



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

SOUTHEASTERN ELECTRIC

JULY 2026 VOL. 27 NO. 3

COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



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Glory**

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UPDATE ON SHARED MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT



Chad Kinsley
CEO/General
Manager

Southeastern
Electric
Cooperative
and Union
County Electric
Cooperative

In my new role as the shared manager for Union County Electric and Southeastern Electric, I plan to use the same CEO column for both co-ops, so everyone receives the same information. This month, I want to update you on two important topics: the merger study approved by both Boards and proposed changes to Union County Electric's bylaws.

BOARDS AGREE TO BEGIN A MERGER STUDY

One of the seven cooperative principles is **Cooperation Among Cooperatives**. Your Boards are putting that principle into action by beginning a merger study. The study will look at whether combining the cooperatives will lower costs and improve efficiency while maintaining reliability, safety, and local service. The goal is simple: to provide the best possible service as cost-effectively as possible for members of both cooperatives.

As part of the due diligence, both Boards have approved using a third-party consultant, Great Co-ops, to help complete aspects of the merger study, including board governance, member communications, member voting,

and how the cooperatives would work together. We expect the merger study to take 9 to 12 months, and we will keep you informed as it moves forward.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO UNION COUNTY ELECTRIC'S BY-LAWS

If the Boards later recommend a merger, members of both cooperatives will vote on it. To make voting easier and increase participation, the Union County Board has proposed bylaw changes that would allow **voting by mail for a merger with another electric cooperative**. Southeastern's bylaws already allow mail voting because of its merger with McCook Electric in 2006.

We will share regular updates as the merger study progresses. No decision has been made. This study is simply a careful review of the facts and options. We're committed to keeping you informed as the process moves forward.

Thank you for your membership and engagement. Please watch for future newsletters and meeting notices and contact either cooperative with questions or feedback.

CLOSED FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY:

The Southeastern Electric offices are closed on Friday, July 3 in observance of the Independence Day holiday. Our 24/7 outage phone will still be active (1-800-333-2859). Pay by phone is also available at 844-961-2524. Bills can also be paid through Smart Hub online or in the Smart Hub phone app.

**COOPERATIVE
CONNECTIONS**
**SOUTHEASTERN
ELECTRIC**

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MAY BOARD SUMMARY

The Board of Directors of Southeastern Electric Cooperative met in Sioux Falls on Thursday, May 21, with all directors present. Also present were CEO Chad Kinsley, Attorney Mike Nadolski, and staff members Audri Carlson, John Euchner, Erica Fitzhugh, Todd Nelson, and Jon Wunder.

Chris Nordquist of DGR Engineering presented the Long-Range Plan detailing major system additions, improvements & replacements over the next 20 years.

CFO Jon Wunder reviewed his written report, including the preliminary financial report, cost of service study, East River capital credit retirement, capital credit allocations, hiring & staffing, & employee committee meetings.

VP of Operations & Engineering John Euchner reviewed his written report, close calls, safety meetings, open positions, projects, large loads, East River 115kV conversion projects, pole inspection, & facilities.

VP of Technology Todd Nelson reviewed his written report, load control receiver update, technology roadmap update, distributed resource portal, cybersecurity, & other IT projects.

VP of Member Services Audri Carlson reviewed her written report, annual meeting updates, telephone upgrades, accounts receivable, disconnects, past due accounts, call volumes, & other projects.

Communications & PR Manager Erica Fitzhugh reviewed her written report, member communications, advertising, recent & upcoming events, upcoming Parkston member appreciation event, annual meeting planning, internal communications, social media, the "Who Powers You" contest, & member survey.

CEO Kinsley reviewed his report & commented on the following topics: Basin financials, East River financials, NCSC Director election, service territory exception, shared management agreement, merger study proposals, joint board meeting schedule, & office visits.

Attorney Nadolski generally discussed co-op related legal matters.

THE BOARD ACTED ON THE FOLLOWING MOTIONS:

- A motion was duly made & seconded to approve Board Resolution #2026-02, Long Range Plan. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to authorize CEO Kinsley to execute the merger study proposal with Great Co-ops contingent on Union County Electric Cooperative's board approval. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to pay the Election and Credentials Committee a fee plus mileage for the Annual Meeting. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to approve the following amended policies: 112 Services of Cooperative Attorney, 303 Travel Expenses & 605 Returned Checks. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to set the July board meeting for Monday, July 27, 2026 beginning at 8:30 AM. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to set the August board meeting for Tuesday, August 18, 2026 beginning at 8:30 AM. Motion carried.
- A motion was duly made & seconded to authorize Ostraat & Holmberg to attend Basin's Annual Meeting. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to authorize Wollmann, Carlos Hofer & Terveen to attend NRECA's Regional Meeting. Motion carried.
- A motion was made & seconded to authorize any board member to attend Union County's Annual Meeting. Motion carried.

The next regular monthly meeting will be held on Thurs., June 18 in Sioux Falls.

BEFORE THE SMOKE: PROTECT YOUR HOME BEFORE WILDFIRE SEASON

Wildfires can move quickly, especially when dry grass, high winds and hot weather come together. In rural South Dakota, where homes, farms, shelterbelts, outbuildings and open grassland share the same landscape, preparation matters.

But there is one important point to make first: fighting a wildfire is not a job for homeowners.

If a wildfire is nearby, leave firefighting to trained professionals. Follow evacuation orders, call 911 to report a fire and stay away from downed power lines, smoke-filled areas and active fire zones. Cooperative members can do their most important work in advance, taking steps that make a property harder for fire to reach and easier for responders to protect.

One of the most effective steps is creating defensible space around the home. That does not mean clearing every tree or turning a yard into bare ground. It means reducing combustible material near houses, garages, sheds and other structures, while thinking about how fire could move from brush to trees to buildings.

