

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



From Cows to Canvas

**Michelle Weber Captures
Rural Life in Art**

Pages 8-9

**Sacred Hoops: Shooting
for Success**

Pages 12-13

CEO/General Manager Monthly Newsletter



Chad Kinsley
CEO/GM

Hello Southeastern Electric members! Thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to read this month's Cooperative Connections magazine and to stay informed about your electric cooperative. I'm excited to share important updates and opportunities for you to help shape the future of our cooperative. In this edition, I'll touch on energy policy, the upcoming Annual Meeting and Director Petitions.

Energy Policy

This time of year is especially busy when it comes to energy policy since the SD Legislature is in session, and nationally, the 2024 federal election cycle is in full swing. Energy policy has always been an important part of electric cooperatives since we were born from policy in the 1930's. The first official Federal action paving the way for rural electrification was the passage of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Act in 1933. This act authorized the TVA Board to construct electric transmission lines to serve farms and small communities that weren't otherwise supplied with electricity at reasonable rates. A few years later, the Rural Electrification Act (REA) was passed and the lending program that became the REA as we know it today.

Decades later, energy policy is perhaps even more important than ever. At Southeastern Electric, we're actively involved in advancing energy policy through several channels including meeting with the local and state officials and legislators that represent our service territory. We also engage in energy policy through our memberships in the SD Rural Electric Association (SDREA) and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). As a collective cooperative family, these organizations represent us well by advocating for energy policy that promotes safe, reliable and affordable energy.

Annual Meeting

Please mark your calendars for our 86th Annual Meeting on Thursday, June 6th at Freeman High School in Freeman, SD. This is a unique opportunity for you, our member/owners, to actively participate in the cooperative decision-making

process. We're just starting the annual meeting planning process, but highlights will include:

- An evening meal with good fellowship and fun family activities;
- A brief business meeting including operational and financial reports
- Election of three Directors

Your participation is vital to the success of our cooperative. By attending the annual meeting, you play a key role in shaping the cooperative's future, ensuring your needs are heard and contributing to the strong sense of community that defines us.

Director Petitions

During our annual meeting, you will have the opportunity to vote for three directors to represent you on our 9 member board of directors. Please take some time to review the notice of Director Districts up for election this year on page 10. The districts up for election include District #3 (eastern Turner County area), District #6 (southern Lincoln County area) and District #9 (McCook County area). Director candidates must circulate petitions for signatures of members within their districts. Completed petitions need to be validated, counted and notarized during normal business hours (Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at either our Alcester or Sioux Falls office. Please stop by our offices, give us a call or visit our website for more information about being a director of your electric cooperative. If you call, please ask our Member Services Representative to visit with a Management Staff member about your director eligibility requirements. Thanks in advance for your interest and participation in your electric cooperative!

Lastly, thank you for your continued support. The Southeastern Electric team and I truly are blessed to serve you, our member/owners.

Regards,
Chad Kinsley
chadk@southeastern.coop

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS

SOUTHEASTERN
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Zoey Christensen Selected as Scholar of the Week



Southeastern Electric Cooperative and Viborg-Hurley High School are pleased to announce Zoey Christensen as a Touchstone Energy® Scholar of the Week winner for the week of February 4 - February 10, 2024. The scholar of the week program is a partnership between Dakota News Now, Southeastern Electric Cooperative and other local Touchstone Energy Cooperatives that honors accomplished high school students.

As a Scholar of the Week, Zoey was featured in a weekly segment on Dakota News Now and will receive a scholarship from Southeastern Electric Cooperative. The video segment can be viewed at: www.dakotanewsnow.com/.

Zoey is also now eligible to receive

a \$1,000 scholarship or one of two \$500 scholarships that will be given away this spring at the annual Scholar of the Year banquet.

Zoey participates in the National Honor Society, FFA, volleyball, track, student council, class president, FCA, HOSA, the all-school play and other activities.

“Southeastern Electric Co-op salutes Zoey and all students who set an example of hard work and high academic standards,” said Todd Nelson, Manager of Member Services and IT with Southeastern Electric Cooperative.

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. Nominations for the weekly awards are submitted by area school principals and faculty, whose selections were based on excellence in the classroom and service in the community.

For more information about Southeastern Electric Cooperative or Touchstone Energy Cooperatives, please contact Erica Fitzhugh at 1-800-333-2859.

