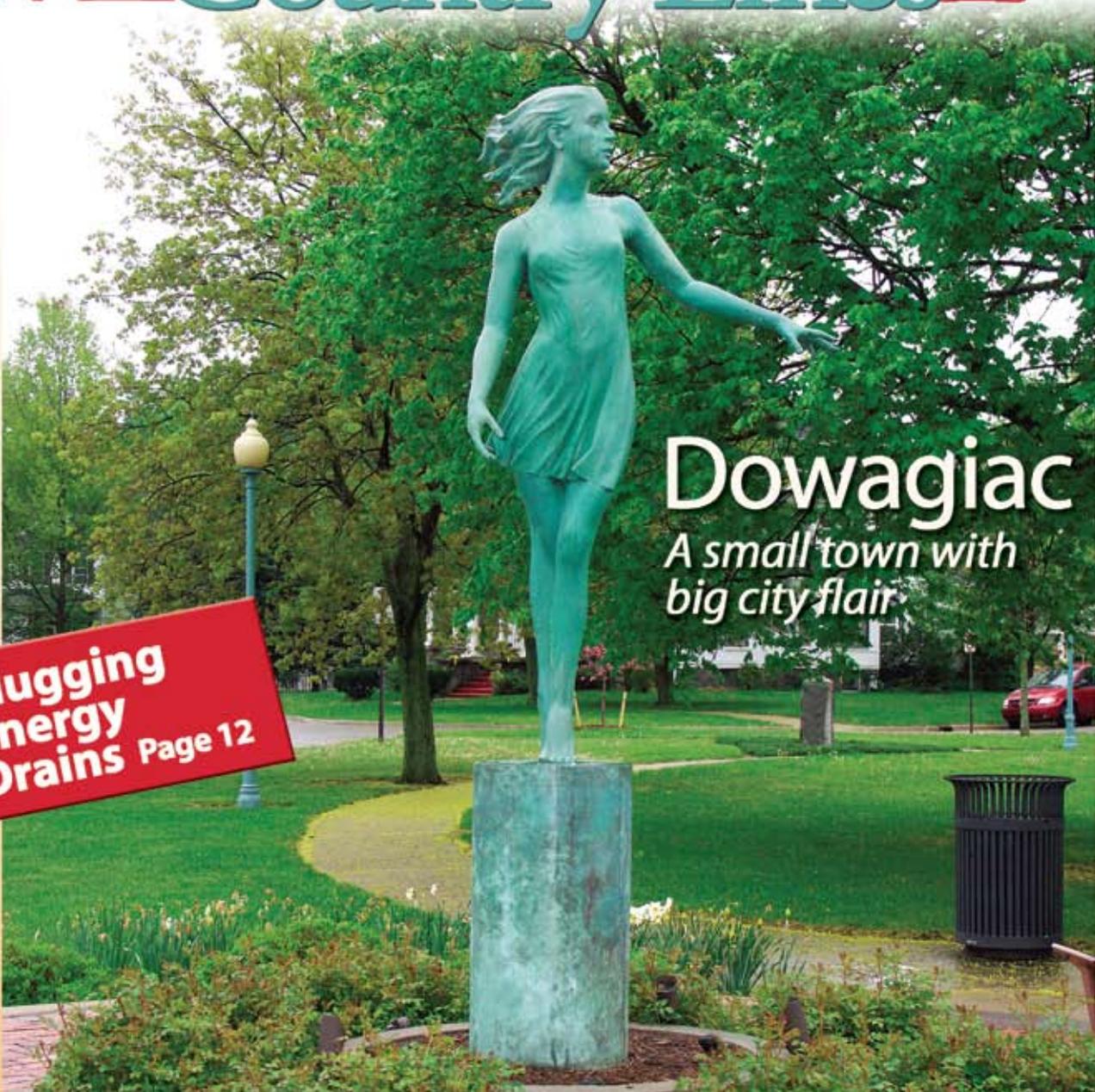


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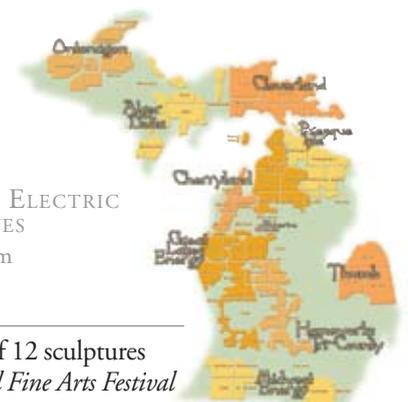
“Dawn of Creation,” by world-famous sculptor Tuck Langland, is one of 12 sculptures by various artists that are spread throughout Dowagiac. *Photo—Dogwood Fine Arts Festival*

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Portland office:

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Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7556 or 1-800-562-8232

Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333
(24 hours for emergency calls)

Tri-County Propane: 1-877-574-2740

Rural TV/DIRECTV: 1-800-293-7112

WildBlue 1-800-668-8413

Long Distance Telephone: 1-888-781-6006

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Manager's Message

Mark Kappler



History's Living Legacy

Your co-op's future is built on the leadership and service of many.