Start closest to the house. Embers can collect against siding, under decks, in gutters or near steps. Remove dry leaves, dead plants, stacked lumber, cardboard and other combustible materials from next to the home. Gravel, rock, concrete, pavers and other hardscaping can be better choices near walls, decks and porches.

Gutters and roofs deserve attention, too. Leaves and needles can become dry fuel. Cleaning them before fire season can reduce the chance that embers find an easy place to ignite.

From there, look at the rest of the yard. Clear dead brush, tall grass and dried weeds, especially near structures. Keep grass mowed around homes, outbuildings, propane tanks and driveways. Trim and space shrubs and trees so fire cannot easily climb from grass to brush to tree canopies. Low branches can act like ladder fuels.

Do not overlook decks, porches and crawlspaces. Dry leaves, grass clippings and other materials can collect underneath. Cleaning those areas and using screening can help keep debris from building up.

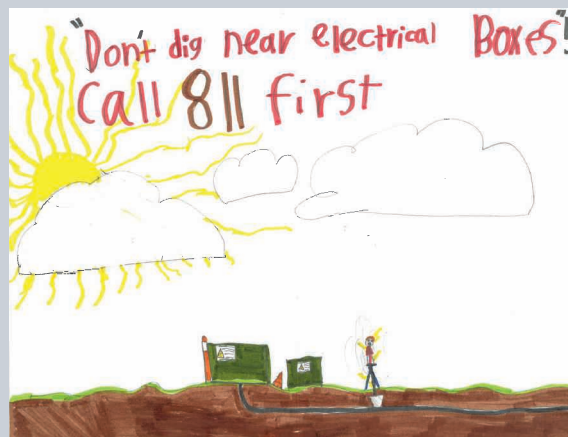
Access is part of preparation, too. Firefighters need to reach

a property quickly and safely. Keep driveways clear, make sure gates can open and trim branches that could block emergency vehicles. Clearly visible address signs can help responders find a home when visibility is poor.

Before making major landscaping changes, building fences, planting trees or adding new water lines, call 811. Underground electric, gas, water and communication lines may be closer than expected. A free locate request helps protect homeowners, utility crews and infrastructure.

Cooperative members can also make a plan. Know two ways out of the property or neighborhood. Keep important documents, medications and emergency supplies ready to go. Take photos or videos of buildings, equipment and belongings for insurance records.

Wildfire preparation is a seasonal habit, much like cleaning gutters, changing filters or preparing equipment for winter. The goal is not to fight the fire. That job belongs to firefighters and emergency responders. The goal is to give the home, property and responders a better chance before the fire ever starts.



**"Don't dig near electrical boxes!
Call 811 first."**

Caleb Blake, age 9

Caleb urges members to not dig near a pad-mounted transformer. Thank you for sharing your picture, Caleb! Caleb's parents are Peter and Stephanie Blake – members of West River 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.

Sweet on RHUBARB

RHUBARB CAKE

Ingredients:

White cake mix
4 cups rhubarb, diced
1 cup white sugar
2 cups heavy whipping cream

Method

Mix white cake as directed on the box. Pour in a greased 9x12 pan. Place 4 cups of diced rhubarb over the top. Pour 1 cup of white sugar over the rhubarb. Pour 2 cups of heavy whipping cream over the top. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes.

Jeanette Kleinsasser
Dakota Energy

RHUBARB SALAD

Ingredients:

2 cups rhubarb, chopped
4 tbsps. water
1/2 cup sugar
3 oz. red jello
3/4 cup cold water
1 apple, diced
1 banana, sliced

Method

Combine rhubarb, water and sugar. Stir and cook until mushy. Add jello and stir until dissolved. Add 3/4 cup cold water. Cool until it begins to set. Stir in diced apple and sliced banana. Chill and serve.

Leanne Eich
Central Electric

RHUBARB CHEESE CAKE

Ingredients:

Rhubarb Filling

9" pie shell, unbaked
2 1/2 cups rhubarb, chopped
1/2 cup sugar
1 tbsp. flour

Cheese Cake Filling

8 oz. cream cheese
2 eggs, added one at a time
1/2 cup sugar

Topping

3/4 cup sour cream
2 tbsps. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

Method

Stir rhubarb with flour and sugar. Put in the unbaked pie shell and bake at 425° for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and lower temperature to 350° degrees.

Beat cream cheese, add 2 eggs one at a time, then add the sugar. Mix well and pour over hot rhubarb layer. Bake 30 minutes at 350° degrees.

Mix the topping of sour cream, sugar and vanilla well and spread over hot pie. Cool 3 hours or more before serving. The flavors blend better the longer it cools. Refrigerate leftovers.

Charles Lebeda
Sioux Valley Energy

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 2026. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.



Sign Up For Notifications!

LEARN HOW TO SIGN UP FOR OUTAGE NOTIFICATIONS

Our SmartHub mobile app and web portal offer a variety of features to help members manage their accounts. This article explains how to sign up for email or text notifications specifically for outage alerts.

For a larger view of the images included in this guide, visit our website at www.southeasternelectric.com.

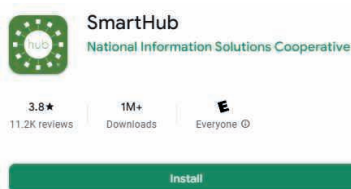
In addition to outage alerts, SmartHub provides a range of notification options, including billing, payment, and other service-related updates. Many of these notifications can be enabled by following the same steps outlined in this article.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO REGISTER FOR SMARTHUB?

You will need an email address and your account number. You can find your account number on your bill.

