

# COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS



## Little cars, big smiles

**Smile makers build  
Toys for God's Kids**  
Pages 8-9

**Treatment center  
changes young lives**  
Pages 12-13

Asher Smith plays with a few  
of the thousands of small  
wooden cars built each year  
by Toys for God's Kids

# COOPERATIVE UPDATE

I'm back with my monthly report after missing a couple months for annual meeting coverage. I personally want to thank the members who faithfully attend your annual meeting and participate in your cooperative business. This is your cooperative; your loyalty and involvement are appreciated.

## EMPLOYEE UPDATE:

Sue Sherwood, Billing Supervisor, resigned her position at Moreau-Grand as of Nov. 11. Sue will be moving to Cam Wal Electric Cooperative in Selby as their Administrative Assistant. We thank Sue for her 11 years of dedicated service and wish her the best in this move.



**Melissa Maher**  
Manager

Stephanie Bartlett, who was hired as Consumer Clerk in March of 2022, has accepted the promotion to Billing Supervisor and trained with Sue prior to her departure. We certainly congratulate Stephanie on stepping up to the plate and taking on this new position which involves processing all the monthly billing statements to the members.

Tammi Ducheneaux has then agreed to take on both her duties as Operations Clerk, along with the duties of Consumer Clerk. Tammi was hired as Consumer Clerk here at Moreau-Grand back in March of 2021 prior to moving to Operations Clerk. Heartfelt thanks to all the employees for their commitment to serve our members.

General capital credit retirements will be applied to your monthly billing statement received in December. The general retirement approved by the board will be \$425,000 this year. This will complete the balance of year 1996 and half of 1997 plus a dollar amount applied as a percentage to all current rate payers. In addition to general retirement, estate capital credits paid out thus far through October is over \$94,000.

The payment of capital credits is practicing the cooperative model of being member-owned and not-for-



Sue Sherwood



Stephanie Bartlett



Tammi Ducheneaux

profit. By the end of 2022, Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative will have paid back over \$10 million to the membership in capital credits since our inception. All this while maintaining quality service and steady rates since 2016.

The next couple months brings budget to the forefront for 2023. Employees prepare and present over a two-month period, a detailed budget for the directors to review and approve for the coming year. Material supply issues continue to be of grave concern – in fact timelines have gotten worse for delivery dates. All these challenges add to the complexity of our daily jobs.

Another major item on our to-do list is a 4-year work plan needed to facilitate a new (RUS) Rural Utility Service Loan. Our current work plan expired in 2021 – with all funds drawn down. This new plan will encompass years 2023-2026. Our engineering firm, Power System Engineering, is instrumental in compiling the data and reviewing our entire electrical system for upgrades and additions.

The new headquarters building plans are ramping up. We now have daily conversations and weekly zoom meetings with all players with plans on construction beginning next spring.

We are entering the holiday season. Have a blessed Thanksgiving. If you begin each day with what you are thankful for – plan on being amazed how this will influence your day.

Until next month...God Bless.

COMPARATIVE REPORT	Current (Sept 2022)	1 year ago (Sept 2021)	10 Years Ago (Sept 2012)	% Change in 10 years
Number of Meters	7,109	7,065	6,679	6%
Kilowatt Hours Sold	6,830,387	6,415,047	5,863,018	16%
Cost of Purchased Power	\$490,990	\$429,177	\$389,220	26%
Overall Ave. Rate / kWh Per Member	0.1213	0.1228	0.1105	10%



## COOPERATIVE CONNECTIONS MOREAU-GRAND ELECTRIC

(USPS No. 018-951)

**Manager:** Melissa Maher

**Editor:** Roger Lawien,  
Member Services & IT Director

### Directors

Larry Hieb, President  
Kerry McLellan, Vice President  
Kelly Landis, Secretary-Treasurer  
Lois Bartlett  
Clint Clark  
Bob Keckler  
Paul Lawrence  
Ryan Maher  
Royce Walker  
Troy Wall

**Attorney:** John Burke

### Management Staff:

Kent Larson,  
Operations Superintendent  
Linda Dahlgren, Finance Officer  
Kyrie Lemburg, Accountant  
Jamie Jones, Accountant

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Design assistance by SDREA

# Oct. 18, 2022 Board meeting minutes and August 2022 financial information

The Oct. 18, 2022, board of directors' meeting was held at the Timber Lake office with the following directors present: Clark, Hieb, Keckler, Landis, Lawrence, Maher, McLellan, Walker and Wall, directors absent: Bartlett and others present: Manager Maher, Finance Officer Dahlgren and Accountant Lemburg (Delegated Recorder of Minutes).

The Large Power Users monthly report was given by Sue Sherwood and Stephanie Bartlett, which included topics on large power usage and payments.

The Member Services report was given by Roger Lawien, which included the Youth Tour to Beulah, CRST Home Ownership class, scholarships, DRU installations, network issues, November Cooperative Connections, Rushmore Member Services meeting, annual meeting review, Nextraq and Rushmore Mapping have been integrated and a Director Scholarship to be offered again in 2023.

The Operations report was given by Kent Larson, which included the 500 MCM project completion, MGE building overhead line removal, Line Superintendent meeting, job shadow, joint training with Grand Electric on hot work and RAM Pole inspection update.

Manager Maher gave the Manager's report including Legislative Forum, new headquarters facility update, CoBank loan, collections, assistance program payments, WAPA credit, fire department donations, thank you notes received, SDREA Manager selected, RUS Administrator selected and Basin Electric's financials.