Make Fall Safety a Top Priority

It may come as a surprise that the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related death is falls. In 2021, 44,686 people died in falls at home and at work, according to Injury Facts®. For working adults, depending on the industry, falls can be the leading cause of death.

Falls are 100% Preventable

March is Ladder Safety Month. Whether working from a ladder, roof or scaffolding, it's important to plan ahead, assess the risk and use the right equipment. First, determine if working from a height is absolutely necessary or if there is another way to do the task safely.

- Discuss the task with coworkers and determine what safety equipment is needed
- Make sure you are properly trained on how to use the equipment
- Scan the work area for potential hazards before starting the job
- Make sure you have level ground to set up the equipment
- If working outside, check the weather forecast; never work in inclement weather
- Use the correct tool for the job, and use it as intended
- Ensure stepladders have a locking device to hold the front and back open
- Always keep two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand on the ladder
- Place the ladder on a solid surface and never lean it against an unstable surface
- A straight or extension ladder should be one foot away from the surface it rests on for every four feet of height and extend at least three feet over the top edge
- Securely fasten straight and extension ladders to an upper support
- Wear slip-resistant shoes and don't stand higher than the third rung from the top
- Don't lean or reach while on a ladder, and have someone support the bottom
- Never use old or damaged equipment; check thoroughly before use

Fall Hazards at Home

Are you a weekend warrior or do-it-yourselfer? If you take on home improvement or other weekend projects, it's important to prepare yourself for physical exertion, especially if you've been sedentary through the winter months, and take extra precautions to prevent falls.

Risky projects, like installing siding, gutters or roofs, are best left to professionals. Saving money isn't worth risking a debilitating or fatal fall.

At home or at work, many of the same rules apply. When taking on a project:

- Practice all of the ladder safety tips mentioned above
- Keep the work area clear of hazards and immediately clean up spills
- Read all instructions and safety precautions on your equipment
- Don't wear loose clothing that can get caught in equipment

We tend to think we're always safe on flat ground, but the thousands of injuries each year tell us otherwise.

- Falls are the #1 cause of death for older adults; fall-proof your home
- Keep floors and surfaces clear of clutter
- Keep file cabinets and desk drawers closed
- Keep electrical and phone cords out of traffic areas
- Install handrails on stairways
- Wear sensible footwear
- Never stand on chairs, tables or any surface with wheels
- Properly arrange furniture to create open pathways
- Maintain good lighting indoors and out

More than 6.9 million people were treated in emergency rooms for fall-related injuries in 2021. A fall can end in death or disability in a split second, but with a few simple precautions, you'll be sure stay safe at home and at work.

Source: National Safety Council



Trim Your Trees

Brace Tapio, Age 8

Brace Tapio cautions readers to trim their trees to prevent power line damage. Brace's parents are Nate and Elsa Tapio from Armour, S.D., members of Douglas Electric Cooperative.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

SEAFOOD SPECIALS

CAJUN SHRIMP

Ingredients:

1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2-3 tsps. cajun seasoning
2 tbsps. butter

Method

Coat shrimp with seasoning. Melt butter in large skillet on medium heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir three minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Serve over cooked rice, if desired.

McCormick.com

CRAB SALAD SPREAD

Ingredients:

8-12 oz. imitation crab meat, flake style, tear into small pieces
1 tbsp. lemon juice
1 cup (approx.) shredded Cheddar cheese
1 small can black olives, sliced
Mayo (must be Mayo), to get correct texture, less is better than too much
1/4 to 1/2 pepper, cracked

Method

Mix by hand. Serve with Club or Ritz crackers.

Linda Hubbard
Rapid City, S.D.

CREAMY SHRIMP LINGUINE

Ingredients:

8 oz. linguine
1 tbsp. butter
1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
1 cup heavy cream
1 package garlic butter shrimp scampi
2 tbsps. white wine

Method

Cook pasta as directed on package. Drain well.

Melt butter in large skillet on medium-high heat. Add shrimp; cook and stir 2 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink. Add cooked pasta, Seasoning Mix, cream and wine. Reduce heat to medium; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally. Serve with grated Parmesan cheese.

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 2024. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.

