

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



Katie Grott, field station manager at SDSU's Cottonwood research facility near Philip, stays busy overseeing several ongoing projects designed to deliver practical and profitable solutions for producers.

## Blazing new trails

**Ag research abounds at Cottonwood**  
Pages 8-9

**Line work courses through their veins**  
Pages 12-13

# Board elections bring new opportunities to serve your community

This month I will be focusing on updates from the nominating committee and reminders about upcoming meetings.



**Tim O'Leary**  
General Manager

### MEMBER ACCOUNT UPDATES

I would like to start with a reminder on updating your account information with the cooperative when you have a phone number or address change. It is important that we have the most up-to-date information for your account for a number of reasons. An up-to-date address allows us to make sure that we send your monthly bill and other cooperative correspondence to the right address, and you get it in a timely manner.

An up-to-date phone number (landline or cell) is important when calling in an outage after hours. Dispatchers at the Cooperative Response Center (CRC), our afterhours call center, use your phone number to bring up your account(s) to dispatch crews to repair an outage at the location associated with that phone number. We use your phone number to call when we are planning on maintenance activities that would require us to shut off the line. We do our best to reach out and let our members know when this is happening in their area and how long it may take. Alan Widmark - 691800

To update your account information, you can use the change of address box located at bottom left of your monthly bill or email changes to [email@llec.coop](mailto:email@llec.coop) or by giving us a call at 800-927-6276.

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The nominating committee met for the second time on February 16th and nominated the following candidates in

their respective districts: District 1 – Kathy Schreurs and Josh Osland; District 2 – Jim Rokeh and Pat Verly; and District 3 – Mike Longtin.

There is still an opportunity for those interested in becoming a candidate in their district through the petition process. The petition process allows a member to collect the signatures of 10 other members in the district to become a director candidate. Please let us know if you would like a petition form or if you would like to learn more about the petition process.

If you would like to serve on the nominating committee in the future or would like your name to be considered as a future candidate, please let us know so we can contact you in the future.

### DISTRICT MEETINGS

Members will vote on the director candidates at the upcoming District meetings. The candidate that receives the most votes at the district meeting will be listed first on the annual meeting ballot for each district.

Each of the meetings will start at 7 p.m. and are scheduled at the following locations:

- District 1 – Lyon-Lincoln Headquarters building in Tyler on Monday, April 4th**
- District 2 – Russell Community Center in Russell on Tuesday, April 5th**
- District 3 – Bethel Lutheran Church in Porter on Thursday, April 7th**

Please join us for your district meeting to learn more about what is going on at your electric cooperative and to participate in the election process by voting on candidate(s) to represent your district on the annual meeting ballot.

**COOPERATIVE  
CONNECTIONS**

**LYON-LINCOLN  
ELECTRIC**

(ISSN 1540-6989)

**Board of Directors**

Sandy Ludeman, Tracy – President  
 Galen Grant, Russell – Vice President  
 Kathleen Schreurs, Tyler – Sec./Treas.  
 Merv Anderson, Porter  
 Jared Dritz, Porter  
 Mary Gunnink, Lake Benton  
 Scott Johnson, Tyler  
 Dale Fier, Taunton  
 James Rokeh, Minneota

**Staff and Personnel**

Tim O’Leary – General Manager  
 Lyle Lamote – Line Superintendent  
 Kristi Jensen - Finance Manager  
 Brian Jeremiason – Manager of  
 Marketing & External Relations  
 Rochelle Borresen – Accountant  
 Lisa Hauswedell – Billing Clerk  
 Jessica Gums – Executive Assistant

**Staff and Personnel**

Randy Keifer – Crew Chief  
 Journeyman Linemen:  
 Ross Birath  
 Dan Tutt  
 Tyler Blomme  
 Tyler Sand  
 Nathan Pavek  
 Sam Rohde - Apprentice Lineman  
 Wade Thooft – Operations Staff  
 Assistant  
 Alan Fischer – Warehouse  
 Coordinator/Work Order Clerk

**www.llec.coop**

Lyon-Lincoln Electric hours April 26 to  
 October 11, 2021 are 7:00 AM – 4:30 PM  
 Monday thru Friday.

LYON-LINCOLN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
 CONNECTIONS is published monthly by  
 Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, PO Box  
 639, W Hwy. 14, Tyler, MN 56178. Electric  
 cooperative members devote 50 cents  
 from their monthly electric payments for a  
 subscription. Non-member subscriptions  
 are available for \$12 annually. Periodicals  
 Postage Paid at Tyler Post Office, Tyler, MN  
 56178 and at additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Lyon-Lin-  
 coln Electric Cooperative Connections, PO Box  
 639, W Hwy. 14, Tyler, MN 56178; telephone (507)  
 247-5505; toll free 1-800-927-6276; fax (507)  
 247-5508.

**Jessica Gums, Editor**

# Can You Dig It?

An underground utility line is **damaged once every 9 minutes** because someone didn't call 811.

Call 811, the "Call Before You Dig Number," at least **2 business days** prior to digging.

811 locators do not detect underground sprinkler systems, invisible fences, data communication systems, private water systems, or gas piping to a garage.

Even if you have previously had underground utilities marked, **utilities can shift**, so it's best to call before starting a new project.

Once all of your utilities have been located, then you can start your digging project!

Learn more at [SafeElectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

# 10 helpful tips for spring energy savings

Every season of the year provides many unique energy-saving opportunities for you and your family.