The Board discussed and registered for the Basin Electric Annual Meeting scheduled for Nov. 9-10, 2022 in Bismarck.

The Board discussed and registered for Board Leadership Courses 903.1 and 927.1 being offered Dec. 6-7, 2022 in Pierre.

Manager Maher presented President Hieb with an NRECA Director Gold Certificate.

Director McLellan gave the CFC Region VI meeting report that included the federal infrastructure legislation and electric vehicles.

Director McLellan gave the SDREA Board meeting report that included the SDREA Manager interviews conducted, Steve Barnett was selected for the Manager position and a Basin Electric update.

Manager Maher gave the SDREA Manager's meeting report that included the SDREA budget, roundtable discussions, mutual aid agreements, director courses offered, West River Electric employee contact update, supply chain issues, federal legislative report, workman's comp officers, NRECA update and CoBank update.

Manager Maher gave the Rushmore Managers meeting report that included large growth in the Southwestern South Dakota cooperatives, Rushmore Electric's Chief Marketing Officer/Member Services position, simulated WAPA load sheds, Rushmore Annual Meeting format changes and a Basin Electric financial update.

Board approved the following: the agenda, minutes from the September meeting, minutes from the organizational meeting, the 2022 annual meeting minutes to be presented to the membership, new members, refunds, line extensions, financial statistics, disbursements, safety report, Policy 70-1A, 2023 SDREA dues, Director Landis as the delegate and Director Clark as the alternate delegate for the Basin Electric Annual Meeting, Director Lawrence as the delegate and Manager Maher as the alternate delegate for the Rushmore Electric Board nominee to the Basin Electric Board, 2022 NRECA dues, Special Equipment Summaries #438-441 in the amount of \$61,122.08.

The next board meeting was scheduled for Nov. 22, 2022, at 8:30 a.m. in the Timber Lake office.

JULY 2022 FINANCIAL INFORMATION			
	AUG. '22	AUG. '21	YTD 2022
Operating Revenues	\$1,120,611	\$1,035,770	\$8,741,954
Cost Of Power	\$554,012	\$553,695	\$4,347,756
Cost Of Electric Service	\$1,128,364	\$1,155,591	\$8,500,292
Margins	\$21,226	\$(118,631)	\$317,735
Kwh Purchased	9,039,661	8,528,276	75,763,913
Kwh Sold	8,846,297	7,929,270	69,956,429

# Deck your halls with home safety in mind

It's time to deck those halls - safely. More than 800 home fires are caused by holiday decorations each year, according to the National Fire Protection Association.

An additional 170 home fires are caused by Christmas trees each year. Keep these tips in mind for a safe holiday season:

- Carefully inspect all electrical decorations before you use them. Cracked or damaged sockets and loose or exposed wires can cause serious shock or start a fire.
- Make sure all extension cords and electrical decorations are being used properly - indoor-rated cords indoors, outdoor-rated cords for outside decorations.
- Inspect extension cords for damage and discard (not repair) any that are not completely intact.
- Never mount or support light strings in a way that might damage the cord's insulation.
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by ground-fault circuit interrupters.
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines. Keep yourself and your ladder at least 10 feet from power lines.
- Turn off all indoor and outdoor electrical decorations before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many decorations or electrical devices. They can overheat and cause a fire.
- Never connect more than three strings of incandescent lights together.
- Water your Christmas tree daily.
- Keep all decorations at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Avoid using candles. The flames are just too dangerous with all the flammable decorations around.
- Purchase electrical decorations from reputable retailers and that are approved by a nationally recognized testing lab such as UL, Intertek or CSA.

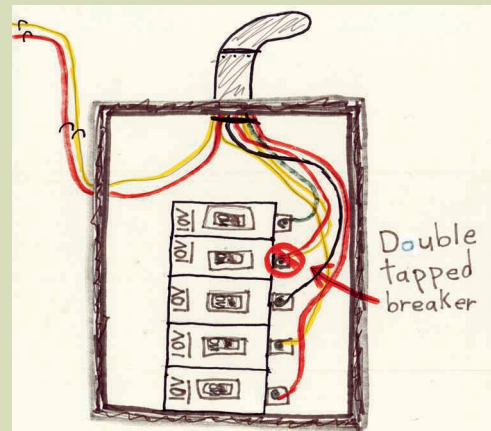


## A NEW TEACHING TOOL FOR SOLAR POWER EDUCATION



Rushmore Electric and Touchstone Energy have joined together to construct a demo trailer designed to teach co-op members across the state more about how solar power functions. The trailer is equipped with fold-out collection panels and also battery storage capability. Co-op energy experts use the trailer to frame discussions about net metering, interconnection agreements and more.

To see a video of the trailer and learn more about how electric cooperatives serve our members, visit Cooperative Connections Plus by scanning the QR code at right.



## Don't play on transformer boxes

### Olaf Sahlstrom

Olaf Sahlstrom, 9, shares a tip he learned from his parents, Ben and Naomi Sahlstrom: Double-tapped breakers are unsafe and can lead to overheating, arcing, and electrical fires. The Sahlstroms reside in Tracy, MN and are members of Lyon-Lincoln 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.