MOBILE APP DOWNLOAD:

To download our free, secure SmartHub app from the Apple or Google Play stores, scan the QR code below.

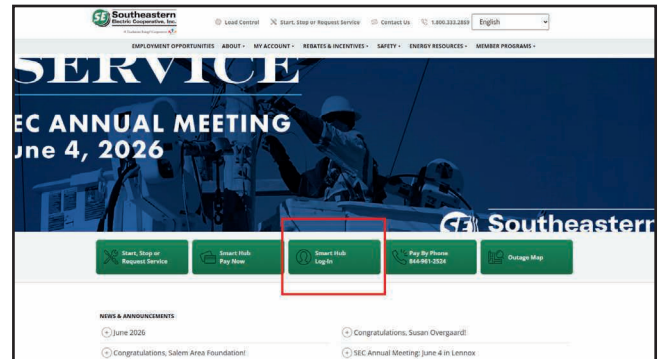


NEED ASSISTANCE?



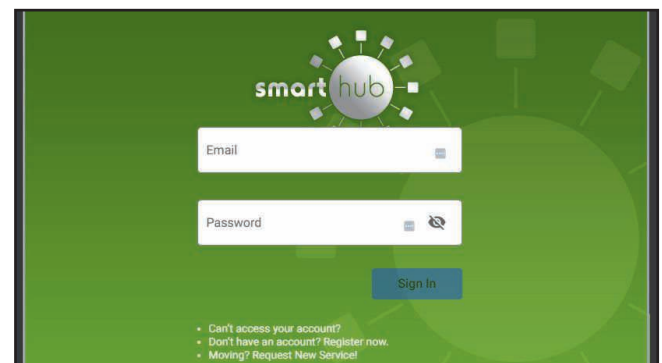
If you have any questions or issues, you may contact us by sending an email to info@southeastern.coop or calling 1-800-333-2859. Visit our SmartHub support page at southeasternelectric.com/my-account/ for more information.

STEP 1



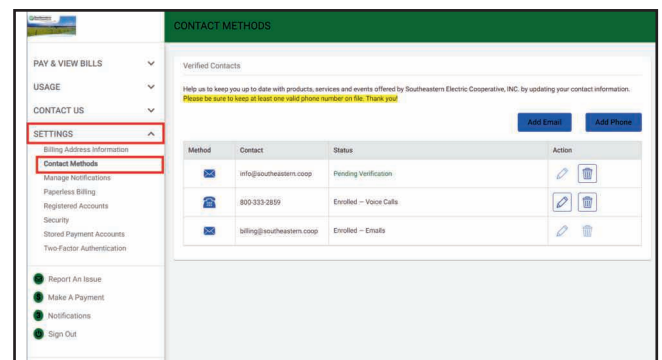
Click on the **SmartHub Log-In** button on our website.

STEP 2



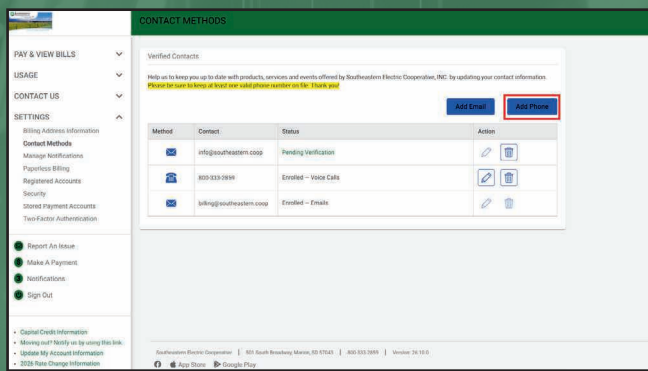
Log in to SmartHub with the email and password you used during registration.

STEP 3



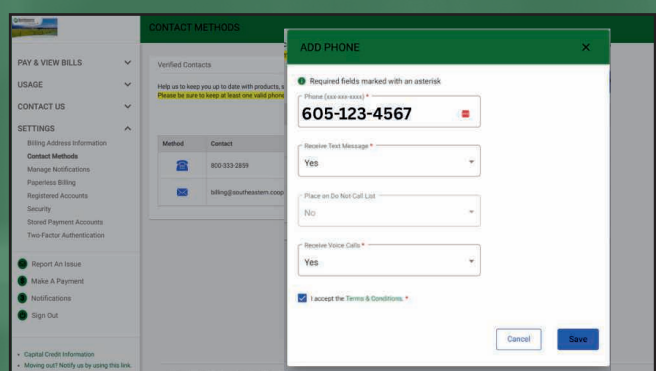
On the SmartHub home screen click on the **Settings** menu on the left and then click on the **Contact Methods** sub-menu.

STEP 4



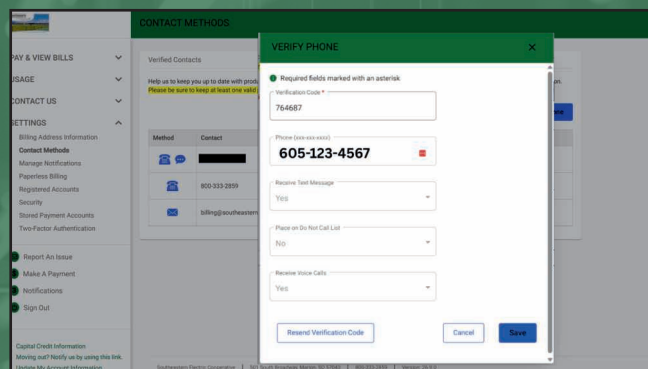
For this example, click on the **Add Phone** button.