Here are some ideas particularly well suited for you to apply this spring.

- 1. Clear the air:** Open windows to allow fresh air to circulate throughout your home.
- 2. Cook outside:** Enjoy the sunshine by using your grill or smoker to add festive flavors to meals.
- 3. Search and seal:** Cracks and spaces let conditioned air slip outdoors. Caulk and weatherstrip to seal leaks.
- 4. Natural light:** Open blinds and curtains and turn off the lights to save energy and money.
- 5. Be fan friendly:** Use ceiling fans to circulate air and keep cool.
- 6. Atmospheric adjustment:** Remember to adjust your thermostat settings for the warmer months ahead.
- 7. Tune up:** Schedule an appointment with a qualified heating, ventilating and air conditioning technician to identify any potential problems with your system.
- 8. Peak savings:** Plan household chores that require electricity during off-peak hours (when energy demand is low).
- 9. Take charge:** Consider disconnecting electrical devices you don't use regularly until you need them. Plugged-in devices use energy even when not in use.
- 10. Move outdoors:** Time spent outdoors offers opportunities to turn off lights, TVs, computers and appliances. You'll be more active, have more fun and save more money.



## DON'T TOY WITH PERSONAL SAFETY



When playing outdoors, keep a safe distance from power lines, substations and other equipment your electric co-op uses to send electricity to your home.

Flying remote-controlled toys and drones is a great way to have fun, but accidentally making contact with a power line or other electrical equipment can be dangerous and, in some cases, even deadly.

- Never fly kites or drones near power lines.
- Stay away from power lines, meters, transformers and electrical boxes.
- Never climb trees near power lines.
- If you get something stuck in a power line, call your electric co-op.



## Fire Prevention

### Jonie Smith

Jonie Smith sends out an important safety message for campers to extinguish fires before leaving the area. Jonie is the daughter of Myles and Amber Smith of Castlewood. They are members of H-D 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.

# LIP-SMACKING BEVERAGES

## BLUEBERRY BANANA SMOOTHIE

**Ingredients:**  
 1 cup spinach  
 1/2 cup water  
 2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar  
 1 tbsp. almond butter  
 1/2 cup bananas, frozen  
 1/2 cup blueberries, frozen  
 1 tbsp. chia seeds  
 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon  
 1/4 tsp. minced ginger  
 1/2 cup berry yogurt  
 fresh blueberries, for garnish (optional)  
 Ground black pepper to taste

### METHOD

In blender, blend spinach, water, apple cider vinegar, almond butter, frozen bananas, frozen blueberries, chia seeds, cinnamon, ginger and yogurt until smooth. Pour into two glasses and garnish with fresh blueberries, if desired.

[culinary.net](http://culinary.net)

## FRENCH ICED COFFEE

**Ingredients:**  
 3 cups strong coffee  
 2 cups sugar  
 1 pint cream or half & half  
 1 qt. milk or almond milk  
 2 tsp. (vanilla) flavoring (other flavorings also work)

### METHOD

Dissolve sugar in hot coffee. Cool. Add other ingredients. Pour into containers (I use the tall 2 c. Tupperware for individual drinks, but also use quarts.) Freeze. Take out and let thaw.

**Ruth Schilberg, Viborg**

## SWAMP WATER

**Ingredients:**  
 1 small package lime gelatin  
 1 cup hot water  
 1 (12-oz.) can frozen unsweetened pineapple juice concentrate  
 2 liters carbonated water

### METHOD

Mix lime gelatin with hot water to dissolve. Add frozen concentrate and carbonated water. Chill. Makes 10 servings.

**Lily Gums, Clear Lake**

## FRUIT SLUSH

**Ingredients:**  
 4 cups sugar (granulated)  
 6 cups water  
 1 46 oz. can pineapple juice  
 2 12 oz. cans frozen orange juice  
 1 12 oz. can frozen lemonade (pink or yellow)  
 2 small bananas, mashed very fine (or other fruit)

### METHOD

Mix and bring to a boil the sugar and water. When mixture is cool, add juices and fruit. Put in 5-quart pail and freeze. When frozen, use 2-3 scoops in a glass with 7-Up or ginger ale. Great drink for spring or summer.

**Alana Neville, Milesville**

## STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE

**Ingredients:**  
 2 cup fresh strawberries, stemmed & halved  
 1 cup plain yogurt  
 1/2 cup ice cubes or chips  
 1/2 tsp. ground cardamom  
 1/4 tsp. ginger

### METHOD

In a blender, combine all ingredients. Blend on high speed until smoothie texture. Makes 2-12 oz. glasses.

**Jane Ham, Rapid City**

**Please send your favorite casserole 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 2022. All entries must include your name, mailing address, phone number and cooperative name.**



### Win Money

#### Find Your Name & Member Number and Win \$

The tradition of listing member names and numbers in the newsletter continues in the Cooperative Connections. If you find your name and member number, call the office and let us know and you'll receive an energy credit. The amount of the credit is \$20.00.

In last month's Cooperative Connections, Agnes & Regina Rybinski Household and Jason Laleman spotted their names and will receive an energy credit. Once again there are two new names and numbers hidden in this issue. Good Luck.

### ENERGY SAVING TIP

When streaming content, use the smallest device that makes sense for the number of people watching. Avoid streaming on game consoles, which use 10 times more power than stream a tablet or laptop.

Streaming content with equipment that has earned the ENERGY STAR® rating will use 20-30 percent less energy.