# CHRISTMAS DESSERTS

## PEANUT BUTTER PIE

### Ingredients:

1 heaping c. peanut butter  
1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese  
(softened)  
1 8 oz. tub cool whip (thawed)  
1/2 c. milk  
2 c. powdered sugar graham  
cracker pie crust (prepared)  
Crushed Butterfingers or Reeses  
for garnish

### METHOD

Thoroughly mix peanut butter and cream cheese. Add 1/2 cup milk and slowly add 2 cups powdered sugar. Mix well. Fold in cool whip. Put in a prepared graham cracker crust. Makes two 9" pies or one 10" pie with a little extra. Top with crushed candy. Place in freezer until frozen. Remove from freezer 10 minutes before serving.

**Elaine Rieck, Harrisburg**

## HOLIDAY HOT CHOCOLATE

### Ingredients:

8 qt. box powdered milk  
1 lb. can Nestles Cocoa Mix  
7-8 oz. jar powdered creamer  
3 c. powdered sugar  
1/3 c. cocoa

### METHOD

Mix in order given in large bowl. Put in air tight container. Use 1/4 cup mix per cup of hot water. Makes about 16-cup mix.

**Phyllis Niemann, Clear Lake**

## MOM'S CHRISTMAS DESSERT

### Ingredients:

2-1/2 c. Rice Krispies  
1/2 c. light brown sugar  
1 c. slivered almonds or toasted  
nut meats  
1/2 c. butter, melted  
1/2 gal. vanilla ice cream  
1 can pie cherries  
1/2 tsp. almond flavoring

### METHOD

Mix first four ingredients together. Spread half mixture in a 9x13 pan evenly. Cut and press vanilla ice cream on top and spread remaining mixture on top. Freeze. When ready to serve, stir pie filling and almond flavoring together and heat on stove top or microwave and use for topping individual pieces.

**Patty Sinning, Lennox**

## GINGERBREAD KISSED THUMBPRINT COOKIES

### Ingredients:

3 c. flour  
2 tsps. ground ginger  
1 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg  
1/4 tsp. salt  
3/4 c. (1-1/2 sticks) butter,  
softened  
3/4 c. firmly packed brown sugar  
1/2 c. molasses  
1 egg  
1 tsp. pure vanilla extract  
1/4 c. granulated sugar  
60 milk chocolate kisses

### METHOD

Mix flour, ginger, cinnamon, baking soda, nutmeg and salt in large bowl. Set aside. Beat butter and brown sugar in large bowl with electric mixer on medium until light and fluffy. Add molasses, egg and vanilla; mix well. Gradually beat in flour mixture on low speed until well mixed. Press dough into a thick flat disk. Wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate 4 hours or overnight. Preheat oven to 350°F. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in granulated sugar to coat. Place 2 inches apart on ungreased baking sheets. Bake 8-10 minutes or until edges of cookies begin to brown. Immediately press a chocolate candy into center of each cookie. Remove to wire racks; cool completely. Store cookies in airtight container up to 5 days.

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

# Q: How can I keep my home warm while saving on my electric bill this winter?

A: Winterizing is an important step to keep your home cozy and your bills low. These tried-and-true methods will ensure your home is sealed tight and ready for colder weather. I've also included tips that address common misconceptions.

### INSULATING PIPES AND WATER HEATER

You can raise the water temperature inside your home's water pipes by 2 to 4 degrees by insulating, according to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Insulating allows you to turn down the heat on your water heater, saving energy and money.

Start by insulating the pipes coming out of your water heater. If you have a gas water heater, keep pipe insulation at least 6 inches away from the flue. Insulate hot and cold water lines. The latter can prevent condensation and freezing pipes. Insulating your water heater can save 7% to 16% on water-heating costs, DOE says. Insulation kits are available at hardware stores. Don't obstruct the pressure relief valve, thermostats or access valves.

### AIR SEALING

Air sealing and insulation are a great combination for minimizing home energy use. Insulation is like a warm sweater for your home, and air sealing is the wind breaker. All the cracks, gaps and holes in a home can be like having a window open year-round. Air sealing eliminates those leaks. It can be done as a do-it-yourself project or by a professional.

### WINDOW SEALING AND IMPROVEMENTS

Windows can be a source of drafts and wasted energy. Close windows tightly.

Add weatherstripping around windows to prevent warm air from escaping your home and caulk the gaps where the window trim meets the wall and the window frame. Add curtains to make the room feel warmer.

Storm windows are a lower-cost option for upgrading single-pane windows. They are available with low-emissivity coatings, which insulate better, and are available for installation either from the inside or outside of the window.



**Miranda Boutelle**  
Efficiency Services  
Group

### FIREPLACE DAMPERS

When I was little, my dad told me it was too cold to have a fire. I remember thinking that made no sense, but he was right.

We had an open, wood-burning fireplace—not a wood stove. A fireplace can draw the warm air out of the house, cooling it down or causing your heating system to use more energy.

Your fireplace adds ambiance to your home but isn't necessarily effective at heating it. If you have a wood-burning fireplace, close the damper when your fire is extinguished. An open damper in the winter is an easy exit for the air you paid to heat.

Adding tempered glass doors to a wood-burning fireplace can create an extra buffer between the cold outside and a cozy living space.

Some gas fireplaces require a damper to remain permanently open so gas can vent out of the home. Check the specifications of your unit to ensure safe operation.

### BEST PRACTICES FOR CLOSING OFF PARTS OF A HOME

Through the years, I have heard a lot of debate about closing off rooms or parts of the home to save energy.