As a student of history, I am enjoying the current emphasis on the history of rural electric cooperatives in America.

Franklin Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act into law 75 years ago, and here at HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, we're gathering materials to mark our own 75th birthday in March 2012.

Even more important to us all is our living history. In November, Pat Essner retired after 38 years of service to the co-op in finance and member services, and on April 1 we'll send Harley Jaques off to retirement after 32 years as a lineman and leader.

While losing Pat and Harley from our daily work life is difficult, it's on a more personal level because their accomplishments included developing new leaders to step up and take us forward.

Before leaving, both Pat and Harley made sure the cooperative is well-stocked with people who will not only perform their daily tasks at a high level, but will go above and beyond to make sure the cooperative remains true to its mission: providing services that enhance our members' quality of life.

The article on page 5 about our service reliability efforts is just one result of their hard work.

This isn't anything new for HomeWorks.

We have a history of families serving the cooperative as member leaders—district officers and board directors—or as employees, and we also have a history of good leaders making sure the cooperative stays on course by developing new leaders.

As we were reviewing invitations to a lunch celebrating Harley's tenure, I noticed we actually have 25 active retirees on the roster. These are people who still stop in and visit, attend any family events we offer, and make themselves—and their cumulative hundreds of years of experience in all departments—available to us if we need it.

Maybe that's why history seems like so much fun these days. Here at HomeWorks, we're surrounded by living history—and it's an incredibly strong foundation for a future of serving you.

Mark Kappler
General Manager

Members Take Part in Bill Re-design

Your energy bill will take on a slightly different look by mid-summer, as we plan to have our computer systems vendor take over the bill printing and mailing.

“We actually began working on this project almost a year ago, looking at what is required to be included on an electric bill, and what we liked about other utilities’ bills,” explains member services manager, Missy Robson. “But the main reason for the change is to add value for our members.”

Robson explains that when members use our eBill online service, they can see all the information from their bill but it’s organized in a different way that can be confusing.

With the change, an actual image of each bill will be generated and attached to the member’s account for them to view any time they access the website. Our member services team will be able to explain items line by line, since both the member and our representative will be able to access and look at the same image.

After an internal review of several drafts of the bill, Robson took the redesigned bill to member focus groups held in early February at both Blanchard and Portland. Her reports offered some valuable insights on what members want—and don’t want—on their electric bill.

Robson says members recommended

making the disconnect notice area (when applicable) bigger and more noticeable. They asked for bigger type, particularly in the center bill portion where energy use and rates are listed, and suggested alternatives for wording that seemed confusing. They also asked for a follow-up meeting in six months to see what comes of their suggestions.

Thank-yous go to Joy Crothers-Angel, Betty Dickerson, Richard Erickson, Connie Gibson, Armond Groh, Randy Maxwell, Floyd Messer, Peggy Pirhonen, Lois Sever, Terry VanSyckle, Pat Zimmerman, and director Philip Conklin for their time and suggestions.

Reliability Efforts Reduce Line Loss, Save Money

Two numbers that HomeWorks tracks regularly are the average outage time per member and line loss.

Line loss describes the energy used by an electric system to move energy across the wires, from the generating plant through transmission and distribution lines to your meter.

In our case, it’s called “loss” because we buy a certain amount of energy from Wolverine Power Cooperative, metered at their substations, that never makes it to a member’s meter to be sold.

A small amount of line loss occurs even in the most efficiently engineered systems, due to heat generated by resistance in the movement of energy. Line loss occurs even in the wiring of your home, between your meter and the appliance using electricity.

Why are these two numbers important to you?

“Outage time per member is something we are constantly working to reduce,” says Matt

Miller, manager of electric operations.

“We can’t control storms and public accidents that cause some outages, but we can build our electric system to withstand normal wear and tear, which includes all but the worst storms. That’s been the goal of our last several

of outages,” Miller points out, especially when ice and wind storms blow through mid-Michigan.

Finally, Miller says, our crews are concentrating on preventive maintenance, patrolling circuits looking for equipment that is working now but might cause problems if stressed by hot weather, storms or high use.