January Board Minutes Summary

The Board of Directors of Southeastern Electric Cooperative met in Marion on Thursday, January 18, 2024, with all directors present. Also present were Manager Chad Kinsley, Attorney Mike Nadolski and staff members Jessica Bickett, John Euchner, Todd Nelson and Jon Wunder.

CFO Jon Wunder reviewed his written report, including the preliminary financial report, FEMA hazard mitigation project update, physical inventories and renewable energy credits.

Member Services and IT Manager Todd Nelson reviewed his written report, open positions, AMR conversion, NISC mapping and staking conversion, disconnects, past due accounts, cybersecurity and load management.

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

Human Resource Generalist Jessica Bickett reviewed her written report, board policy review, workforce flexibility,

upcoming career fairs, compliance, staffing updates and open positions.

Manager Kinsley reviewed his report and commented on the following topics: primary meter services, rate schedules, strategic planning, Sioux Falls land, recent cold weather, East River and Basin financials, SD America's Electric Cooperative PAC and legislative update. Manager Kinsley attended the East River managers advisory committee meeting, the NRECA CEO Close-Up and SDREA Annual Meeting.

Attorney Nadolski discussed current proposed legislation being considered during the current legislative session.

The board acted on the following motions:

- A motion was made and seconded to execute the Permanent Storm Sewer Agreement between Southeastern Electric Cooperative, Inc. and the City of Salem. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve work order inventories

#306-311 with a total of \$3,594,810.38 available for loan fund advance. Motion carried.

- A motion was made and seconded to adopt Board Resolution #2024-01 establishing the date, time and place for the 2024 annual meeting. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to authorize Director Kost and Carlos Hofer to attend a SDREA sponsored training. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to authorize Directors Wildeboer and Kost to attend NRECA's Directors Conference. Motion carried.
- A motion was made and seconded to set the March board meeting for Monday, March 18, 2024. Motion carried.

The next regular monthly meeting will be held on Friday, February 23, 2024, at the Marion office.

Notice to members: Annual Maintenance Underway

As part of our on-going maintenance program each year we try to inspect all of our overhead lines and underground cabinets for problems that could cause an outage or could pose a dangerous situation. Please avoid piling snow on our equipment to prevent damage.

During this time of inspection we will also be stopping at each account to inspect our equipment in your yard, so if you see a Southeastern truck or vehicle in your driveway you will know why we are there. We want our members to be aware of this so you know what is going on and that this is only an inspection of our equipment, so to better serve you our member/owners.

As always we appreciate your cooperation. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions at 1-800-333-2859.



APPLY FOR A **TRIP OF A LIFETIME**

Deadline is MARCH 4, 2024.



JUNE 15 TO 21, 2024

AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

WHAT IS YOUTH TOUR?

- An all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., paid for by Southeastern Electric Cooperative.
- A week of visiting historic monuments, touring world class museums and meeting elected officials.
- Developing life-long friendships with delegates from across the country!

HOW TO APPLY

- Applicants must be a junior or senior in high school.
- You and your parents or guardian must be served by Southeastern Electric Cooperative.
- Must complete and submit the application and an essay at www.southeasternelectric.com/washington-dc-youth-tour/