Best practices come down to the type of heat source. If you have a zonal heating system, where individual areas are controlled separately, you can close doors and only heat the areas you use. Examples of zonal systems are wall heaters, baseboard heat, hydronic radiant heat, radiators and ductless heat pumps, also called mini-splits.

Keep areas with plumbing or water lines warm enough so pipes do not freeze.

If you have a central forced-air heating system, leave doors open to all heated areas. Closing doors and/or register dampers forces the system to work harder, uses more energy and can shorten the life of heating equipment.

### CHECK YOUR FILTERS

Maintaining a clean filter in your furnace is one of the best ways to keep it running efficiently and prevent costly repairs. Check your furnace or ductless heat pump filter monthly during peak heating season.



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# The Clauses share stories of Christmas seasons past

**Billy Gibson**

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

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If you want to be a big-time Santa, it's all about the beard.

These days, there's no place in the department store Santa scene for spurious scruff. Don't even try faking it. The kids can spot a fraud from halfway across the food court.

Sporting a convincing set of whiskers is how Curt Winquist scored a serious prime-time Santa gig more than 10 years ago.

He always dressed up as Santa Claus each Christmas to entertain local kids using the same homemade suit that his dad donned before him. But as it often happens with middle aged men and their suits, this one started shrinking and getting appreciably tighter...especially around the mid-section.

So, Winquist found himself shopping for a new suit at a costume store in Sioux Falls when he was approached by a stranger who just so happened to be connected with a photography company. She took one look at the humble farmer from Alcester and told him he was about to join the top ranks as a "professional department store Santa."

"I told her I only knew how to farm and milk cows," Winquist recalled. "She put my name on the standby list and later I got a call. They said a Santa at a mall in Connecticut had a heart attack and died and they needed someone right away. I didn't even have time to get ready. It was on-the-job training."

He soon found himself being flown to the Brass Mill Center located in Waterbury, CT. For the next 38 days, he played Santa for upwards of 14,000 kids, some of whom only met with failure when they tried to yank off his beard.

Winquist, who is a member of Union



Carla and Curt Winquist of Alcester enjoy entertaining hundreds of children each holiday season.

County Electric while his son is a lineman at Southeastern Electric, spent the next six years traveling to Waterbury each Christmas season. The company he worked for put him up in the local Hilton and provided a security team each morning as he made his way to breakfast in the hotel restaurant and then off to the mall. It was strongly suggested that he not leave the hotel for any other reason lest he be spotted by mall patrons and his identity revealed.

Even his wife, Carla, got in on the act and served as Mrs. Claus for several seasons. The Connecticut gig ended in 2017, and these days the two are seen at smaller and more private venues such as day care centers, nursing homes, birthday parties and schools.

Along the way, the Winquists discovered that portraying Santa and Mrs. Claus doesn't always come with lots of laughter and bellies that shake like jelly.

Especially in December of 2012. That's the year, just three weeks before Christmas, that 26 people were shot and killed at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, CT. The massacre occurred just 20 miles from the mall where Winquist worked each season.

Winquist found himself having to take the service elevator and exit through the back door to evade kids in the hotel lobby.

"There were families of the victims who were staying at the hotel and they were upset and crying and we didn't want the kids to see Santa walking through the lobby in that situation when they were heading out to funerals," he said. "It was just horrible because there was such grief, but then there were people who had no connection to the killings and they just wanted things to be normal. I had to switch my mind on and off. You just want to make the kids and the families feel better."

The Winquists have reams of stories to tell from the past as they continue their roles as the Claus couple from the North Pole. In fact, they've written a book about their experiences entitled "Santa's Christmas Diary," which is available on Amazon.

"It has been a big thrill for us. We work pretty well together as a team," Curt said. "She does a good job of calming kids down when they get nervous about sitting on Santa's lap, or if the lines get long and the kids start getting antsy. I love Mrs. Claus!"





LeRoy Iedema, Richard Ringling and Duane Strand crank out nearly 60,000 toy cars each year from their 12x10-foot workshop in Platte.  
Photo by Billy Gibson

## Duane Strand gets lots of 'smileage' out of making toy cars for children

**Billy Gibson**

editor@sdrea.coop

Frustrated moms across the ages have been searching for a surefire method for getting an unruly child to simmer down.

Duane Strand is pretty sure he's found a failsafe solution: toy cars.

Several years ago, Strand began building tiny wooden cars in his nondescript backyard shed in Platte. He recalls visiting Pierre one evening and having dinner at a local restaurant when a young boy suddenly started pitching a fit and hollering at the top of his lungs.

Strand just happened to have one of the cars in his pocket. He reached out and handed it to the child and was rather amazed at the result. Not only did the whining stop forthwith, but that boy's frown turned upside down as the

kid started beaming from ear to ear.

"He quit yelling right then and there. His whole attitude changed," Strand recalls. "These cars really have a soothing effect on the kids."

That's the impact Strand is shooting for as he and his three-man team of retirees crank out nearly 60,000 toy cars each year. They're looking to squeeze all the "smileage" they can get out of the toy cars they build.

The main construction crew includes retired farmer Richard Ringling and retired mechanic LeRoy Iedema. Ringling usually works the drill press to create holes in the wood where the axles will go. Then Iedema follows up by pressing the wheels onto the axles. He came up with a way to make sure the wheels roll straight and stay in place and dares anyone to try and pull off a wheel.