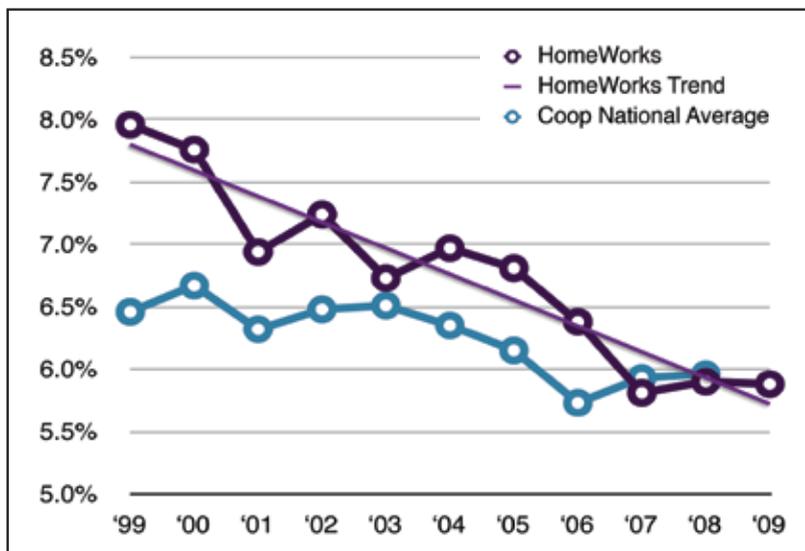
The result is a significant reduction in average outage time per member, from 274 minutes in 2005, to 203 minutes in 2008 and 207 minutes in 2009, and we continually strive to do better.

While reducing potential outages, Miller points out that these efforts all help reduce the co-op’s line loss. A tree branch rubbing against a power line takes some energy with it. A cracked insulator or undersized wire won’t conduct electricity efficiently.

Line loss is important to you because each percent of loss equals about \$250,000 at our current level of kilowatt-hour sales. Line loss is recovered through the rates paid by all members of the cooperative, since we are a

not-for-profit utility.

The chart above shows how our line loss has dropped in the past several years due to our focus on improving the performance of your electric system.



annual work plans,” he explains.

“We’ve also focused on clearing trees from the rights-of-way along the 3,300-plus miles of line across our system. Trees that are in the wrong place are one of the leading causes

FCC Pushes Faster Internet

If you're not using high-speed internet because it's unavailable or slow, would you like to do something about it? The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has unveiled a pair of tools to help.

Both are available on the FCC's broadband.gov website. One tool is the Consumer Broadband Test. When you click the box that reads, "I want to test my connection quality," a short questionnaire pops up. It asks where you're accessing the internet, including the street address and whether it's a home, a business, or on a mobile device.

Then the test begins. At the *Country Lines* office in Okemos, it took 55 seconds to determine that our Comcast cable has a download speed of 13,709 kilobits per second.

Compare that to just 56 kilobits per second for dial-up internet service.

For those without high-speed service, there is what the FCC calls the "Broadband Dead Zone Report." Click the "I do not have broadband at home" button, and a short questionnaire asks for the home address and whether there would be interest in purchasing broadband service.

"Transparency empowers consumers, promotes innovation and investment, and encourages competition," says Julius Genachowski, FCC chairman. He said the tools "will arm users with real-time information about their broadband connection and the agency with useful data about service across the country."

—Michael W. Kahn, NRECA

A "Glorious Mess"

In your column (Mike Peters/March), "We need your help to avoid A Glorious Mess," you concluded that we can help by telling our delegation that we don't support unelected bureaucrats taking the lead in regulating CO₂. While I don't disagree with your point, I think it would have been better if you urged the membership to also ask our delegation to get busy, work together and accomplish meaningful change that will avoid the need for knowledgeable bureaucrats to even seek ways of implementing reduction in greenhouse gases on their own. After all, it is the failure of some in Congress to act that is resulting in others looking to take the lead.

Tom Fleming, Suttons Bay

Your comment, A "Glorious Mess," regarding the regulation of carbon dioxide, states that: "...we do know that if EPA does move ahead on their own, the regulations will be more onerous and more costly than if Congress were to act." However, EPA has not addressed in detail regulation of carbon dioxide or moved ahead on their own yet, and Congress has not yet acted. You also state: "...we don't know which direction Congress will ultimately take." Therefore, we, or you, cannot conclude that if EPA does move ahead on their own, the regulations will be more onerous and more costly than if Congress were to act.

The EPA is an agency charged to protect human health and the environment by writing and enforcing regulations based on laws passed by Congress. Greenhouse gases, which include carbon dioxide, threaten the public health and welfare of the American people. Therefore, until Congress passes new laws changing or clarifying EPA's regulatory role regarding greenhouse gases, the EPA should step forward to



© iStockphoto.com/Damian Gadal

regulate carbon dioxide.