LEARN MORE AT
WWW.SOUTHEASTERNELECTRIC.COM

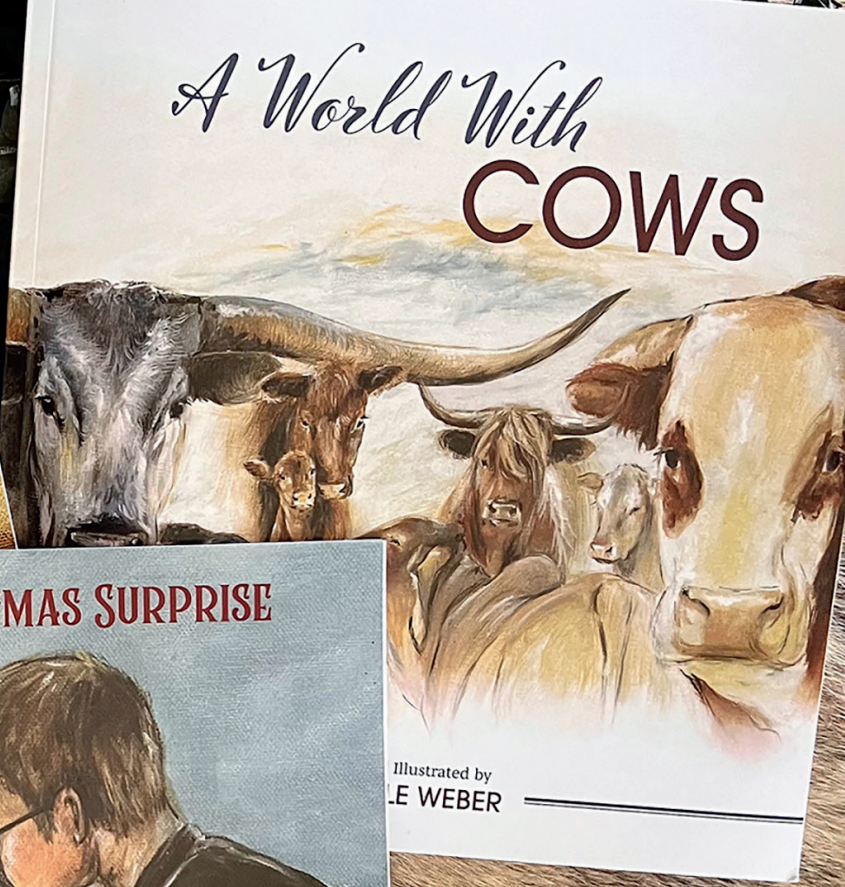
EMPOWER



FACEBOOK/INSTAGRAM:
NRECA YOUTHTOURDC

SE Southeastern
Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



Illustrated by
MICHELLE WEBER

FROM COWS TO CANVAS

Rural Artist Michelle Weber has illustrated 11 children books in addition to showcasing her art nationwide and internationally.

Michelle Weber Captures Rural Life in Art

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

During her upbringing in Windom, Minn., Michelle Weber discovered her passion for art at a young age. She was the kid who was always doodling, often paying more attention to her drawings than to the class. Holding on to her passion, Weber took her first art class in high school with her art

teacher, Mark Nass. Although the class had a rocky start, Nass recognized her potential and helped fuel a passion that would ultimately lead Weber to becoming a prominent rural artist.

“I was a junior in high school when I enrolled in my first real art class, and to be honest, I kind of hated it,” said Weber. “That first week, I was mortified that I wasn’t any good.”

Initially contemplating dropping the class, Weber sought a signature from her art teacher to change her art class to a study hall instead. Despite her request, Nass refused to let her drop the class and encouraged her to try give the class another chance.

“After a few weeks, everything just clicked,” said Weber. “I fell in love with painting and began living in the school’s art room.”

In less than a year, Weber made substantial progress in her artistic abilities. Enough so, that her teacher encouraged her to apply for the Congressional Art Competition. She applied,

and her painting not only won in her district but also earned a spot in the U.S. Capitol building in Washington D.C., where it was showcased for an entire year.

Weber's success in the Congressional Art Competition foreshadowed what was to come. Drawing inspiration from her upbringing on a farm and involvement in 4-H, Weber began primarily painting livestock. In 2011, Weber's friend from Mitchell, S.D., Amanda Radke, approached her with a request to illustrate a children's book featuring livestock and rural agriculture, a perfect fit for Weber's artwork. This opportunity led to the creation of "A World With Cows," marking Weber's first foray into a full-time career as an artist.

"The book was a huge stepping stone for both of us," said Weber.

The children's book marked not only the beginning of a career but also established Weber's niche – capturing the focal point of rural life on canvas: livestock, horses, buffalo, and more. Weber has since illustrated 10 additional children's books and successfully sold her artwork both nationwide and internationally.

Traditionally, her oil paintings have been rooted in a realism, capturing every detail of the depicted animals. More recently, Weber has expanded her art to include a more whimsical and abstract representation of the rural lifestyle.

"My niche market is the producer, so it's important that my art reflects an authentic rural lifestyle," said Weber. "I want these paintings to have a touch of who I am, but also have the integrity of this lifestyle retained on canvas too."

Today, Weber resides just outside Lake Benton, Minn., a town just outside the South Dakota border. From her small town, Michelle Weber also maintains a website, michelleweberstudio.com, where she showcases a wide range of products

featuring her artwork, including prints, notecards, children's books, and even cake pans. In addition to her website, Weber recently opened a studio named, "The Studio by Michelle Weber" in the center Lake Benton.