There are others who join in the

process: Justin Kok cuts the wood into manageable blocks; Brett Wynia performs repairs on the drill presses, band saws, sanders, routers and other pieces of equipment when they break down; and Curtis Versteeg helps to sand down the rough surfaces on the cars.



Toy cars are distributed by military personnel serving overseas.

And just down the road from the shop is the Platte Lumber Yard, where many of the material supplies are stored until needed for production. Strand said it was the folks down at the lumber yard who initiated the vital connection with





Dustin Knutson of Boyds Hardwood Gunstock supplies the toy makers with the laminated wood used to create the tiny cars (inset) for worldwide distribution. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

Boyds Hardwood Gunstock that keeps the operation humming along.

“Without Boyds we wouldn’t be able to do any of this,” Strand said.

Dustin Knutson, a member of Central Electric Cooperative and part owner of the company that bills itself as the largest after-market gun stock maker in the world, is a Shriner with a heart for community service and said he was all-in when Strand approached him about supporting the program by supplying excess wood.

“They’re really easy to work with,” he said, noting that he keeps one of the cars on his desk. “They take whatever they can get and they show up consistently. We started saving off-cut blocks of wood specifically for the cars. The laminated wood works well because it’s colorful and looks good and the kids can pick out their favorite one.”

Strand’s distribution system is a bit scatter shot but he still manages to send them all over the globe. Anyone he knows who is planning a trip gets a supply of cars. Knutson, for instance, takes them with him when he travels for business or pleasure, whether vacationing in Mexico or hunting in Africa.

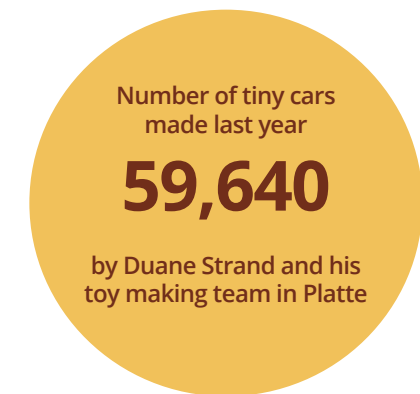
“People in America may think these are just simple toys, but I’ve been in parts of the world where a toy for a kid is a stick and a rock,” Knutson said. “But these little cars give kids something to smile about. Duane and his guys are just beautiful people doing good things for the good of humanity and we’re happy to help them any way we can.”

The toys also ride along in ambulances, military satchels and police vehicles in the event a child needs to be calmed. They show up in doctor’s offices, churches and other venues.

The operation is affiliated with a group called Toys for God’s Kids, a non-denominational organization based in Denver. Strand is the only affiliated “smile maker” in South Dakota.

While the three-man crew claims they’re working harder than they used to before retiring, Iedema assigns a greater value to his toil beyond the opportunity to put a smile on a kid’s face. He said his heart doctor has informed him that he’s in better shape than before he started woodworking three years ago. He’s slimmer, more active and feels a lot better.

Strand chips in, “...yeah, and he’s



more ornery than ever, too!”

Collectively, the guys crank out about 250 cars a day scrunched inside the 12 x 10-foot shed. Each unit has to be dipped in linseed oil to protect children from any potential toxicity. The toys are boxed and shipped to their destination at the recipient’s expense.

Strand doesn’t know how much longer he’s going to be able to keep cranking out cars. He’ll reach the age of 90 in a few months and his friend Ringling has a plan: “I told him when he turns 90 we’re going to take him up by the interstate and take a picture underneath the sign that says I-90. Get it?”

# THANKFUL

"The holidays."

I love everything about this time of year. Just the thought of the holiday season brings a smile to my face and evokes a sense of comfort and nostalgia.

Recalling family gatherings and traditions warms my heart and fills my senses. Just thinking about it conjures up so many memories like the smell of Grandma Lulu's Thanksgiving dressing. I don't know if it was the love she mixed in or her "secret ingredients," but she instilled in all of us the blessings of the holidays and made them very special to all of us. \*15114



**Roger Lawien**  
Member Services  
and IT Director

It's a time of reflection. I'm grateful for my own family as well as my co-op family. At Moreau-Grand Electric, we're driven by a sense of mission and purpose. Your employees feel a strong connection to our communities and our members. It is the connection to you, our member-owners, that drives and inspires us.

One of the ways we connect is with SmartHub. It is a free app that empowers you to monitor, manage and pay your

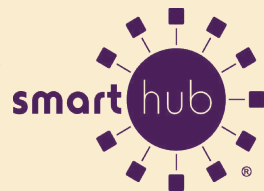
energy bill conveniently through your phone, tablet or PC. Another service we offer is leveled billing, which is intended to help budget your monthly energy costs.

We also offer rebates on water heaters. If you are replacing your existing electric water heater or building new we offer a rebate that will help you with that expense. Upgrading your water heater saves you money and energy.

Another important investment we make is in our local youth. Since 1992, Moreau-Grand Electric has awarded 66 future leaders scholarships totaling \$55,000.

At the heart of all of these programs is you - the members we proudly serve. Looking back, I'm grateful for so many wonderful community partners and for the positive impact we can continue to make.

Speaking on behalf of your cooperative family at Moreau-Grand Electric, we wish you and your loved ones peace, joy and prosperity. I know the future will be bright, because of you.