The EPA has performed well over the last 30 years as a regulatory agency to reduce air pollutants in a manner which has not been overly costly to the American economy. As such, the EPA has gained the experience needed to address complicated issues associated with environmental problems. That experience should be utilized, not ignored. And the EPA should not be assumed to be "more onerous and more costly" in its regulatory efforts before the EPA and other governmental entities have addressed the issues in detail.

Daniel Tuharsky, Redford

Mike Peters replies: You have raised a good point. My comment was based on a comparison of the House-passed bill and several proposals being considered in the Senate with what some believe regulation under the Clean Air Act (CAA) could lead to—including [observations of] one of the author's of the CAA, Congressman. John Dingell. I have read enough about CAA regulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to lead me to believe that regulation without clear Congressional direction is not a good path. Our position has been to support measures that will lead to regulation that is "fair, affordable, and achievable."

There were provisions in the House bill that we did not support (allocation of emissions based on sales, as they were not fair to Michigan and other Midwest states) and we thought the early emission reduction targets were overly aggressive (not achievable). We also supported clear preemption language so that we don't end up with multiple

Stay Clear!
A downed power line may not be a dead line. It could cause serious injury or death.

If someone is injured by contact with a power line, call 911 and keep others away until help arrives.

If a power line falls across or near your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives. If you must exit, jump clear so that no part of your body is touching the car when you land. **KEEP BOTH FEET TOGETHER**, and shuffle or hop at least 30 feet away from the vehicle.

Michigan's Electric Cooperatives

layers of regulation. When Congress acts they should preempt states from adopting different standards, and they should make it clear that EPA is to regulate GHGs under the legislation as passed and not under the Clean Air Act or the Clean Water Act.

Having one standard implemented by the EPA will lead to the most workable regulatory scheme for GHGs possible. However, that being said, you are correct that we don't know for certain what EPA will do, and since Congress has not acted we can't compare the two paths.

How Country Lines Began

It might be of interest to readers to know more about the early efforts (Ramblings, January) to get a regular flow of information to the member-owners of Michigan's electric co-ops. The decision was made in 1978 to establish the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) and employ a full-time administrator to manage and operate the new organization. I was selected for the job and we began full-time operation in January, 1979.

In the work plans and budget for 1980, I advocated the start-up of a publication to be mailed to all of the cooperatives' members, then numbering approximately 200,000, and preferably on a monthly basis. The MECA Board of Directors voted in favor of a bimonthly publication, if and when we had enough co-ops subscribing to reach a minimum circulation of 100,000.

We achieved that and made plans for a tabloid publication to be known as *Michigan Country Lines*. A big step forward was made when we asked a popular *Lansing State Journal* columnist, Jim Hough, to write a human interest column for our magazine. Being from the U.P., he knew something of the plight of rural folks catching up with their city cousins in the conveniences of modern living. When he said, "Yes, I'll do it," I knew we had a winner who would vastly boost reader interest in our publication.

Thanks, Jim, for joining our *Country Lines* team and treating us to so many entertaining stories and personal experiences. We wish you and Darl

the very best in retirement.

*Ray Kuhl, former MECA CEO
and executive editor*

Energy Vampires

Could you give some sources for the whole house indoor meter, please? The article (Feb. 2010) said when, in an experiment, people were required to check their meters, electrical use went down significantly. Even afterwards, when it was no longer required, people still checked it and lowered their electrical use. If true, I hope this is something the co-ops might consider in the future as a standard fitting for every home. (Give yourselves a 15-year 'heads up' if you want, but think about it.)

Beth Clemensen, via email

One meter is TED, available at theenergydetective.com, ranging in price from \$119 to \$455. We'll have more in May.—ed.

Tweeting

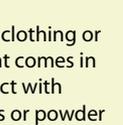
I just finished reading the column regarding tweeting [Ramblings, March]. I thoroughly enjoyed it and 'yes,' this baby boomer was shaking her head. I refuse to sign up on Facebook, or Twitter. I don't need one more thing to absorb me on this computer. I keep telling myself to hold off until I retire, when I have more time. I didn't want to get into this texting thing, either; however, I finally realized it is the best way to get a response from my kids.

I do feel there is a time and place to do this. It is called 'respect of others,' whether you are in a meeting, with friends, or even driving. We use to laugh about my father-in-law who refused to use a microwave, and he retired from GM when computers were taking over after 35 years. He was amazed at how times had changed.