STEP 5



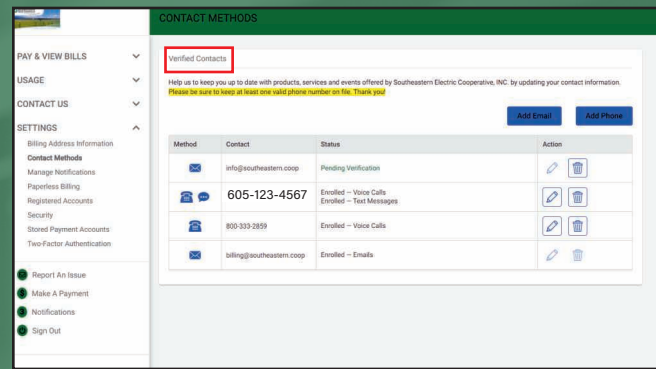
Type your **phone number** in and **set the rules** for that particular phone number. Then click the **Save** button.

STEP 6



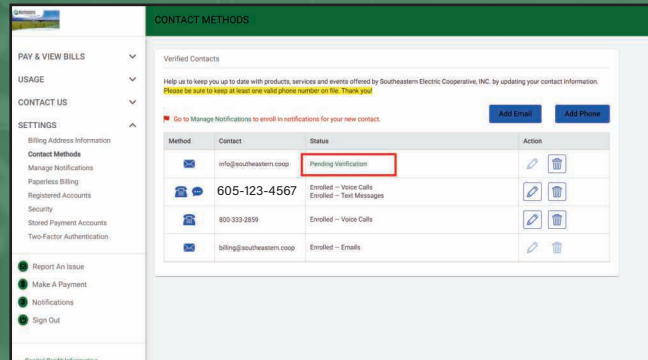
Enter the **Verification Code** that was texted to your phone and click the **Save** button.

STEP 7



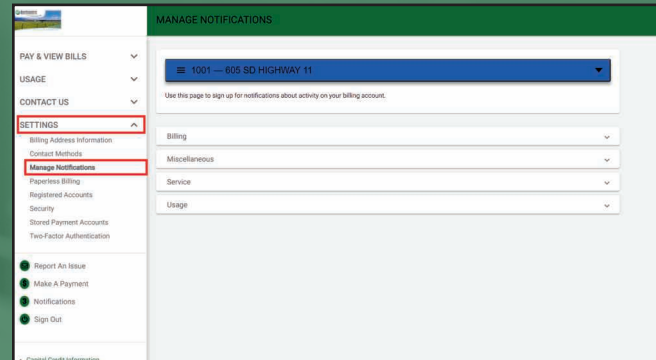
The new phone number is now listed in the **Verified Contacts** section. You can always come back to edit or delete this contact.

STEP 8



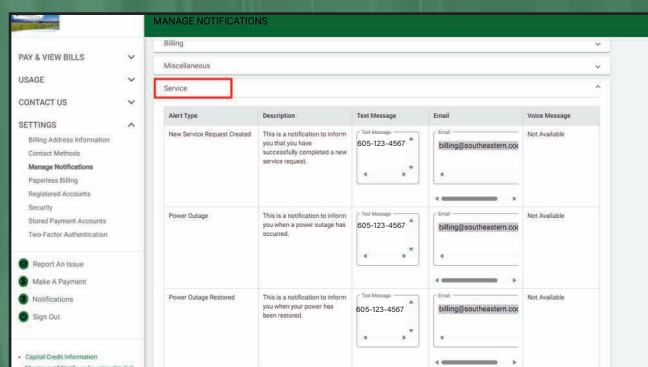
For unconfirmed phone/emails in the Additional Contacts on File section, you can click the **Confirm Contact** link.

STEP 9



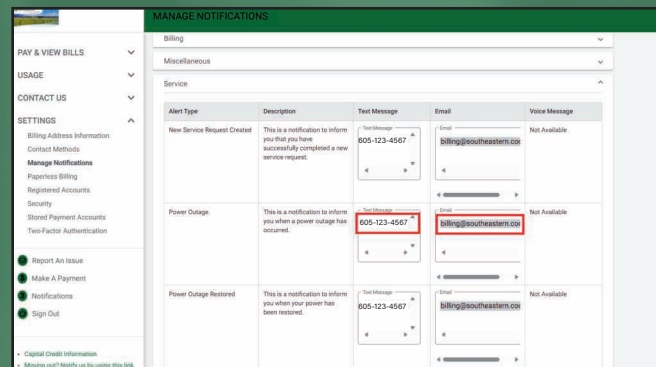
On the SmartHub home screen click on the **Settings** menu on the left and then click on the **Manage Notifications** sub-menu.

STEP 10



For this example, click on the **Service** category.

STEP 11



For each category click the dropdown menu in the **Text Message** and/or **Email** columns and select the contact from the list.



A CENTURY OF GRIT AND GLORY

The Days of '76 Rodeo

Photos by KSchurr Photography

Jocelyn Johnson

jocelyn.johnson@sdrea.coop

In the historic gulch of Deadwood, S.D., the past isn't tucked away in books – it rides out of old wooden chutes every July at the Days of '76 Rodeo.

What began more than a century ago as a short weekend celebration has grown into a week-long rodeo and parade tradition that draws contestants and visitors from across the country. Yet, amid the growth and national recognition, the Days of '76 remains rooted in family, heritage and a deep sense of place.

Pat Roberts, longtime board member of the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "It started in 1924, and it actually wasn't a rodeo then. It was a celebration of Deadwood and its establishment in 1876 – hence where the name came from. It was started by the community just to promote the founding."

Those early celebrations featured parades, horses, fireworks and the kind of small-town pageantry that fits a frontier

community proud of its past. The full-fledged rodeo format came a few years later in the late 1920s, but the heart of the event hasn't changed: honoring Deadwood's origins and the Western way of life that built it.