"The Studio is a space located right in the heart of Lake Benton," said Weber. "Some people look at Lake Benton with a population of less than 700 or less and ask, 'Why would you open your studio there?' But I stand behind supporting these small. They are the heartbeat of this country, so it only seemed fitting to bring it home."



A Weber painting, titled "Side Eye."



Weber is widely known for her oil paintings that capture the essence of an authentic rural lifestyle on canvas.

Important Notice to the Members of Southeastern

Directors' elections will take place at the upcoming annual membership meeting by those members present and voting on June 6, 2024 in Freeman, South Dakota, at Freeman High School. If you are interested in being a director candidate for the board, contact us for a petition. A candidate must have 15 or more members of their district affix their signatures to the petition. Petitions can be obtained by calling the office at 1-800-333-2859. The petition must be returned and certified before Monday, April 22, 2024.

Three directors will be elected for a term of three years. The three-year terms will be from districts three (3), six (6) and nine (9).

The role of a director:

- Directors must abide by and uphold the bylaws of the cooperative.
- Directors act as trustees for the assets

of the cooperative and protect its assets.

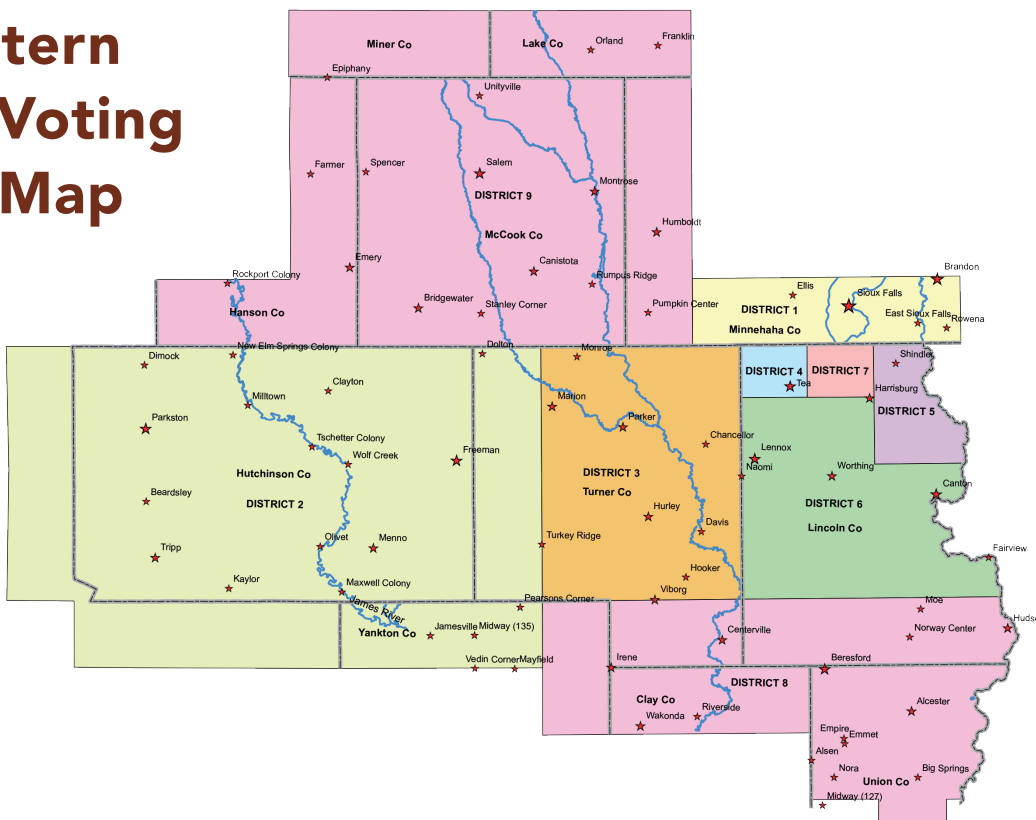
- Directors formulate, approve and review policies to provide guidelines for the cooperative.
- Directors are selected to serve on the boards of East River Electric Power Cooperative and the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.
- Directors are asked to attend educational seminars and represent the cooperative at meetings of associated organizations.
- Directors are asked to remain informed on pertinent legislative issues and discuss the issues with elected representatives.
- Directors need to keep informed on current Rural Utilities Service (RUS) and electric industry happenings and

how they may affect the cooperative.