## January Board meeting minutes

The regular monthly meeting of the Board of Directors of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative was held on Monday, January 24, 2022. Directors present were James Rokeh, Jared Dritz, Kathy Schreurs, Mary Gunnink, Galen Grant, Scott Johnson, Merv Anderson, Sandy Ludeman, and Dale Fier. Also present at the meeting were General Manager, Timothy O'Leary, Finance Manager, Kristi Jensen, and Attorney, Michael W. Cable.

The Board and others in attendance stood and gave the Pledge of Allegiance before the meeting was called to order.

President Ludeman called the meeting to order and routine business was conducted including approval of December, 2021 meeting minutes, a review of the check schedule, applications for memberships, and shares to be canceled.

Kristi Jensen, Finance Manager, gave the Financial and Statistical Report for the period ending November 30, 2021. Ms. Jensen reviewed with the Board Lyon-Lincoln's Weighted Cost of Capital for 2022.

Lyle Lamote, Line Superintendent, reviewed with the Board the December Outage Report and the December Safety Meeting that had been held on December 9, 2021 which concerned the topic of New Employee Orientation. Carl Henning from STAR Energy Services made the presentation to do the New Employee Orientation since Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. had hired 3 employees in the last six months. Mr. Lamote also indicated that the linemen were continuing to perform Maintenance to the OCR's, line patrol, changing out meters for members serviced out of the Tyler and Lake Benton substations, and performing tree trimming.

Brian Jeremiason, Manager of Marketing and External Relations, gave

his monthly report. Mr. Jeremiason reviewed with the board that the Cooperative ended the 2021 year with 21 Commercial/Ag lighting rebates processed, 16 Heat Pumps rebated, 4 Mini-Splits, 5 Air-Source, and 7 Geothermal rebates. Mr. Jeremiason also updated the Board on future EV options.

General Manager Timothy O'Leary then gave his manager's report; some of the items reviewed were as follows: The Board reviewed the power bill and sales to members and compared those figures to budgeted amounts and looked at line loss for the system. Mr. O'Leary reported on the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. MAC Meeting. Mr. O'Leary advised the Board that the administration and staff updated the Employee Handbook to address new laws that went into effect on January 1, 2022. Mr. O'Leary then reviewed with the board his upcoming meetings, events, and notices.

The Board reviewed the December Cyber Security Program Report dated January 6, 2022 and the East River Electric Power Cooperative, Inc. Monthly Video Report which included the Basin Summary.

The directors reported on training sessions and meetings attended and reviewed and discussed upcoming meetings and educational workshops to be held.

Representative, Chris Swedzinski, attended the Board Meeting and gave the Board his legislative report which included redistricting, tax relief, unemployment insurance, and general discussion concerning miscellaneous items. During his presentation the Board had lunch.

There being no further business to come before the board, a motion was made and carried to adjourn.

# SOW SEEDS OF SAFETY THIS PLANTING SEASON

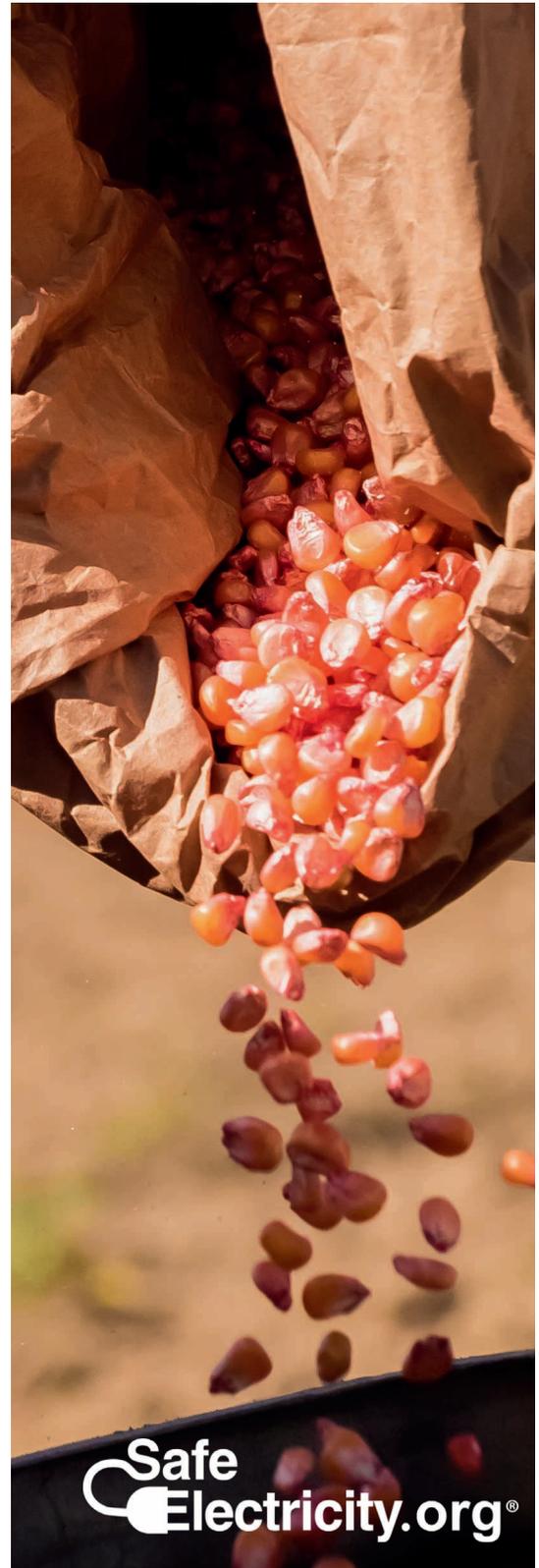
**W**hether you've been through 30 planting seasons or three, be alert to the dangers of working near overhead power lines. You and anyone working or doing business on your farm should know and follow electrical safety precautions to avoid potential hazards.