In 1970 I was a military wife, and my first child was born in Japan. It cost \$29 a

How to Clean Up a Broken Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb (CFL)



- 1  Ventilate the room.
- 2  Scoop up powder and glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. Seal in a plastic bag.
- 3  Use duct tape to pick up any fragments or powder.
- 4  Immediately place all materials used to clean up and the plastic bag in an outdoor trash container. Remember to wash your hands.
- 5  Discard any clothing or bedding that comes in direct contact with broken glass or powder from inside the bulb. Washing tainted items may cause mercury fragments in clothing to contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage.

To learn more about CFLs and why you should be careful when cleaning up a broken bulb, visit www.epa.gov.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation Institute, YASLY

minute to call home. We put money aside to pay for that minute to be able to call my parents about the birth of their first granddaughter. I couldn't even talk, I cried the whole minute just hearing their voices! Now I am the one saying, 'Times sure have changed!' Thanks for the great story! It really inspired me.

Deanna Alexander, via email



Help us create stories and features that match your interests!

Favorite Michigan-made product. We'll build stories around your favorite Michigan-made products, whether past or present. Send us no more than 100 words describing your favorite product made in the state and why you have a passion for it. Think Vernor's Ginger Ale, Life Savers, Stroh's beer, American Spoon Foods' cherry butter, a 1952 Ford pickup. Just remember, it must be, or have been, made in Michigan. And if you have a photo (not from a computer printer) of you or someone close to you with the product, send it along. Send now and throughout the year.

The iconic all-time favorite *Country Lines* recipes. *Country Lines* has published reader recipes for 30 years, and over that time readers have clipped and copied them—from Swedish meatballs to chocolate oatmeal cake—and stuck them in folders, notebooks and card tins in the best kitchens in the state. Pull out that food-spattered clipping, copy it and send it in, along with an explanation of why you like it. We'll run them in a special tribute to our 30th anniversary in November. Deadline is Oct. 1.

Send your entries for favorite Michigan-made product and *Country Lines* recipe to: *Country Lines* Editor, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864, or email knudtson@countrylines.com.

Start Spring's Projects With A Phone Call

Spring's warming weather signals the beginning of construction and maintenance projects—which pose a unique set of risks for utilities.

When people don't pay attention to where they are digging, overhead lines or underground cables can be damaged, causing:

- ▶ Power outages that can disrupt one household or hundreds of them;
- ▶ Additional costs, including materials and work time, paid by all the co-op's members; and
- ▶ Personal injury, or even loss of life.

Ladders, shovels, excavators, farm equipment and dump trucks are just a few types of equipment that our line crews have recorded as damaging our power lines.

How can you help avoid these risks? Keep your eyes open for overhead lines and maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from them. If your work means you need to get closer, call HomeWorks Tri-County before starting and we will help provide safe clearance.

It's harder to watch out for underground utility lines. That's why state law mandates contacting Miss Dig (811) at least three full business days before digging begins.

Underground utility lines will be marked

or cleared by all utilities, with flags or paint markings such as red for electric, orange for telephone and cable, or yellow for gas.

Once marked, make sure to work well away from any utility flags. If you must dig near a marked line, the law requires you to dig by hand within 18 inches on either side of the mark. Take extra caution while hand digging this close to buried utility lines; if necessary contact Miss Dig or HomeWorks Tri-County Electric directly

so that further steps can be taken to protect you and the buried utility lines.

Preventing contact saves you the cost of repair, avoids the inconvenience of a power outage, and most importantly, keeps you or a loved one from suffering a painful or even fatal injury.

Play it safe this spring and look for potential hazards before you start a project. Doing so will make this a safe and productive spring season.



Chris O'Neill is HomeWorks Tri-County's safety coordinator.

Portland Renovation Decision Close

Visitors to the Portland office may get a different view over the next several months.

Planning is complete for needed renovations at the cooperative's Portland facilities, and contractors from around mid-Michigan have been asked to bid on the project with several options, including doing the work phase by phase.

If bids are acceptable to the board of directors, final due diligence and negotiations would take place in April and demolition/construction work could begin in May.

"There is a possibility we could move completely out of the office building, out of the way of construction, and into the new Operations Center for several months," says general manager, Mark Kappler.

"This would make it easier for the contractors to plan their work and cause fewer disruptions for our members and employees while moving around the renovation work.

"And, we will make sure service to our members, whether they stop by the office or call on the telephone, will not be disrupted," Kappler adds.

The purpose of the renovation project is to bring an aging infrastructure up to modern standards for safety and energy efficiency, and to eliminate many different floor levels throughout the building that keep it from being properly accessible.

Bringing You Year-round Value

HomeWorks
Tri-County Propane

Another heating season is winding down, and once again HomeWorks Tri-County Propane's guaranteed capped price has saved all of our customers from the volatility of price uncertainty.