Today, the Days of '76 Rodeo is marking its 104th year alongside other milestones – the 150th anniversary of Deadwood and the nation's 250th anniversary.

The rodeo boasts a total payout of roughly \$350,000 and typically draws 700 to 800 contestants, including top names like Rocker Steiner, Lisa Lockhart and rising stars such as Emily Beisel. During a week of performances, 25,000 to 30,000 spectators pack the grandstands, turning the arena into a sea of cowboy hats and hometown pride.

The events remain classic: bareback riding, steer wrestling, calf roping, team roping, barrel racing, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and breakaway roping. No frills, no gimmicks – just the timeless contests of skill and grit that define rodeo.

"We just keep it traditional," Pat said. "Just welcome everybody to Deadwood to enjoy the best cowboys and the best bucking stock that we can get."

For a town of about 1,200 people, the Days of '76 Rodeo has earned outsized recognition.

In 2011, the Days of '76 was inducted into the Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame, a distinction the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) had not extended to a rodeo in many years.

Chris Roberts, son of Pat Roberts and fellow board member on the Days of '76 Rodeo planning committee, said, "We won the PRCA Rodeo of the Year every single year that we were in the medium category until we surpassed into large. We've been nominated many times in the large category and won it once. To our knowledge, we're the only rodeo that's won Rodeo of the Year in each and every category."

In Deadwood, legacy still rides out of wooden chutes, year after year, drawing generational athletes. Rodeo here is a family affair. The Roberts family has been involved continuously since the event began.

"There's been a Roberts at every Days of '76 celebration since it started," said Pat.

Pat attended his first Days of '76 Rodeo when he was four days old and serves on the board with his son, Chris.

"I'm fourth generation," Chris said. "My great-granddad was there from year one, and we never missed a single year. Then his son – my granddad – followed in his footsteps, my dad and now me."

A fifth generation is already helping behind the scenes, continuing a family legacy that mirrors the rodeo's own endurance through the decades.

That kind of continuity isn't unique to the Roberts alone. Many contestants

arrive with stories of parents and grandparents who once competed in Deadwood.

"From a contestant perspective, I'd be willing to bet that no matter where you grew up, if you are a rodeo family, Deadwood was one that was always on the map," Chris said. "I hear it every single year – contestants talking about how grandpa or great-grandpa, grandma or great-grandma competed in Deadwood, and they've always wanted to be here. In the rodeo world, everybody knows Deadwood."

Mackenzi Gatzke, secretary of the board of directors, says her family story is similar. She currently serves on the Days of '76 board alongside both of her parents and noted two other families who have long served on the board promoting the event.

"Our board is all made up of people who were or still are locals to Deadwood, and we're all volunteers," she said. "We really do it because we love Deadwood, and we love the Days of '76 and the tradition behind it. We actually have four different families with multiple generations on our board, and we all just work together like one big family that just loves the community."

That focus on authenticity extends beyond the arena. The Days of '76 Museum houses the largest working



collection of horse-drawn wagons in the country, along with memorabilia from across the Black Hills dating back to 1876. During rodeo week, many of those wagons leave their resting place to roll through downtown Deadwood in historic parades – matching the sight of a 19th-century streetscape.

For Pat Roberts, rodeo's relevance in modern life is still significant and comes down to identity.

"It's tradition – it's the cowboy way," he said. "These cowboys and cowgirls are athletes...and the horses are too. They're bred to buck. We're not hurting anything by doing it – that's what they want to do. Just think of Deadwood and the West. Rodeo fits right in."



2025 Capital Credits Allocated



Jon Wunder
CFO

The books for 2025 have been audited, allowing Southeastern to allocate 2025 margins (revenues in excess of expenses) to members who received service during the year. Allocations are based on each member's 2025 patronage (electric bills).

As a general estimate, members can approximate their 2025 allocation by multiplying their total annual electric bills by 10%. Actual allocations may vary.

The amount of your 2025 patronage capital credit allocation, along with your total unretired patronage capital credit balance with Southeastern, was included on your May

electric bill issued in June.

Your patronage capital credit balance represents your equity investment in Southeastern and may be returned to you in the future through patronage capital credit refunds, as authorized by the Board of Directors. Additional information about capital credits is available on our website.

Capital credits are one of the many benefits of being a cooperative member and help distinguish cooperatives from investor-owned and municipal utilities.

As always, if you have any questions please let us know. 1-800-333-2859.



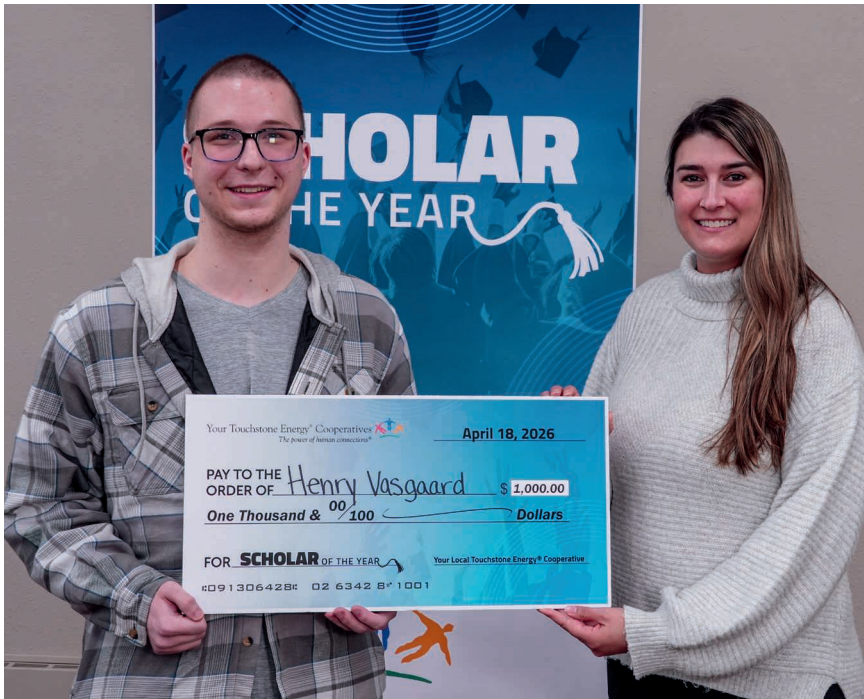
ways to prepare your home for *Summer Vacation*