## Need cash for college?

# Moreau-Grand has four scholarship opportunities

Moreau-Grand Electric believes that by sponsoring youth programs we are investing in tomorrow's leaders. You can help by encouraging future leaders to apply. Applications are available at <https://www.mge.coop/scholarships> or at our offices in Timber Lake or Eagle Butte and with your school's guidance counselor.

## DIRECTOR'S SCHOLARSHIP

Our board of directors donate a portion of their compensation to a scholarship fund. This year, the scholarship will be awarded to applicants who plan to attend an approved regional line worker training program. The scholarship is in the amount of \$2,500 and the deadline to apply for this opportunity is February 20, 2023.

## BASIN/MOREAU-GRAND SCHOLARSHIP

Each year Moreau-Grand Electric offers a \$1000 scholarship to one area student, chosen by our power supplier Basin Electric Cooperative. The deadline to apply for this opportunity is February 20, 2023.

## RESOURCE CONSERVATION SPEECH CONTEST

Each year the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, Resource Conservation and Forestry Division sponsors a resource conservation-oriented speech contest. Any SD student in grades 9-12 is eligible to enter. This includes public, private, and home-school students.

- First Place: \$1,200 Scholarship
- Second Place: \$800 Scholarship
- Third Place: \$500 Scholarship

The contest is sponsored by the Touchstone Energy Cooperatives of South Dakota. The deadline to apply for this opportunity is March 25, 2023.

## SD ASSN. OF COOPERATIVES SCHOLARSHIP

SDAC is awarding two \$1,000 scholarships to second-year higher-education students who are pursuing a degree relative to the cooperative business and who are members or whose parents/guardians are members of a SDAC member cooperative including Moreau-Grand Electric.

Application deadline: October 2023

Winners announced in November 2023.





## Director Larry Hieb receives Gold Certification

We congratulate Board Director Larry Hieb on maintaining his Gold status as part of the Director Education Program.

Directors who receive and maintain the Gold Certificate demonstrate a deep commitment to serving their membership to the highest possible standards.

To earn the Director Gold designation, directors must first earn NRECA's Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate and the Board Leadership Certificate, plus three additional leadership credits.

Those awarded the Gold Certificate are committed to the advancement of their industry knowledge and to the performance of their fiduciary duties to their cooperative and to those who elected them to their respective board positions.



Congratulations to Larry Hieb on obtaining his CCD GOLD status.

## MGE returns \$425,000 in capital credits to members

### CREDIT ON MY BILL?

Yes, that is the cooperative difference! Unlike other electric utilities, Moreau-Grand Electric exists to make sure your needs are always met, not to make a profit. As a member-owner, you share in the margins in the form of capital credit refunds. The cooperative works hard every day to keep your rates as low as possible. But it's sure nice to know that when there are credits, they go back to you.

### HOW MUCH HAS BEEN RETURNED TO ITS MEMBERS SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE COOPERATIVE IN 1946?

Including this year's capital credit refund, members have received \$10 million.

### HOW MUCH IS THE 2022 CAPITAL CREDIT REFUND?

The general retirement approved by the board will be \$425,000. This will be applied to your billing statement received in December.

### HOW IS THE AMOUNT GIVEN TO EACH MEMBER DECIDED?

These credits are based on the amount and cost of electricity each member purchased during the year or years being retired.

### WHY AREN'T THE ALLOCATIONS PAID OUT ALL AT ONE TIME?

One of the basic cooperative principles is that members participate in the financial well-being of the cooperative through their economic participation. Members are the owners of the cooperative and the cooperative uses payments received from members to build and maintain the reliability of the electric system. When finances permit, margins are periodically returned to the membership.

## LOCATE YOUR ACCOUNT NUMBER



If you locate your account number anywhere in this or past issues of Moreau-Grand Electric's *Cooperative Connections*, you will be a winner and will receive a \$25 credit on your next bill! For example: \*1234. **Previous winners:** We have drawn 16 member names since last October. Last winner was Steven S. from Isabel. Keep looking!

## HOLIDAY CLOSING

Moreau-Grand Electric's offices will be closed Thursday, Nov. 24, in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

# CHANGING YOUNG LIVES

The Great Plains Youth Regional Treatment Center near Mobridge is a place where at-risk youth can go to address their challenges with drug and alcohol abuse. *Photo by Roger Lawien*

## Treatment center helps young people get back on the right path

**Billy Gibson**

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

It was a small compliment, but it meant everything to the young lady who wasn't quite accustomed to receiving positive reinforcement. A simple affirmation spoken softly and sincerely into her ear: "You're gorgeous, and you're worthy." And the tears began to flow.

The Indian Health Service Great Plains Youth Regional Treatment Center near Mobridge is a place where at-risk youth can go to address their challenges with drug and alcohol abuse and find the support they need to deal with difficult situations.

Acting Clinical Director Charita Dowdell remembers that encounter with the young woman.

"I tell all of our residents how gorgeous they are and that I see the beauty in them and who they are deep down inside," Dowdell said. "I told her she was worthy and that she had value,

and she just broke down. She told me that nobody had ever said that to her."

That's just one of the stories about how the treatment center's staff strive to change the lives of teens who enter the program. There are many others.

Program Director Lavon Booth has been involved with the residential program for 20 years, initially as an administrative officer when she started in 2002. She previously served at the Cheyenne River Service Unit in her hometown of Eagle Butte before starting at the YRTC.

She sees the transformation of residents captured in plain view during graduation ceremonies that take place when the 12-week session concludes.