You probably know someone who buys their propane from another company—ask them if they are offered a guaranteed capped price at no extra cost, with no agreement to sign and no hidden fees such as delivery, fuel surcharges or hazmat fees. At HomeWorks, we provide our service without any of these hidden charges.

This month is a good time to think about another great HomeWorks value: our equal monthly payment plan. Sometimes called a budget plan, this program lets you even out the annual cost of your

propane to avoid seasonal ups and downs. May is your enrollment month if you want to take advantage of the equal monthly payments.

Your monthly payment will be based on your history of propane use and our anticipated capped price for next year. You'll know what to expect every month, no matter how cold it might get in January.

Even better, if you combine this payment plan with autopay, letting your bank or credit card pay your bill automatically on the due date, you'll get a \$25 credit as a thank-you. Plus, if you designate a savings or checking account for your autopayments, we'll take an extra penny off every gallon you use.

Equal monthly payments, convenient autopay, and a little more savings—you get great value from HomeWorks!



Randy Halstead
Propane Manager

To learn more about propane service from HomeWorks, call 1-877-574-2740 or visit homeworks.org.

Absolute Zero

I have a “Far Side” cartoon framed next to the thermostat in my house. I’ve had the cartoon since it was published by Gary Larson in 1989. The picture is of several guys in lab coats holding test tubes and the caption reads: “A team of scientists at the Helsinki low-temp lab reduces a temp to the lowest ever reached, 2 billionths of a degree above absolute zero—or the temperature at which a father will allow his children to turn up the thermostat.”

I find the cartoon rather funny. My kids never have. And, my wife knows she actually controls the temperature in the house, regardless of what I may think.

But over the years I’ve done what I could to keep the house at least slightly above absolute zero, yet keep the electric and gas bills to reasonable levels. I’ve replaced the old dial thermostat with a digital set-back

thermostat, and I have it set back fairly aggressively for the time between midnight and 6 a.m. They’re all asleep, anyway, so no one is complaining about how cold it is.

Every light that could have a CFL has one. I’ve caulked about everything imaginable that could or should be caulked. I’ve added insulation in the attic, although I may add more over one part of the house that still seems a bit chilly. I’ve installed ceiling fans in almost every room.

We have a whole-house fan that works great most days of the year before it gets really hot and humid. We replaced all the windows about five years ago. We had insulation blown into the walls two



Michael Peters is president and CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His email address is mpeters@countrylines.com.

years ago when federal tax credits became available.

Whenever we have had to replace an appliance—and over the last 14 years it’s been most of them—we have replaced them with Energy Star®-rated appliances. I’ve wrapped the water heater with insulation and added pipe wrap to the hot water line. I know my heating ducts leak, and sealing those up is on the list of “things to do.” And, I really want to switch my furnace and air conditioning

to an air-to-air heat pump. It’s just a matter of time.

I know there are more measures we can take to reduce our energy bills, but I see this as a process, especially in an older house.

Your electric co-op has many suggestions to help you reduce your energy bills, as well. Whether it’s an online energy audit, rebates for Energy Star appliances, or paying a bounty and picking up your extra freezer or that refrigerator in the garage, your cooperative can help you reduce your energy bills.

I am really happy to see that the refrigerator pick-up program is finally rolling out statewide over the next several months. My column in the 2009 issue showed a picture of an old green refrigerator along with the announcement that we wanted *your* old refrigerator. Unfortunately, getting the program up and running across every cooperative’s service area has proved more difficult than we first thought. I think I received more emails—asking *me* when *I* could come pick up an old refrigerator—than for any other comment I’ve written.



We’re coming to get ‘em!
“The refrigerator pick-up program is finally rolling out statewide over the next several months... I think I received more emails—asking *me* when *I* could come pick up an old refrigerator—than for any other comment I’ve written.”

To learn more about your cooperative’s energy optimization programs, go to michigan-energy.org

Dowagiac: Small Town With Big City Flair

The home of the popular Dogwood Fine Arts Festival is a fine place to visit anytime. **Rita C. Henehan**



Will Clafin, a storyteller at the Dogwood Fine Arts Festival.

Photo - Dowagiac Dogwood Festival

What do bestselling authors Kurt Vonnegut, Norman Mailer, John Updike, Ann Patchett, Joyce Carol Oates, William Styron and Sara Paretsky have in common with nationally known artists like Dale Threlkeld and Winifred Godfrey, world-renowned sculptors Richard Hunt and Tuck Langland, and musicians such as Arlo Guthrie and Chanticleer?

They have all come to Dowagiac, a south-western Michigan town of about 6,000, to participate in its renowned Dogwood Fine Arts Festival, which started back in 1993.