## **When near power lines, poles and other utility equipment:**

- Maintain a 10-foot clearance in all directions.
- Realize that electricity can arc/"jump" when equipment is too close.
- Be aware of increased height when loading and transporting.
- Designate preplanned routes that avoid potential hazards.
- When approaching or in the field, use a spotter and deploy flags.
- Before exiting the cab, look up to ensure proper clearance of all equipment.
- Lower extensions to the lowest setting before moving loads.
- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path.
- Contact your electric utility if you think a pole or line may have been damaged.

If your equipment does come in contact with a power line or other utility equipment, do not exit the cab. Instead, call 9-1-1 and wait until utility workers say it is safe to exit.

If you are in imminent danger (e.g., equipment is on fire) and need to exit the cab, make a solid, clean jump out of the cab and hop with both feet together as far away as you can.



**Safe  
Electricity.org®**



# ROBO RANCHING

Cottonwood Field Station Manager Katie Grott and student Lily McFadden take a break from their work. *Photos by Billy Gibson*

## Cottonwood Field Research Station is abuzz with studies designed to increase producer profitability

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdua.coop

There are robo-cops, robo-codes and robo-calls. But robo-cattle ranching?

That futuristic phrase is part of the nomenclature surrounding a beef production movement called “precision ranching,” an offshoot of the “precision agriculture” approach that promotes the use of advanced technology to improve yields and profitability.

This new wave of ag research evokes postmodern images of bovines grazing through the fields wearing high tech gadgets. Turns out, it’s a description not too far off the mark, according to Dr. Jamie Brennan, an assistant professor of research and extension specialist at South Dakota State University.

Based out of the West River Research and Extension Center in Rapid City, Brennan is using SDSU’s Cottonwood Field Station near Philip to study the viability of using high-tech GPS tracking collars to deliver real-time information on steer activity and behavior.

“By monitoring animal movement we can identify changes in behavior that might indicate sickness, for example, which can be sent as an alert to producers,” Brennan said.

He’s deploying the type of advanced accelerator technology commonly associated with Fitbit watches, vehicle trackers, smartphone map apps and other monitoring devices.

“We’re working to develop the capability for producers to easily identify not only where animals are on the landscape but also where they are selecting for grazing and resting locations,” Brennan said. “The work we are doing at the station is designed to determine the potential benefits - and possible shortcomings - of precision ranching technology and to predict the return on investment for the producer.”

Brennan’s project is just one of several intriguing studies currently in play at the Cottonwood Field Station. One of six field research centers in the SDSU Agriculture Experiment Station network, Cottonwood is among the

oldest facilities of its kind in the country. Covering more than 2,600 acres, Cottonwood was established in 1907 and has received regional and national acclaim with impactful results such as developing a new method of determining stocking rates for western regions and devising the Universal Soil Loss Equation now known as RUSLE2.

These scientific forays into precision ranching include virtual fencing (Vence™), Smart Feeder™ systems, mobile app-based mineral consumption monitors, methane emissions measuring devices and soil moisture monitoring.

The exploration into virtual fencing holds plenty of promise in helping producers manage their livestock and landscape more efficiently and effectively, according to Cottonwood Field Station manager Katie Grott.

While it may be hard for an old-school rancher to envision a world without barbed wire, fence posts and cattle guards, moving this technology to market could result in substantial savings for farm families.

Grott explained the technology is a much more sophisticated version of the kind of residential-grade invisible fence



A cow at the Cottonwood Field Research Station waits patiently for a Smart Feeder to be loaded with hay.

designed to keep pets from wandering around the neighborhood streets. Virtual fencing is already being used to contain goat herds and other smaller animals with measurable success.

The latest research testing involves combining an electrical pulse administered through a GPS-enabled collar, combined with an auditory stimulus to keep cattle confined within certain boundaries. A software program allows the rancher to define those boundaries as needed for successful grazing rotation and land management.

“We’re looking at how virtual fencing affects animal behavior, performance and natural resources,” Grott said.

Dr. Krista Ehlert, assistant professor and extension specialist, is also involved in the project and adds, “Virtual fencing turns physical labor into cognitive labor for producers, helping to reduce labor and potentially improve work-life balance for producers.”

Other projects at Cottonwood include work being led by assistant professor Dr. Hector Menendez. The research uses technology developed by the Rapid City firm, C-Lock. C-Lock has a scale that collects daily weight records on animals every time they drink. The data provide

valuable information on stocking rates, forage quality and weather conditions on individual animal performance.

“It’s an exciting time in the area of agricultural research,” Menendez said. “We have secured funds to proceed with a project on interdisciplinary engagement in animal systems and precision livestock water monitoring. And we’re excited about holding producer-oriented workshops, training classes and field days to educate producers on how these advancements can improve their profitability.”

One rancher who keeps a close eye on the latest research results is Eric Jennings, president of the South Dakota Cattleman’s Association.