"We're very fortunate to see the change that happens in our residents from the time they arrive until the time they graduate," she said. "We see them moving in a positive direction and at graduation we get to hear them speak intimately about what they've learned and you see how it all comes together.

They come in very shy and reserved, and they leave here carrying a more positive spirit and more confidence. It's really touching for us and very rewarding."

The treatment center is housed in the old Chief Gall Inn hotel on land leased from the Standing Rock tribe. Youth between the ages of 13 and 17 are referred through tribal alcohol programs, local schools, community service organizations and other agencies.

According to the center's mission statement, the program "is dedicated to promoting a healthy lifestyle restoring balance and harmony in mind, body and spirit to our American Indian youth and their families."

Dowdell said playing a role in watching that mission statement come true to life in the form of changed behaviors and more positive attitudes makes her know she's definitely making a profound difference.

One effective modality is a mentoring program where residents taking part in the rehabilitation process shepherd those who are just entering the facility. Not only do the incumbent residents show the newbies around the physical





The youth treatment center is located in the former Chief Gall Inn hotel near Mobridge. *Photo by Roger Lawien*

space, but they also listen to their concerns, answer questions and try to allay their fears that stem from living in a new environment with certain rules, guidelines and expectations.

“When they start feeling homesick or afraid or stressed and they just need someone near their age to talk to, it helps them make the adjustment so they can settle down and focus on what they need to do to make changes. That bond is something that actually helps both of them get through and graduate successfully,” she said.

Dowdell noted there is a concern among staff about residents returning to a challenging environment. So, upon graduation, the youth receive support through a tracking system where staffers make regular check-in calls after three days, three months, six months and a year. A tele-health network is also

available to the graduates.

Role-playing also helps re-integration, Dowdell said. She added that the residents are taught to anticipate the same kind of challenges they faced before and how to handle them with a different approach.

“They return as a changed person, but everybody else around them will be doing the same things,” she said. “We tell them to stay connected to their support system and manage their emotions; how to be true to yourself while being respectful to others. We prepare them for what life is going to look like when they leave.”

She mentioned one particular youngster who entered the program with a defiant attitude and dealing with depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress. She knuckled down academically and caught up to her class grade. After

graduation, she returned to juvenile detention for seven months. But in the end, she straightened out her life by applying the things she learned at the center.

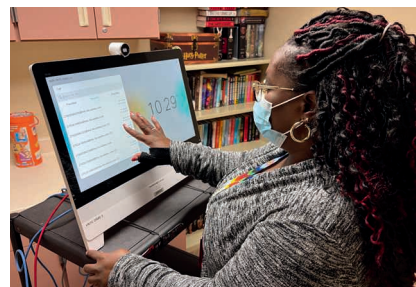
“She struggled with treatment, but she sent us a letter thanking us for what the program did for her,” Dowdell said. “She said she was grateful for giving her the skills to manage the difficult predicament she was going through. She changed her mentality and grew and matured and became a new person.”

Dowdell stressed that parents can play a key role in helping their children navigate through rehabilitation or prevent them from becoming a candidate in the first place.

“Listen to your children,” she emphasized. “They are saying something to you, but often they don’t feel like they’re being heard. Before you shut that door, listen to what they’re saying. You may have to shut the door anyway, but at least take the time to listen to what they have to say.”

Visit [www.ihs.gov/greatplains/healthcarefacilities/greatplainsyrtc/](http://www.ihs.gov/greatplains/healthcarefacilities/greatplainsyrtc/).

Lavon Booth, left, and Charita Dowdell, work to provide students the skills they need to change the direction of their lives.





# SANTA SACS FOR KIDS

The Botkins - Amanda, Dean, Elizabeth, Anna and Eric - work as a team to provide gift bags for students. Photo by Billy Gibson

## Botkin family creates Santa Sacs program to spread holiday cheer

**Billy Gibson**

billy.gibson@sdrea.coop

Each Christmas season, the Botkin family home nestled in the foothills just outside of Spearfish is transformed from a cozy chalet-style space into a tightly managed, finely tuned assembly center.

The goal is to produce dozens of cinch sacks full of Christmas gifts for school-age children. There's even a name for the operation: Santa Sacs for Kids.

Amanda Botkin and her husband, Eric, have spent the past 10 yuletide seasons organizing the program and working in conjunction with local school counselors to connect with students and distribute the gift bags. When the calendar page flips to December, the Botkins and their three children ages 8 through 14 kick into high gear and the home starts buzzing with activity.

To achieve maximum efficiency – or possibly to prevent the family pets from completely freaking out - the process is

departmentalized. In the kitchen area, bags are filled with coloring books and stickers and small toys for kindergarten and elementary school children. In the living room, items specifically for older female students are gathered up and placed in pink plastic sacks. Down the hallway, fast-food gift cards, winter hats and personal hygiene products like body wash and shampoo for high schoolers are collected and deposited in the totes.

Closer to Christmas and before school lets out for the break, the bags are loaded up in the family Sequoia and transported to counselors at different schools in the area.

The entire program was Amanda's brainchild, which stemmed from her quest for a way to spark a spirit of giving and community service within her own children – and most of all, a sense of gratitude for blessings received.

"My oldest daughter, Elizabeth, was in kindergarten and I just felt that it was very important for my kids to understand how fortunate we are as a



Eric's sister, Amy Irion, also enjoyed participating in the annual project.

family. They need to know what it's like to do things for others," she said. "Not everybody has a Christmas that looks like ours does."