- Directors approve budgets, evaluate cooperative operations and review financial reports, work plans and audits.
- Directors need to be available to the members in their district to respond to members' concerns and questions.

Board meetings are usually held on the third Thursday following the first Monday of each month. Current board meeting times begin at 8:15 a.m. and last until mid-afternoon. Attendance at various other director meetings are scheduled on a rotational basis by director district. Director's regular duties will require an estimated 25 hours a month relating to cooperative business activities, meetings and associated organization meetings.

Southeastern Director Voting Districts Map



Nominations Open for the Who Powers You Contest

We know our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let's celebrate them! The Who Powers You contest celebrates Touchstone Energy® members, employees and other individuals in the region who have impacted them by going above and beyond to help others.

Does your neighbor volunteer with a local non-profit organization? Maybe they go above-and-beyond at their job? However they are doing it, help us recognize their efforts by nominating them for the Who Powers You Contest.

Winners will be selected by a panel of judges based on the impact the

nominee has on the community. Weekly finalists will be announced and featured on Keloland Living starting in March and the three contest winners will be announced on Keloland Living at a later date. Submit nominations at whopowersyoucontest.com.

Contest finalists could win one of the following cash prizes:

- Grand Prize Winner: \$3,000
- Second Place: \$1,500
- Third Place: \$500

Please direct any questions about the contest to cbakken@eastriver.coop.



TELL US WHO POWERS YOU!

We know our co-op community is filled with people making a difference. Let's celebrate them! Nominate a member or employee of your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative who goes above and beyond. **They could win up to \$3,000!**



Nominate your local hero at
WHOPOWERSYOUCONTEST.COM

Title VI Statement of Non-discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: 202-690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.



Sacred Hoops Coach Tuffy Morrison is just one of many volunteer coaches who make Sacred Hoops Basketball a reality for rural athletes.

SHOOTING FOR SUCCESS

Sacred Hoops Basketball Scores Big with Rural Youth

Frank Turner

frank.turner@sdrea.coop

Sacred Hoops Basketball, a nonprofit organization unique to South Dakota, has been changing the game for youth basketball across the state for more than six years. Using basketball as a tool for youth development, the program organizes teams, trains coaches, and hosts tournaments and workshops for young individuals in all communities – both big and small.

Since the program's conception, the emphasis has centered on rural engagement. Allan Bertram, the owner and operator of Sacred Hoops, co-founded the program alongside Jordan Long and a few other movers and shakers as a way to bring quality basketball instruction to students who would otherwise need to travel hundreds of miles to participate. Their goal was to make basketball accessible to all athletes across the state, not only improving their basketball skills but

also their life skills.

“We wanted to bridge the gap for kids in rural areas, particularly our athletes in low socio-economic areas who may not have been able to play basketball otherwise,” said Bertram. “We want to ensure that every kid who wants to play can.”

Beyond hosting tournaments and teams, Bertram and the organization's other volunteers have found other ways to make changes on and off the basketball court. In addition to hosting more than 120 high school instruction programs across the state, Sacred Hoops Basketball annually distributes more than \$70,000 in scholarships that aid athletes from low-income families to play ball. The organization was also the driving force behind a recent initiative that placed 2,000 new pairs of shoes in the hands of children from select, rural



Sacred Hoops Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier draws up a play for the the Sacred Hoops West River Youth Team.

elementary schools in South Dakota. “We’ve seen so many kids grow and fulfill their passion,” said Bertram. “In today’s world, our youth sometimes don’t understand what their purpose or passion is, and that’s why so many of our youth are struggling. It doesn’t matter what a kid is passionate about – it could be music, sports, gaming, or whatever – but it’s our job to help feed that passion because that is what gives those kids a purpose.”

Today, the program has expanded to encompass more than 50 dedicated volunteers and 600 athletes across 60 teams in their summer season, with athletes spanning from third grade to high school. These numbers, said Bertram, have added up to a real impact for athletes across the state. Within Sacred Hoops Basketball, more than 75 athletes have gone on to play college-level basketball.

“It gives us a great sense of pride because those kids are not only getting a post-secondary degree but also get to continue their passion by playing at the next level,” said Bertram. “Many of these kids come from rural areas or

locations.”