Once you have packed your bags, **get your house ready for vacation too.**

1. Set or program your thermostat to 85 degrees.
2. Unplug small appliances and electronics.
3. Turn your natural gas water heater to low.
4. Turn off your electric hot water heater.
5. Use light timers or smart lighting.
6. Ensure your sump pump is operational.
7. Clean out your refrigerator.
8. Pause your mail.
9. Make sure doors and windows are locked.
10. Let a neighbor know your plans.

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Viborg-Hurley senior Henry Vasgaard accepts his scholarship check from Erica Fitzhugh. **Photo by Cody Bunger.**

HENRY VASGAARD

Selected as Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year

Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives in eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota honored some of the area's most impressive high school seniors during the 24th Annual Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year Banquet and recognition held at the Dakota Prairie Playhouse on the campus of Dakota State University.

The event honored the 32 high school students who were chosen each week throughout the school year as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Week. It's a program which recognizes students for

academic achievement, co-curricular involvement, and community service. The students are featured in weekly segments which air on Dakota News Now television and each student receives a \$250 scholarship for being chosen as the Scholar of the Week.

Henry Vasgaard, a senior at Viborg-Hurley School within Southeastern Electric's service territory, was selected during the banquet as the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Year and received a \$1,000 award. Willa Stern a senior at Webster Area High School,

within Lake Region Electric's territory, and Jennifer Stark a senior at Scotland School District, within Bon Homme Yankton Electric's territory, received \$500 scholarship awards. The winners' names were drawn from among those in attendance.

Vasgaard is an active student, participating in FFA, the National Honor Society (Vice President) and Student Council (President). He volunteers his time by assisting special needs students, helping at the school concession stand and local theater, and being an active member of his local church.

His proudest achievement is being President of the Student Council and working on re-writing the Student Council Constitution. Much of the information was outdated, including the roles and responsibilities of officers and members. Vasgaard hopes that the update will leave a positive legacy for the school and future students. Next fall, he plans to pursue a degree in Business Administration from Southeast Technical College.

Author and former S.D. Legislator V.J. Smith was the keynote speaker. Dakota News Now multimedia journalist Hannah Ekwall served as the master of ceremonies.

Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have sponsored the Scholar of the Week program since 2002. In that time Touchstone Energy Cooperatives have awarded over \$100,000 in scholarships to over 650 students as part of the Scholar of the Week program.

FORT MEADE & THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

How South Dakota Set the Stage for a National Anthem

Jacob Boyko

jacob.boyko@sdrea.coop

This month – July of 2026 – the United States of America celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, when the Founding Fathers declared the end of Great Britain's role as their colonial overseer.

No patriotic song captures the sacrifice and resilience of the American experiment quite like the national anthem, "The Star-Spangled Banner." However, the anthem is not from the American Revolution, nor was it immediately adopted as the nation's official song. Its story unfolded over more than a century, from a British bombardment in Baltimore to a flag-lowering ceremony on the plains of western South Dakota.

The War of 1812

The year is 1814. The United States of America is in the midst of its second war with Great Britain – The War of 1812 – and the nation is reeling from a recent attack on Washington, D.C., where British troops torched the Capitol and White House.

A Maryland lawyer, Francis Scott Key, had just boarded a British naval vessel. He was sent there on behalf of the U.S. government to negotiate the release of an American prisoner, and while his negotiation was successful, Key was not allowed to return ashore until the British forces completed their bombardment on nearby Fort McHenry for fear that Key had overheard military plans while on board.

Detained aboard the enemy ship, Key looked ashore to Baltimore as the American forces fended off the invasion. As dusk settled over the harbor, it became harder for Key to track the battle, his only illumination being the occasional glow of British rockets and exploding shells. Key watched through the night, not sure who was winning the drawn-out fight. At dawn, there was just enough illumination for Key to make out the American flag still flying over the fort. The Americans had held



Visitors to Fort Meade (1 mile west of Sturgis, S.D.) will see the very same flag pole used by Col. Caleb Carlton during the flag retirements. These once-a-day evening ceremonies were the first instance of the Star Spangled Banner serving as the United States' unofficial national anthem.

Photo submitted by Randy Bender

the fort and fended off the British from Baltimore.

Key's experience that night inspired him to write a poem he titled "The Defence of Fort M'Henry." Later, it was put to song and became known as "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Fort Meade

Fast forward to 1892, thousands of miles west on the American frontier.

Col. Caleb Carlton is the new commander of the Eighth U.S. Cavalry at Fort Meade, a U.S. Army post in the young state of South Dakota. About a mile west, the bustling town of Sturgis is growing along with the fort, serving as an important stop along numerous trails heading toward gold country in the streams of the Black Hills.

"Fort Meade was put in place in about 1878 to help maintain the peace in the Black Hills region between the native tribes and the settlers coming in," explained Randy Bender, a lifelong resident of Sturgis and second-generation Fort Meade Museum board member.