“There are some interesting new concepts being explored through this facility and others,” Jennings said. “We’re watching to see which of these systems prove to become both practical and affordable for producers to implement in their daily operations. For instance, the idea of virtual fencing has been around for a while, but the research and application of new technology has emerged as a viable option.”

Brennan, Ehlert, Menendez and others who work daily to blaze new pathways

Amount of acres  
researchers have

**2,640**

at their disposal at the  
Cottonwood  
Field Station

for cattle producers take gratification from knowing their labor and application of scientific methods could result in a farm family turning the corner toward profitability and sustaining a generational way of life. Plus, they enjoy drawing students into the process and inspiring the next generation of farmers.

“They receive training in animal science, rangeland ecology, precision technology, modeling, computer programming and boots-on-the-ground ranching,” Menendez said. “One of our aims is to encourage the next generation of professionals that can merge precision technology to maximize rangeland livestock production while maintaining ranching culture.”



# PROTECTING THE POWER GRID

## Lineworkers strive to provide an essential service

When people flip a light switch, they may not give much thought to why or how the light comes on.

Electric lineworkers provide an essential service: They work hard to install and maintain overhead and underground power lines that keep electricity flowing. These specialized workers are on call 24/7 in case severe storms or other circumstances cause the power to go out.

Lineworkers work with high-voltage electricity, often at great heights, in all kinds of weather conditions, such as snow, wind, rain, ice and extreme heat and cold. The work required to maintain the power grid is physically demanding. To become proficient, most lineworkers go through a technical training program and first learn on the job as apprentices under the careful eye

of seasoned lineworkers who have earned journeyman status.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, electric power line installers and repairers typically:

- Install, maintain or repair the power lines that move electricity.
- Identify defective devices, voltage regulators, transformers and switches.
- Inspect and test power lines and auxiliary equipment.
- String (install) power lines between poles, towers and buildings.
- Climb poles and transmission towers and use truck-mounted buckets to get to equipment.
- Operate power equipment when installing and repairing poles, towers and lines.
- Drive work vehicles to job sites.
- Know and implement safety

standards and procedures.

When a problem is reported, lineworkers must identify the cause and fix it. This usually involves diagnostic testing using specialized equipment and repair work. To work on poles, they usually use bucket trucks to raise themselves to the top of the structure, although all lineworkers must be adept at climbing poles and towers when necessary. Workers use specialized safety equipment to keep them from falling when climbing utility poles and towers.

Storms and other natural disasters can cause extensive damage to power lines. When power is lost, line repairers must work quickly to restore service to customers.

Although everyone at Lyon-Lincoln Electric works hard to provide reliable service, we salute our lineworkers who work around the clock to keep the power on. Their safety, as well as yours, is our top priority.

*Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*

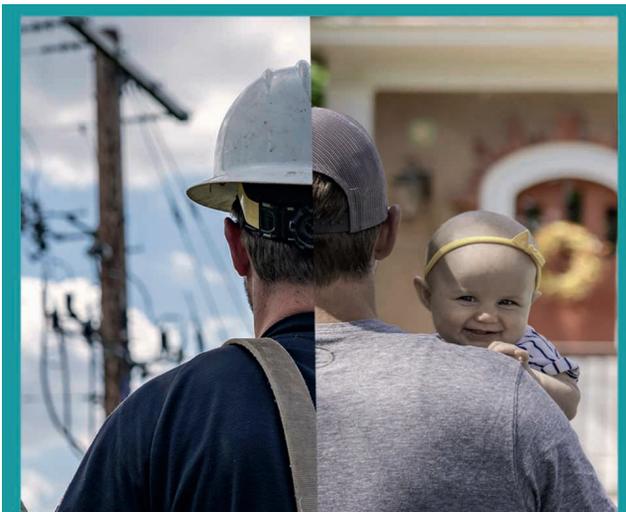
## THANK A LINEMAN ON APRIL 11

America's electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Lineman Appreciation Day.

On April 11, 2022, Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. will honor the dedicated men and women who often work in challenging conditions to keep the lights on. We proudly recognize all electric linemen for the services they perform around the clock to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety. Jon Fadness – 1174701

"Our lineworkers are the first responders of our electric distribution system, and they work around the clock on high-voltage lines," said Tim O'Leary, General Manager. "Conditions can be dangerous, but they power through to ensure reliable service for our members."

Seven men maintain 1,670 miles of line in Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative Inc.'s service territory. We invites members to take a moment and thank a lineman for the work they do. Use #thankalinenman to show your support for the men and women who light our lives.



### LINEMAN APPRECIATION DAY

We thank lineworkers for their courage and commitment to powering our community.

### YEAR TO DATE COMPARISON

	Dec-20	Dec-21
Total Revenue	\$10,556,811	\$10,497,188
Cost of Power	\$5,997,903	\$6,052,346
Operating Expenses	\$4,052,571	\$4,065,958
Operating Margins	\$506,337	\$378,884
KWH's Purchased	99,444,800	97,112,714
Services in Place	4,118	4,130
Miles of Line	1,670	1,671
Revenue per Mile	\$6,321.44	\$6,281.98

# Capital Credit Allocation Notices

If you purchased energy from Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. in 2021, you will notice a special note on your February billing statement about capital credits. It simply says, "Capital Credit Allocation for 2021."

It will then list your 2020 ending balance and any retirements made in 2021 and the amount allocated in 2021 and then your ending 2021 balance. If you have more than one account, the amounts from all of your accounts were combined and the total allocation appears on only your main membership account.

Former Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. members who purchased energy in 2021 and are now inactive were mailed a separate capital credit allocation statement.

