in on what the city council is going to say at their meeting," Hine said.

Community newspapers, in that sense, really are the eyes and ears for the community. The important goal of the community newspaper is to connect the community, Hine said. "Especially in this world when it's so easy to be on different sides of the spectrum. Community newspapers are the fabric that holds communities together, no matter what side of the aisle their readers land on," she said. "Especially in this world when it's so easy to be on different sides of the spectrum. Community newspapers are the fabric that keeps communities together, no matter what aisle their readers land on," she said.

Hine bought the True Dakotan eight years ago in March of 2015. Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, the newspaperwoman

has found herself enthralled with the small Jerauld County community.

Over the last eight years, Hine said she's seen more changes in the newspaper industry than her predecessor saw in the last 40 years.

"There's been a great deal of change," Hine said.

She's gotten more creative with advertising, using social media as a tool to promote local businesses. If a business is hosting an event or wants to promote a special sale, the business will do a Facebook live with Hine.

The True Dakotan also offers an online E-Edition and weekly newsletter, though the original print product is still the largest circulation.

Advertising and marketing aside, it all comes down to local news content.

"That's the driving force as we enter this evolution of newspapers. We're at the cux," Hine said.

To the northeast in Day County, the Reporter and Farmer newspaper is being led by Amanda (Fanger) Dulitz, a young reporter-turned-publisher, who recently purchased operation last year.

"Community newspapers are the lifeblood of a community. The strength of a community is reflected in the strength of their community newspaper. We're the bulletin board of the community. We're the cheerleaders of the community. We keep people connected," Dulitz said.

Dulitz found her passion for rural newspapers in South Dakota as soon as she picked up the reporter pad in 2007 after graduating from high school.

She worked at the Onida Watchman for a short time before heading east to Webster, where she took on the role as a news reporter for the Reporter and Farmer. Fast forward a couple decades and now Dulitz is the owner of the Reporter and Farmer.

She noted that costs were pretty stable at the newspaper for awhile, but seemed to sharply increase as soon as she signed the dotted line giving her ownership of the

operation.

"I'll probably have to take a look at my rates and lock in my rates for the next year. Everything is just going up, and it impacts the bottom line overall and you've got to do what you've got to do," she lamented.

But without the support of subscribers and advertisers, and really the entire community as a whole, the newspaper couldn't fulfill its purpose of keeping everyone on the same page and in the know.

The relationship between a community newspaper and the community itself is something Dulitz compares to a team of horses.

"The newspaper keeps everybody in an area knowing what's going on and pulling in the same direction. One horse can only pull so much, but if you put them together they can pull double. That community unity – the newspaper – is what yokes people together and gets people pulling together," Dulitz said.

She understands that without the community support, there'd be no newspaper.

"We've got some of those readers when the paper gets back from the press on



Kristi Hine, editor/publisher, True Dakotan and Delia Atkinson, office manager

Friday – they're standing there waiting for the paper to be dropped off. They're the first ones in the door letting us know about some breaking news event that we haven't heard about yet," she said.

"Constantly, readers and advertisers let us know what we're doing right and what we're doing wrong. We need that. We need that mutual push and pull. We recognize that our readers and advertisers are key to our business and we appreciate it."



From left is Publisher Amanda (Fanger) Dulitz, circulation manager Pat Sass, graphic designer Megan Garry, writer Kevin Winter, sales representative Kirstin Ure (front), print tech Jessica Washenberger and proofreader Linda Holberg.



Jan. 26-27
Pro Snocross Races
 18 Seventy Six Dr.
 Deadwood, SD
 605-578-1876

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.

JAN. 5
Granite Sports Fantastic Friday
 3 p.m.
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 6
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 10
45th Annual Ranchers Workshop
 9 a.m.
 Sinte Gleska University Multi-Purpose Center
 Mission, SD

JAN. 12
Granite Sports Fantastic Friday
 3 p.m.
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 13
Knights of Columbus Bowling Tournament
 1 p.m.
 Meadowood Lanes
 Rapid City, SD

JAN. 20
Live on Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 23
A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)
 6:30 p.m.
 Mangiamo
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 25
A Trip to Chile (Reservations Required)
 5:30 p.m.
 Mangiamo
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 26
Granite Sports Fantastic Friday
 3 p.m.
 Hill City, SD

JAN. 26-27
Reliance Area Community Development 29th Annual Dinner Theater
 6 p.m.
 Reliance Legion Hall
 Reliance, SD

FEB. 3
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 3
Lake Hendricks Fishing Derby
 11a.m.
 City Boat Landing
 Hendricks, MN

FEB. 10
Polar Bear Chili Cook-Off
 11a.m.
 Main Street
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 10
Tour de Chocolate
 Main Street
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 17
Live On Stage
 High Country Guest Ranch
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 18-20
MASC presents Disaster! the Musical
 Vesta Community Center
 Vesta, MN

FEB. 20
A Trip to Portugal
 6:30 p.m.
 Mangiamo
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 22
A Trip to Portugal
 6:30 p.m.
 Mangiamo
 Hill City, SD

FEB. 23-24
Women in Blue Jeans Conference
 Highland Conference Center
 Mitchell, SD

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