When Bobbie Jo Hartline, festival secretary, is asked how Dowagiac gets such big names to participate, she responds with a simple, “we ask them.” She further explains that they have a wish list of potential participants. “The ones we have managed to attract believe in what we are trying to do here and agree to work things out with us. Education is a big piece of the festival. The speakers and performers have to be willing to give presentations at local schools as well as at the festival.” This gives students a chance to discuss literary works with authors, jam with musicians, and work with artists.

A major aspect of Dowagiac’s philosophy is making the arts accessible to all. At one point in talking with Hartline, a fellow in bib overalls and a knit cap pokes his head in to ask her a question. After he leaves, she notes that he is one of the largest pork producers in Cass County. “He’s supplying the pork for the festival’s first culinary arts show with ‘Big Daddy’ Aaron McCargo Jr.,” she adds. “Like I say, we try to get everyone

involved.” Find details about the May 6-15 festival by calling 866-490-2847 or on the web at dogwoodfinearts.org.

The festival has also given birth to a permanent display of statues called “Sculptures in the City.”

“In the mid-90s, we were approached by the Tremble-Dalton families who wanted to purchase a sculpture for the city,” explains Hartline. “Since then, our visual arts commit-



“We’re the best-kept secret in Dowagiac,” says Museum Director Steve Arseneau, pictured near a display of Round Oak heating stoves. Admission to The Museum at Southwest Michigan College is free.

tee has brought donors and sculptors together to create 10 more outdoor displays.” There’s even a brochure that leads visitors to all the sculptures, with the majority located in the downtown area.

Other Reasons to Visit

Dowagiac’s natural resources are also a big draw. Nested in Cass County’s rolling hills, the town is surrounded by numerous inland lakes that draw many Chicago-area residents here for the summer. And with that clientele, there is a demand for shops, restaurants and entertainment.

The shopping/restaurant district is concentrated around Front Street. “We have dedicated customers who keep coming back because we provide them with service and quality,” explains Susan Kazlauskas, owner of The Marshall Shoppe, a woman’s clothing store. Her store opened in 1947 and was named in 1957 after Stella Marshall. In 1973, Martha DeShazo (Kazlauskas’ mother) bought the shop and in 1991 Kazlauskas purchased it from her mother. “I’m also excited to see a lot of younger merchants coming into town,” she says. “A number of new shops have opened up and down the street.”

Kazlauskas also mentions her next store neighbor, The Wood Fire Italian Trattoria, an upscale restaurant that brings live entertainment to the area. Leon Redbone performed this winter.

And, there are a number of other restaurants. For the more casual, try Zeke’s with its 250 beers from around the world, or for an old-fashioned treat, try Caruso’s Candy and Soda Shop.

“Our shop is like stepping into the past,” says Caruso’s co-owner, Jane Wright. The original black Italian marble soda bar, with pedestal stools, and the tin ceiling and



This bronze lion by artist Rosetta is one of several statues that are part of Dowagiac’s “Sculptures in the City” display.

glass cases full of chocolate treats attest to that. “Kids can see sodas being made at our fountain and we have hand-dipped malts in any flavor.” Wright and her sister, Julie Johnson, are the current owners of this family business.

Antonio Caruso and his wife, Emilia, bought the business in 1922 and managed it for 45 years with the help of their children, among them Julia and Theresa. In 1969, Antonio handed the reins over to Julia’s husband, William Rutherford, and in 1982, Julia’s daughter Mary Myers steered. In 2005, Theresa’s daughters, Wright and Johnson, took over.

“All our candies are handmade, one piece at a time,” says Wright. “Our bestsellers are our toffees, turtles and peanut clusters. We also ship our candies throughout the state and are

working on setting up our website for home-made candy orders.” The sisters are ensuring that their grandfather’s legacy and the art of candy-making survive in Dowagiac.

Further preserving the area’s legacy is The Museum at Southwestern Michigan College, which is two miles east of downtown on M-62. “We are Dowagiac’s best-kept secret,” says Steve Arseneau, director. “We’ve just finished a major renovation, which we started in 2006. We have four galleries with interactive displays.” The first gallery portrays the town’s history; the second displays Round Oak Stoves, the manufacturer of wood heating stoves that put Dowagiac on the map. The third is dedicated to the fun you can have in the area, and the last to locals who became famous, such as Webb Miller, the World War II journalist, and James Heddon, who is credited with inventing the fishing lure.

The museum houses an extensive collection of Round Oak stoves, including “The Katelee,” which is the Holy Grail for wood stove collectors. There’s also an interactive display showing how the different Heddon lures respond when pulled through the water.