The amount of capital credits allocated to you as a member of Lyon-Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc. represents your share of the cooperative's 2021 margins, or payments in excess of expenses. These margins were allocated to Lyon-Lincoln Electric members based on the total amount of electric energy billed in 2021. Margins may be used by the cooperative for operating capital, necessary reserves, and other contingencies.

The capital credit amount is an assignment of capital credits and not an indication of immediate payment. Capital credits will be paid to the members as determined by the Lyon-Lincoln Electric Board of Directors according to bylaw provisions. You can save this billing statement for your records. Please be sure to notify us of any address changes.

-Kristi Jensen, Finance Manager

## January Outage Report

(10 Or More Consumers)

**1-2-22** - 128 Consumers were off 1 hour and 30 minutes in the Township of Lake Marshall. The cause was a blown fuse on the electronic OCR in the Dudley Substation due to load.

**1-7-22** - 19 consumers were off 1 hour and 20 minutes in the Township of Monroe. The cause was a blown fuse for OCR being down for service.

#THANKALINEMAN

# VOLTAGE IN THEIR VEINS

The Miller and Wingen men share a total of 177 years of experience in the electric utility industry. Pictured above are Joel Miller, Rollie Miller, Travis Miller, Corey Miller, Wes Wingen and Dustin Wingen.

## Miller, Wingen utility workers represent a combined 177 years of faithful service

**Tara Miller**

taram@centralec.coop

Take a moment to imagine life without electricity. No household appliances, no electric heat, no air conditioning, no internet and no phone. In 1925, only half of homes in the U.S. had electricity. Fast forward to 2022, and electricity is a basic necessity.

April is Lineworker Appreciation Month – a time to celebrate and honor the brave men and women who often work in hazardous conditions to power our world.

The Miller family, originally from Canova, has 177 years of electric industry experience, and most of them started their careers as lineworkers.

### WHERE IT ALL STARTED

Before attending school to become a lineworker, Joel Miller, better known as “Joe” or “Smokey” to some, graduated from Canova High School and began working at Overhead Door Company

in Sioux Falls. While he didn’t mind the work, he knew it wasn’t what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. Joe then heard about an opportunity to attend school and become a lineworker.

“I knew Ron Callies. He was an instructor,” Joe said. “He told us to look at the program, so Robert Zens and I checked it out and thought we would give it a try.”

Joe graduated from what is now known as Mitchell Technical College (MTC) in 1978 and began the family’s legacy of life on the line when he joined East River Electric in Madison. He started on the construction crew and later worked in maintenance. His friend Robert Zens also worked at East River Electric, but passed away in a motorcycle accident in 1980.

Joe worked at East River Electric for nearly 20 years before he moved to Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) in Pierre. WAPA is a federal organization that markets and delivers hydroelectric power and related services

across the 15-state region. Joe retired from his position of line foreman at WAPA in 2020 after 43 years.

### FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Rollie was next in the Miller family line-up, a year younger than Joe. His mom talked him into going to Pipestone, MN, to work at Bayliner Boats with his older brother Ed. Rollie then worked at Feterl’s Manufacturing in Salem where he welded augers until he decided to enroll in line school at MTC at the age of 20.

“The biggest reason I went to line school was because Joe had just done it, and I was friends with Robert Zens. I saw how they just did it, and I thought I could do it, too,” Rollie explained.

Rollie now manages Vigilante Electric Cooperative in Dillon, MT. Before running the show, he worked for an electrical contractor and for West River Electric.

He then attended SDSU and worked for Bob’s Electric in Flandreau with Reggie Gassman, who is manager of customer electrical services at Sioux

Valley Energy. They both grew up in the Canova area.

Rollie earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering, allowing him to become a licensed professional engineer.

"My education has greatly benefited me throughout my career," Rollie said.

Rollie's boys are also following the family tradition. Cody Miller attended SDSU to become an electrical engineer and consults for electric utilities, and Logan "L.J." Miller is enrolled in the power line construction and

maintenance program at MTC.

"It's not a cake walk. I told them you really have to study and work hard," he said.

After Rollie, Corey was the next Miller brother to attend MTC.

"The reason I went into it is because I had two older brothers who were



Cody Miller



L.J. Miller

linemen. I knew when I was a freshman in high school that I was going to be a lineman," Corey said.

After graduating from MTC in 1987, Corey became an apprentice lineworker at Public Service of New Hampshire. He worked there for three years, then took a position at Missouri Public Service.

Like his brothers, Corey worked his way up the ranks. He was hired as a lineworker and promoted to foreman, then supervisor, and now works in management. He is also on the board of directors for the International Lineman Rodeo Association, helping host the annual lineman rodeo event which promotes lineworker safety.

Corey's 15-year-old son Zach plans to become a lineworker after high school. Corey shares this advice for anybody

- **Joel Miller**, Retired Line Foreman at Western Area Power Administration (Pierre, SD)  
43 Years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Rollie Miller**, General Manager at Vigilante Electric Cooperative (Dillon, MT)  
42 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Corey Miller**, Director of Regional Operations at Evergy (Lexington, MO)  
35 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Travis Miller**, Foreman at Southeastern Electric (Salem, SD)  
30 years of industry experience
- **Wes Wingen**, Manager of Meter Services at Black Hills Power (Rapid City, SD)  
15 years, 10 months of industry experience
- **Cody Miller**, Electrical Engineer (Dillon, MT)  
8 years, 6 months of industry experience
- **Dustin Wingen**, Former Lineworker at Alaska Village Electric Co-op (Anchorage, AK)  
2 years of industry experience
- **Logan (L.J.) Miller**, Student in the power line program at Mitchell Technical College

considering a career in the field:

"We need linemen. It is an awesome profession to get into. Linemen live to restore power – that's their lifeblood. And, quite honestly, you will make a very good wage while doing that."