Sacred Hoops Basketball Director and Coach Ted Standing Soldier also emphasized the impact that the nonprofit has had on West River athletes. Standing Soldier regularly works with athletes from several rural

West River communities, including Pine Ridge, Belle Fourche, Kadoka, and more.

“We have athletes from all over come to play on one team, and it’s changing the game for these kids. We have seen several of our athletes start making junior varsity and varsity teams as middle schoolers,” said Standing Soldier. “These are kids we want to help reach their full potential, both on and off the court.”

Reflecting on his upbringing, Standing Soldier said that basketball played a significant role in his early life, ultimately leading to college scholarships that allowed him to play basketball for Platte Community College in Nebraska and later the University of Mary in North Dakota. Those opportunities, he said, are ones that he wants to share with other youth in South Dakota.

“Basketball has been a part of my entire life,” he said. “I developed a love for the game. God has used it to impact my entire life, and now I’m using it to impact others.”



The Sacred Hoops Basketball AAU West Coast National Championship Team.



Ali Van Sambeek's one-year-old smiles while feeding the chickens.

Keeping Chickens

Shannon Marvel

shannon.marvel@sdrea.coop

During summertime mornings, Ali Van Sambeek will send her five-year-old out into the backyard to retrieve what's needed to cook that morning's breakfast.

"He's learned how to fry an egg on the stove, so in the summer he'll go out to the coop, bring back an egg and cook himself breakfast. Or I'll tell kids we need some tomatoes and eggs for breakfast, and they'll go out to get them in the backyard," Van Sambeek said.

Nestled in the Black Hills between Hermosa and Keystone, Ali and her husband raise four children, all under the age of seven, and a couple dozen chickens.

The chickens were added to the Van Sambeek family about a year ago.

"We wanted our kids to have more chores. We both grew up ranching and farming. We don't personally do that

anymore and we wanted our kids to have a taste of that life," Van Sambeek said.

"We haven't had to buy a store-bought egg since we started," she gleamed.

To begin, Van Sambeek started asking friends who raised their own chickens in their backyards a lot of questions.

Around that time and by chance, Van Sambeek learned of a friend that was looking to get rid of a couple hens and a coop for free.

So Van Sambeek took advantage of the opportunity and gave the hens a home in her backyard.

"We started with four, and were up to 20 at one point. And now we're down a little bit after an unfortunate situation with a hawk. That was our kids' first experience with losing animals. But this spring we'll get chicks again," Van Sambeek said.

The Van Sambeeks started off with Dominique brown layer chickens, but expanded the number of breeds in their

coop to get a more colorful plethora of eggs.

"I really wanted the green, dark brown and blue eggs. We pretty much have all the colors now. They've stopped laying throughout the winter, in the summer we'll get about eight or nine eggs a day," Van Sambeek said.

With her children being at the ages of 7, 5, 3 and 1, raising chickens has been



Ali Van Sambeek's son refills the water jug for the family's chickens.

a great way to teach them that their food doesn't just come from the store.

"Somebody has to put work into it – it's kind of cool when it's your own work. That's been one of the biggest things. We also have a pretty big garden. We feed the scraps from the garden back to the chickens. It's so much fun for the kids to see that process," Van Sambeek said.

Over in the eastern part of the state near Brandon, Stephanie Peterson has taken her love of raising backyard chickens and her expertise in doing so to new levels.

Peterson grew up in Lemmon and Rapid City before moving to Washington, D.C., to work on Capitol Hill for U.S. Sen. Tom Daschle.

During her time in Washington, D.C., Peterson raised four backyard chickens. Nine years ago, Peterson and her family moved back to South Dakota and bought a small acreage just outside of Brandon.

She purchased 15 hens and one rooster in the process and immensely enjoyed caring for the chickens and was entertained by their antics.

That developed into a full-fledged business for Peterson, named Fruit of the Coop.

"I heard that the backyard chicken keeping classes instructor for Sioux Falls Community Education was no longer available to teach, and I stepped right into the opening. I've been teaching classes since 2015. I also help small communities draft and pass backyard chicken ordinances for their towns, in addition to offering private consultations for folks who want personalized help getting started with backyard chickens," Peterson said.

She even offers advanced classes on veterinary care for flocks and is a distributor of non-GMO, organic chicken feed grown and milled by a local family farm.