Amanda, who works as a nurse in Spearfish, contacted local school counselor and personal friend Mandi Scott and shared the details of her plan. Scott climbed aboard without hesitation. Then Amanda hopped on social media to seek support from other friends, relatives and anyone else interested in contributing to the project. The response was overwhelming.

"We've received so much help from so many people who were willing to donate items or funds to buy gifts," she said. "But we wouldn't be able to do





Anna Botkin, a student at Spearfish Middle School, has learned that it's more important to give than to receive. *Photo by Billy Gibson*

anything without participation from our counselors. We do everything through them and everything is anonymous with the kids. They give us the ages and genders and we put together the Santa Sacs for them based on the information we get. School counselors have a really hard job and don't always get the recognition they deserve, so we want them to know how much we appreciate what they do and the critical services they provide. They're amazing!"

While Amanda says that pursuing the project is its own reward, occasionally the counselors will forward messages of thanks they've received from students.

"It's nice to get notes when the kids send them," Amanda said. "But it's mostly about trying to give them the kinds of gifts that they'll like or use or have fun with."

Eric Botkin said he was gung-ho from the beginning when his wife approached him with her plans. He describes the influence his single mother had on developing his understanding of charity. When he was younger, his mom worked

Elizabeth was a youngster when her mother started Santa Sacs for Kids and helps each year to stuff and distribute gift bags.

at a nursing home in Douglas, WY, and he and his siblings would spend Christmas visiting with residents and giving them presents. When Eric was in high school, his mother was a patrolling police officer and used her position to serve others and help solve problems.

During the first year of Santa Sacs for Kids, Eric's role was to take care of the younger kids, Anna and Dean, while kindergartner Elizabeth played the role of Amanda's elf.

"I kept an eye on the kids while Elizabeth and Amanda went out and shopped," Eric said. "But then as the years went along, the number of bags and gifts kept growing. We needed



every hand in the house and whatever volunteers we could get. Amanda has a huge heart and is a great person and always tries to make sure there are nice things in the bags. She wants the kids to all love what they get."

Amanda, not exactly a loafer, has bigger dreams for the program she created: "I'd really like to get more of the surrounding communities involved and put more bags out there. There's so much need."

She would also like to see more older kids get involved in Christmas giving projects so that they can learn the lessons that Elizabeth has learned.

Elizabeth, a 14-year-old freshman at Spearfish High School, is a track and wrestling athlete and also participates in Spartans for Spartans, a group that helps elementary students make a smoother transition to middle school.

"I like getting Christmas presents, but it's more important to give to others," she said. "I like doing something positive with my family and it's great knowing I'm helping other kids make their lives better."

For those who wish to donate, visit <https://gofund.me/2f62016a>.

## REGISTER TO WIN!

Bring this coupon and mailing label to the Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives booth in LaCroix Hall at the Black Hills Stock Show to win an electric snow blower!

Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Your E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**December 15-18, 2022**  
**Christmas at the Cathedral**  
521 N Duluth Ave.  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-988-3765

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.

**NOV. 25**  
**Olde Tyme Christmas Kick-off and Parade**  
Hill City, SD

**NOV. 25**  
**"Light up the Night" Parade and Fireworks**  
Belle Fourche, SD

**NOV. 25-26**  
**Kris Kringle Kraft Fair**  
Hill City, SD

**NOV. 26**  
**Gregory Mid-Winter Fair**  
Gregory Auditorium  
Gregory, SD  
605-830-9778

**DEC. 2-3**  
**Christmas in the Hills**  
Mueller Center  
Hot Springs, SD  
605-745-4140

**DEC. 3**  
**Santa's Thrift Village**  
Minneluzahan Senior Center  
Rapid City, SD  
605-394-1887

**DEC. 3**  
**Tabor's Holiday Light Parade**  
Tabor, SD  
605-660-0274

**DEC. 3**  
**60th Annual Wreath and Centerpiece Sale**  
Central States Fair Grounds,  
Rapid City, SD  
605-343-0710

**DEC. 3**  
**Julefest 2022: Scandinavian Christmas Festival & Bazaar**  
8 a.m.-2p.m.  
Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
Spearfish, SD

**DEC. 4**  
**Sioux Falls Legion Post 15 Pancake Breakfast**  
8:30 a.m.-noon  
1600 W Russell St.  
Sioux Falls, SD

**DEC. 4**  
**Hartford Hometown Christmas**  
Hartford, SD  
[www.hartfordhtc.com](http://www.hartfordhtc.com)

**DEC. 4**  
**Walk Through Bethlehem**  
United Methodist Church  
Webster, SD  
605-345-3747

**DEC. 10**  
**Frontier Christmas**  
Fort Sisseton Historic State Park  
Lake City, SD  
605-448-5474

**DEC. 15-18**  
**Christmas at the Cathedral**  
521 N Duluth Ave.  
Sioux Falls, SD  
605-988-3765

**DEC. 17**  
**Custer Christmas for Kids**  
Custer High School  
Custer, SD  
[custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com](mailto:custerchristmas4kids@gmail.com)

**JAN. 14**  
**Coats for Kids Bowling Tournament**  
Registration Starts at 1 p.m.  
\$80 for a four-person team  
Meadowood Lanes  
Rapid City, SD  
605-393-2081

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