Travis was the last of the Miller brothers to attend line school. He decided milking cows wasn't his calling, so in 1991 at age 26, Travis followed the path started by his big brother Joe.

"I figured they all did it, so I could probably do it better," Travis joked. He is now the foreman at Southeastern Electric in Salem.

Wes and Dustin Wingen are the sons of Stacy (Miller) and Bob Wingen. They are nephews to the Miller brothers and have also been involved in the electric utility industry. Dustin was a lineworker in Anchorage, AK, before coming back home to farm. Wes is an engineer and manager of meter services at Black Hills Power in Rapid City.

### IT'S A MILLER THING

The Miller family had nine children: Sandy, Duane, Ed, Joe, Rollie, Stacy, Derrin, Travis and Corey. Marcella, mother of the youngest eight children,

passed away in 2011, and Duane "Stub" Miller, the family patriarch, currently resides in Howard. Stub shared, "People don't know it today, but having electricity is something we shouldn't take for granted."

The four Miller brothers share a combined 151 years of electric industry experience. When you add it all up, the Miller and Wingen men boast an impressive 177 years of electric industry experience.

They couldn't have worked in this profession without the support of their families, which are too large to list. All the storm jobs, dangerous assignments and family moves were worth it when they think about the people they serve. They all agree, "It's a Miller thing" and working with voltage is in their veins.

### THANK A LINEMAN

Please take time to thank lineworkers for all they do to brighten our lives. We thank the Miller family for their many years of service in the industry.

*Editor's note: Writer Tara Miller is Travis Miller's wife and works for Central Electric Cooperative near Mitchell.*



# FORAGING FOR FUN

Jayne Pfeifle of Timber Lake is fond of foraging for fruit, which she turns into delicious jellies and jams. *Photo by Roger Lawien*

## Foraging for 'found food' can be fun and also good for your diet plan

**Billy Gibson**

[billy.gibson@sdrea.coop](mailto:billy.gibson@sdrea.coop)

Back when Jayne Pfeifle was a little girl and ventured outdoors to gather chokeberries with her mother, her thoughts were fixed on the delicious jellies and jams she'd soon enjoy.

She wasn't aware she was engaging in an activity that would come to be known decades later as "foraging." For all she knew, foraging for food was something wild animals did when they got hungry.

With the steady lifting of pandemic restrictions, many people across the country are taking to the outdoors to avail themselves of what's called "found

food" or "nature's free grocery store."

As an indication of the rising popularity of foraging, one social media star from Ohio has amassed nearly 3.5 million TikTok followers, in addition to nearly a million more fans on Instagram. Alexis Nikole Nelson, 29, has been featured on National Public Radio, Fortune magazine, The New York Times and other news and entertainment outlets.

During the pandemic, Nelson started posting videos from her forays into the forests to gather edible mushrooms, berries, weeds and other plants. She was floored by the response she received.

Some subjects included "Where to find mushrooms that taste like shrimp,"

"How to make 'bacon' out of acorns," and "How to make 'danger bread' using cow parsnip." But Nelson struck social media gold when she posted a video that got the attention of people left financially strapped by the pandemic: "How to 'stretch' groceries by foraging."

Before long, a wider audience of outdoors enthusiasts were gravitating toward the notion that foraging can not only be enjoyed either solo or with others, but it can also be adventurous while saving money and promoting a more nutritious diet.

For Pfeifle, much of the satisfaction she derives from foraging for chokeberries, plums, elderberries and other wild edibles is making sure her husband of 39 years has a tangy treat to spread on his breakfast toast.

"Clyde likes his jelly and toast every

## What to take

- Bug spray
- Sunscreen
- Long pants (for prickly and/or poisonous plants)
- Gardening gloves
- A basket or bag for storage
- A GPS or phone for maps
- Scissors or a hunting knife



Morel mushrooms are a favorite target for many foragers in search of free food and fun.

morning,” she said of her husband, her frequent foraging field companion. “I enjoy getting out and gathering the berries and he enjoys the jelly, so it makes everybody happy.”

Just don’t ask her to deal with buffaloberries. That’s where Pfeifle draws the line.

“It’s a tiny berry. They’re hard to pick, hard to clean and hard to process. The jelly is good, but it’s too much hard work and not worth the trouble,” said Pfeifle, who has served as an educator at Timber Lake Elementary for the past 48 years.

Little Moreau Recreation Area is a prime public picking place for Pfeifle and other people in the Timber Lake area, but she stays close to the vest when asked to disclose some of her other favorite foraging sites. It so happens that holding secrets is a quality found in many foragers, akin to a fisherman’s reluctance to announce to the world where the fish are biting.

Jaclyn Arens, communications and marketing coordinator at Bon Homme Yankton Electric Cooperative, looks forward to foraging for morel mushrooms when the weather warms up in the spring. She’s learned over the past

few years since she began the hobby that there’s a limited window of time for the best hunting.

“We start scouting at the end of March, but we don’t usually find anything until April and May,” she said. “The soil temperature is important, and the morels don’t pop up until it’s warm enough, about 50 degrees. They burn up or disappear when it gets too warm.”