"I started my egg business in 2016, working directly with chefs and restaurant owners to provide pasture-raised eggs to Sioux Falls restaurants. I also offer farm tours and field trips, and operate a farm stay Airbnb here at Fruit of the Coop," Peterson said.

What drives Peterson's passion for chicken and eggs is how interesting of an animal she's found chickens to be, with what she described as "unique biological makeups and also fun personalities."

Over the years, Peterson has seen the number of people raising their own chickens increase.

According to the American Pet Product Association's survey, ownership of backyard chickens increased from 8% in 2018 to 13% in 2020.

"And since COVID-19, the numbers have skyrocketed. The pandemic allowed for folks to have the time to pursue their backyard chicken hobby. But more importantly, many people began to focus on where their food was coming from and how to eat more locally," Peterson said.

"Raising your own chickens for eggs is an easy way to take control of a small part of the food system we all participate in. It

is now estimated that 12 million people in the U.S. own backyard chickens."

Things you need to know when considering backyard chickens:

- Hatching a Plan (local laws, cost, choosing a breed, where to buy)
- Chicken Little (setting up a brooder, food and water, heat, socializing)
- Feather Your Nest (coops and runs, predator proofing, cleaning, nest boxes, ventilation, space needed, seasonal care)
- Chicken Scratch (feeders and waterers, nutrient-dense feed, oyster shell, grit, treats)
- Ruling the Roost (free range, dust baths, molting, pecking order, injuries and diseases)
- Eggs/The Fruit of Your Coop (laying age, the "bloom," winter laying)



The Van Sambeek kids inspect the chicks that will be added to their coop.



MARCH 1-3, 2024
National Pheasant
Fest & Quail Classic
 1201 N West Ave.
 Sioux Falls, SD

FEB. 15 - MARCH 15
Chamberlain-Oacoma
Burger Battle
 Facebook.com/chamberlainoacoma
 Chamberlain-Oacoma, SD

FEB. 19
Wessington Springs Farm,
Home & Health Show
 10 a.m.- 3 p.m.
 W. S. Elementary Gymnasiums
 Wessington Springs, SD

FEB. 24
Plankinton Fire &
Ambulance Fundraiser
 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
 Plankinton Ag Building
 Plankinton, SD

MARCH 3
Sioux Falls American Legion
Pancake Breakfast
 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.
 South Dakota Military
 Heritage Alliance Building
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 9
French Toast/Pancake Feed
& Health Fair
 8:30 a.m.
 Tea Community Building
 Tea, SD

MARCH 9
Epiphany Sausage Sale
 605-425-2600
 Epiphany Catholic Church
 Epiphany, SD

MARCH 15
East Dakota Chapter NWFT
31st Annual Banquet
 Ramkota Exhibit Hall
 Sioux Falls, SD

MARCH 23
Tyndall VFW Vegas Night
 7:30 p.m.
 Tyndall Community Center
 Tyndall, SD

MARCH 23
Brown County Fair
Foundation Hall of Fame
Banquet and Auction
 6 p.m.
 Yelduz Shrine
 Aberdeen, SD

MARCH 29
NDFC Tracy Byrd Concert
 6 p.m.
 Holum Expo Building on the
 Brown County Fairgrounds
 Aberdeen, SD

APRIL 2
Clay-Union Electric
Ribbon Cutting & Open
House
 3 p.m. - 6:15 p.m.
 31321 SD Hwy. 19
 Vermillion, SD

APRIL 4
McCrossan Wildest Banquet
Auction in the Midwest
 5:30 p.m.
 \$100 per Ticket
 Sioux Falls Arena
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 5-7
71st Annual Hayes Play:
Under a Cowboy Moon
 7 p.m.
 Hayes Community Hall
 Hayes, SD

APRIL 19
American Legion Post 15
Dance
 6 p.m.- 10:30 p.m.
 El Riad Shrine
 Sioux Falls, SD

APRIL 27
Henry's Run 5k Run/Walk
 9 a.m.
 Register online
 sandfordhealthfoundation.org
 Falls Park
 Sioux Falls, SD

MAY 4-5
Flea Market
 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
 605-770-2411
 Rustic Designs & More
 Ethan, SD

MAY 4-12
Spring Show
 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
 605-770-2411
 Rustic Designs & More
 Ethan, SD

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.

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