Carlton was eager to make his mark – not through a battle, but patriotism. He and his wife discussed how they could better instill respect for the American flag among their troops stationed at the fort. The Carltons' idea was to have the band play an official song during the evening retreat, when the flag is retired for the night.

"Carlton issued orders that all within hearing distance were to stand at attention, and all men not under arms were to remove their hats as a sign of respect to the flag," Bender said.

That song, chosen at the urging of Mrs. Carlton, was the Star Spangled Banner.

"We selected the Star Spangled Banner as it was written under very unusual circumstances," Carlton later wrote in a 1914 letter.

Carlton's daughter, Mabel, recalled the first ceremony in her journal.

"As the final notes of the song faded away, the flag landed gently in the arms of the waiting troops," she wrote. "If it had been practiced, it could not have been done more perfectly."

From Fort Meade, the practice began to spread as other officers and government officials visited and observed the ceremony.

"The New York Times referred to the fact that (I) was trying to establish a national anthem," Carlton wrote. "This attracted the attention of Col. Cook in command of the recruiting depot at David's Island, who wrote me that he was having recruits taught to sing our national air. I suggested he concentrate his instruction on the Star Spangled Banner."

Carlton also wrote that later, during a meeting in Harrisburg with Pennsylvania Gov. Daniel H. Hastings, that the governor promised he would initiate the playing of the Star Spangled Banner among the state's militia.

The most decisive support came during a meeting between Carlton and Secretary of War Daniel Lamont, with the two speaking about the custom. Before long,



Above: Officers of the 8th Cavalry in Fort Meade, S.D. in 1892. Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society

Right: A photograph of Fort Meade with Bear Butte in the distance. Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.



Lamont ordered that the Star Spangled Banner be played during evening retreats across the nation.

Nearly 40 years after Fort Meade's first Star Spangled Banner rendition, Congress in 1931 declared it the national anthem.

Today, visitors to Fort Meade can stand near the place where that custom began. A historical marker near the parade ground bears the words "It Started Here," connecting the South Dakota fort to the story of the national anthem.

"That flagpole that they lowered the flag down from for that event is still standing at Fort Meade, and still used," Bender said.

For Bender, who grew up at Fort Meade while his father worked at the

VA hospital and mother served on the museum board, the historic post still carries the feel of another era.

"When you visit Fort Meade, it's like stepping back in time," Bender said.

Many visitors are surprised to learn about Fort Meade's place in the anthem's history.

"It's one of those things we just take for granted that we have a national anthem," Bender said, "We never stopped to think about how these things came to be. But every one of those stories had to start at some point, and the national anthem story got its start in Fort Meade, South Dakota."

The Fort Meade museum is open from mid-May through the end of September 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday.



Left image: Keith Paulsen, Janet Karel (Treasurer), Glenda Blinder (Chair), and Amber Blagg hold their certificate for being selected as a finalist in the Who Powers You Contest. Not pictured: Sharon Kinzley (Vice Chair), Jeremy Grady, and Maggie Anderson. Right image: Susan Overgaard holds her certificate for being selected as a finalist in the Who Powers You Contest.

SALEM AREA FOUNDATION & SUSAN OVERGAARD

Named as Southeastern Electric Co-op Finalists in Regional Who Powers You Contest

Erica Fitzhugh

Communications & PR Manager

Southeastern Electric along with the region's other Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives recently finished the fifth annual Who Powers You Contest. The contest highlights local figures who are making a difference in their communities. Member-owners, employees, and residents who live or work within the service territory of the region's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives were eligible

to be nominated. Weekly finalists were featured on Keloland Living and the three contest winners were announced at the end of May.

Southeastern Electric is proud to share the stories of two weekly finalists that are positively impacting our service territory. Their video interviews were featured on Keloland Living and recaps of their segments are available on

the contest's webpage at www.WhoPowersYouContest.com.

THE SALEM AREA FOUNDATION

The Salem Area Foundation was established in 2007 to provide financial support for charitable and nonprofit purposes in the Salem area. The great work this foundation does for the Salem community is what earned them recognition as a

Southeastern Electric Cooperative finalist in the 5th annual regional Who Powers You? Contest.

“The strength of a community is often measured by those who quietly invest in its future, and the Salem Area Foundation is a shining example of that commitment in action,” wrote Tara Miller, a community member who nominated the Foundation for the contest.

Since its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$70,000 back into the community, impacting residents of all ages and strengthening essential services. Its contributions have supported a wide range of initiatives, including the Salem Volunteer Fire Department, Salem Pool House, McCook County 4-H, McCook County Food Pantry, Wildwood Cemetery, Salem Youth & Recreation programs, and improvements to the Salem baseball field. In addition, the Foundation has invested in youth and family-focused efforts such as the Legion Baseball Program, Playground Equipment Fund, McCook Central School Supply Project, and the Backpack for Kids Program. Broader community efforts like First Circuit CASA and Salem Economic Development have also benefited from the Foundation’s generosity.

“The Foundation is made up of seven volunteers that serve three-year terms,” shared Glenda Blindert, Chair. “Everybody in our community has talents and something to give, we are always looking to welcome new members to join our foundation.”

“Thanks for the recognition with this contest, it is a great

way to get the word out about our Foundation,” said Janet Karel, Treasurer. “Our annual fundraiser is each fall during the National Day of Giving; however, donations are accepted online all year.” To make a tax-deductible donation to the Salem Area Foundation, go to: <https://www.sdcommunityfoundation.org/make-donation?fund=Salem%20Area%20Foundation>

SUSAN OVERGAARD

Susan Overgaard, a Southeastern Electric member from the Centerville community, was named as a finalist in the 5th annual regional Who Powers You? Contest. “Susan has served as the founding Chair of the Centerville Area Community Foundation for the past 24 years, helping turn a vision into a lasting force for good,” wrote Jared Hybertson, a member of the Foundation who nominated Susan for the contest. “Thanks to her leadership, the Foundation has reinvested more than \$100,000 into the Centerville community, supporting vital organizations such as the local school, food pantry, arts council, parks, and economic development initiatives.”