In keeping with the forager’s unspoken code of silence, she’ll say when and how, but she won’t say where.

“I will say we look for places that have moist soil and deciduous trees like oak, elm, ash and cottonwood. Forests with big, old, decaying trees are best because morels grow from the root systems of dying trees. People have had luck in places where trees have been cut down or burned. There is plenty of public land in South Dakota to explore,” Arens said.

One pro tip Arens offers is to bring along a mesh bag to store your morels. The mesh material allows the spores to spread while hunting for more mushrooms. Another pro tip: if you do find an elusive morel, freeze in your tracks...there are likely more close by, so it’s wise to stop before accidentally trampling over a perfectly fine ’shroom.

In addition to the lure of the hunt, the taste of morels and the quality time spent with her boyfriend, Arens really



Jaclyn Arens

enjoys the annual ritual of getting out into the wild after a long winter.

“My favorite thing is getting outside in the spring after being cooped up in

the winter,” she said. “Plus, morels are delicious, and they taste even better after a long day of mushroom hunting. My favorite way to cook morels is to lightly batter them in flour and fry them in a hot pan with butter. Yummy!”

She encourages beginners to follow a few basic rules:

- Avoid areas beneath or around electric power lines.
- Avoid trespassing on private property.
- Never eat anything unless you can identify it with 100 percent accuracy.
- Take a companion along for fun and safety.
- Try to avoid areas where chemicals or insecticides may have been applied.



**APRIL 16**  
Easter Egg Hunt at  
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, 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.

To view the publication's master event calendar, scan the QR code below:



Or visit <https://sdrea.coop/cooperative-connections-event-calendar> to view more upcoming events.

**MARCH 26**  
**13th Annual Lake Benton Area Foundation Gala**  
Lake Benton, MN, call 605-690-0028 for tickets

**MARCH 26**  
**Annual Ag Day**  
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-367-6000

**MARCH 30**  
**Elton John Tribute Concert**  
Performing Arts Center, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-7813

**APRIL 2**  
**Watertown Coin and Currency Show**  
Elks Lodge, Watertown, SD, 605-882-4663

**APRIL 2-3**  
**Youth & Family Services' 25th Annual Kids Fair**  
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, [youthandfamilyservices.org/kids-fair/](http://youthandfamilyservices.org/kids-fair/)

**APRIL 8-9**  
**Forks, Corks & Kegs Festival**  
Various Locations, Deadwood, SD, [deadwood.com/event/forks-corks-kegs](http://deadwood.com/event/forks-corks-kegs)

**APRIL 8-9**  
**Jackrabbit Stampede Rodeo**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, [swiftelcenter.com](http://swiftelcenter.com)

**APRIL 8-10**  
**CAHF Spring Fling Eggstravaganza Series**  
Carroll Acres Hobby Farm, Rapid City, SD, [carrollacreshobbyfarm.com](http://carrollacreshobbyfarm.com)

**APRIL 8-16**  
**The Passion and the Cross**  
Orpheum Theater Center, Sioux Falls, SD, [siouxfallsorpheum.com](http://siouxfallsorpheum.com)

**APRIL 9**  
**Keystone Spring Fling Vendor Fair**  
1101 Madill Street, Keystone, SD, 605-786-3035

**APRIL 9-10**  
**DGTCA Gun Show**  
Rushmore Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-270-0764

**APRIL 16**  
**Easter Egg Hunt**  
Reclamation Ranch, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-2867

**APRIL 22**  
**River Rat ½ Marathon, 10K, and 5K**  
Gavins Point Area, Yankton, SD, [allsportscentral.com](http://allsportscentral.com)

**APRIL 22-23**  
**Junkin' Market Days**  
W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-941-4958

**APRIL 23**  
**Lakota All Star Basketball Games**  
The Monument Summit Arena, Rapid City, SD, 605-342-41985

**APRIL 23**  
**Martina McBride**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, [swiftelcenter.com](http://swiftelcenter.com)

**APRIL 23**  
**Winefest Renaissance**  
1121 1st Avenue SE, Aberdeen, SD, 605-225-8714

**APRIL 23-24**  
**46th Mobridge Area Art Show**  
Scherr-Howe Arena, Mobridge, SD, 605-845-2060

**APRIL 23-24**  
**Brookings Quilt Guild Show**  
Swiftel Center, Brookings, SD, 605-690-3246

**APRIL 27-30**  
**45th Annual Kingswood Rummage Sales**  
Southwest Sioux Falls, SD, [kingswoodrummage.com](http://kingswoodrummage.com)

**APRIL 28-30**  
**26th Annual Black Hills Dance Festival**  
The Monument, Rapid City, SD, [blackhillsdancefestival.com](http://blackhillsdancefestival.com)

**APRIL 29-MAY 1, 5-7**  
**Ordinary Days**  
Grand Opera House, Pierre, SD, [pierreplayers.com](http://pierreplayers.com)

**APRIL 30**  
**SDSO Centennial Finale**  
Washington Pavilion, Sioux Falls, SD, [sdsymphony.org](http://sdsymphony.org)

**MAY 7**  
**Cinco de Mayo Fiesta**  
131 E Falls Park Drive, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-274-3735

**MAY 14-15**  
**Ellsworth Air and Space Show**  
1940 EP Howe Drive, Ellsworth AFB, SD, [ellsworthairshow.com](http://ellsworthairshow.com)

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