Overgaard has been involved with the Centerville Community Foundation since its inception. She was instrumental in raising the initial funds to get the Foundation established and serves as the Chair, leading the group in their efforts to improve the community. Contributions from the Foundation have benefited a local daycare, Rotary Club, food pantry, the

Legion, ambulance training, Fire Department, an educational speaker for the high school, improvements at the pool (new roof, plumbing and decking, new chairs), upgrades to the track and field house, and more.

“We have a great group of young people that are active and willing to step up to help,” said Overgaard. “There is never a shortage of organizations needing help and there are so many opportunities to get involved, many hands make light work!”

“It’s just fun to be a part of something that makes a difference in our community,” shared Overgaard. “Our annual fundraiser is a golf tournament; however, donations are accepted online all year.” To make a tax-deductible donation to the Centerville Community Foundation, go to: <https://www.sdcommunityfoundation.org/make-donation?fund=Centerville%20Foundation>

CONTEST WINNERS

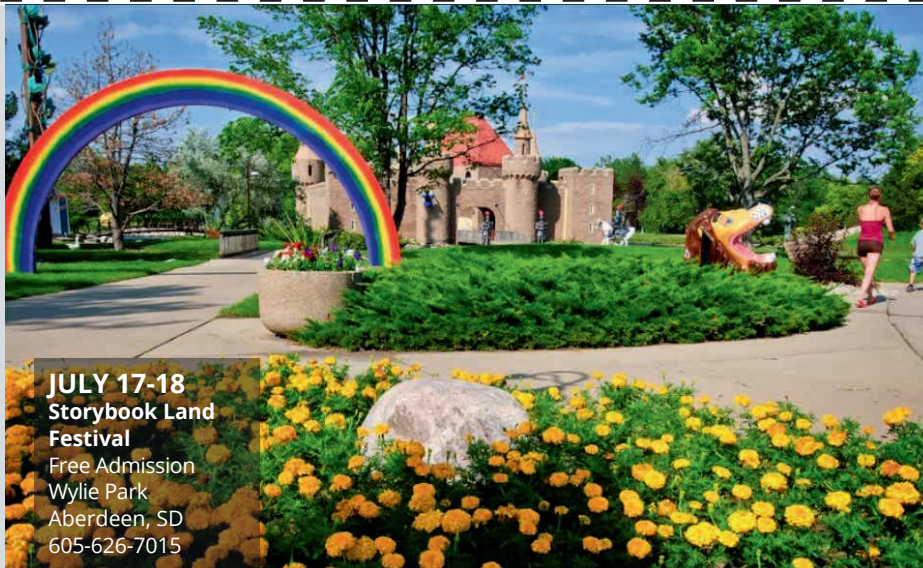
Three final winners were selected by a panel of judges based on the impact that they have on the community. Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership (ICAP), headquartered in Sioux Valley Energy’s service territory, was awarded the first-place grand prize. The second place prize was awarded to Aaron Vaughn and the Takota Youth Center from the Central Electric Cooperative service territory. The third place prize went to Mary Jo Parker, a member of Charles Mix Electric.

REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth at Dakotafest or the South Dakota State Fair to win a prize!

Your Phone Number: _____

Your E-mail Address: _____



JULY 17-18
Storybook Land Festival
Free Admission
Wylie Park
Aberdeen, SD
605-626-7015

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.

JULY 2-4
USA 250th Celebration
at Mount Rushmore
Rapid City, SD
www.nps.gov

JULY 8
Tracy Area Gardens & Quilts Tour
2-7:30 p.m.
Rain Date: July 9
Tracy, MN
507-629-3252
tracy.area.garden.quilts@gmail.com

JULY 10-12
Rooted: A Prairie Arts Weekend
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

JULY 11
Tractor Tour
Free Admission
Granite City, IA
605-261-9720

JULY 15-19
Danish Days
Viborg, SD
danishdays.org

JULY 17
Antique Tractor Pull
Free Admission
Granite City, IA
605-261-9720

JULY 18
A Celebration of Johnny Cash
7 p.m.
Gayville Hall
Gayville, SD

JULY 18
Forever Simon & Garfunkel
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 18-19
Threshing Bee
Free Admission
Granite City, IA
605-261-9720

JULY 18-19
10th Annual Charles Mix Saddle Club SDRA Rodeo
Geddes, SD
605-680-2763

JULY 24-25
Hot Hurley Nights
Hurley Vol. Fire Dept. Beer Tent
7 p.m.
Tripp County Fairgrounds
Brechyn, MN
320-522-1218

JULY 25
Planes, Trains & Automobiles
Prairie Village
Madison, SD

JULY 25
Disability Awareness & Accessibility Committees Resource Fair (DAAC)
11 a.m.-2 p.m.
Minneluzahan Senior Center
Rapid City, SD

JULY 31-AUG. 2
46th Sioux River Folk Festival
Newton Hills State Park
Sioux Falls, SD
info@sdfotm.org

AUG. 1-2
51st Annual Pioneer Power Threshing Show
MN Machinery Museum
Hanley Falls, MN
507-828-5437

AUG. 4-6
Farmfest 2026
8-a.m.-4 p.m.
Gilfillan Estate
28269 MN Hwy. 67
Morgan, MN
ideagroup.com/farmfest

AUG. 7-9
Fur Trader Days
NEW Art in the Park
Geddes, SD
Vendors, Artists: 605-428-5007

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.