“The idea behind the Festival is to make the arts available to everyone,” comments Bobbi Jo Hartline, secretary for the Dowagiac Dogwood Fine Arts Festival. This year’s event is May 6-15.



Photos – Rita C. Henehan



Jane Wright and her sister, Julie Johnson (not shown), are the third generation of their family to operate Caruso’s Candy and Soda Shop in downtown Dowagiac.



Energy Drains

Even with advances in energy efficiency, consumers continue to use more energy. **Megan McKoy**

Odds are your home has a big-screen TV, a satellite or cable box, and a DVD or Blu-ray player—maybe two or three. Add an Xbox®, Wii™, PlayStation®, or other video game console, and your entertainment center's ready to go.

Indeed, most of us depend on a large number of electronic gadgets these days—and not just for entertainment. Personal computers, stereos, alarm clocks, coffee makers, battery chargers, cell phones, microwaves... the list goes on and on.

Most of the electricity used in the average home goes toward heating and air conditioning, water heating, and lighting, all of which are significantly more energy efficient than even just a decade ago. Yet our demand for new electronic devices means we continue to consume more electricity every year—a whopping 15.6 percent rise since 2000. Younger American consumers use cell phones more for playing games, listening to music, and watching TV than talking on them, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

“Despite anticipated improvements in energy efficiency, any energy savings are

likely to be overshadowed by rising demand for technology,” cautions Nobuo Tanaka, executive director for the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), an autonomous body. He estimates that by 2030 consumer electronic use will climb threefold—equivalent to the combined residential electricity consumption of the United States and Japan.

However, there are ways to avoid the coming energy pile-up. For example, cell phones are now extremely energy efficient because of consumer demand for longer battery life.

“Many mobile devices are already far more efficient in their use of power than other products which run solely off a main electricity supply,” explains Tanaka. “Because extending the battery life of a mobile device is a selling point, manufacturers placed an emphasis on designing products which require very little power. This shows us what

can be achieved.”

If consumers demand that manufacturers reach the same level of efficiency with other electronics, such as gaming consoles, TVs, and even alarm clocks, IEA believes energy use in this sector could be cut in half.

Electric cooperatives are active on this front, offering home energy audits and financial assistance for weatherization, as well as educating consumers on the benefits of purchasing energy-efficient appliances. Making consumers aware of how many energy dollars small electronic devices drain from a family budget is just one more way co-ops are working to keep electric bills affordable.

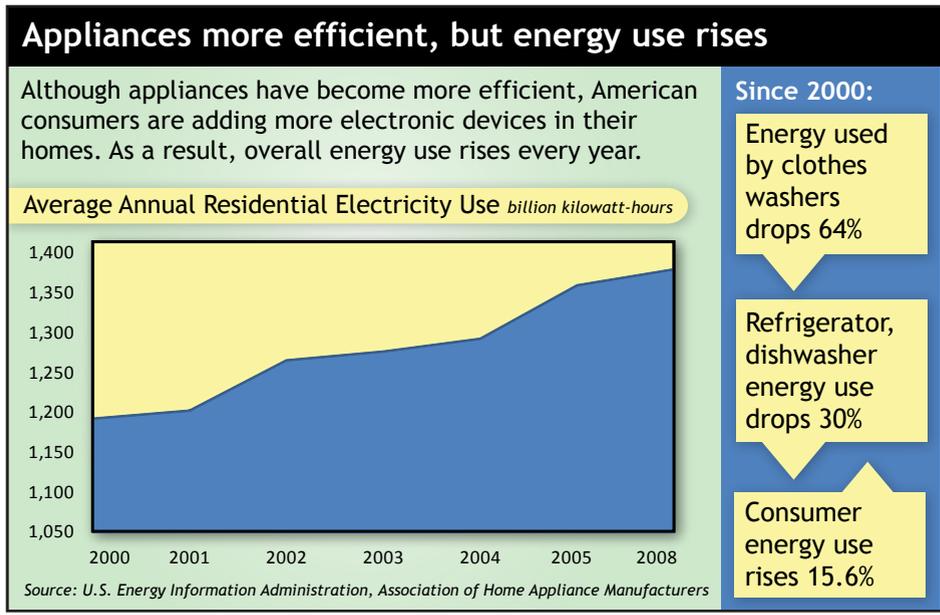
Appliance Accountability

Computers and monitors were the first products to receive an energy efficiency rating from Energy Star®, a program launched in 1992 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Since then, more than 60 categories have been added, from dishwashers and windows to DVD players.

Energy Star-rated products deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy. Although actual energy savings depend on what's being replaced, new Energy Star appliances save significantly more energy. For example,



© iStockphoto.com/Genie Chutika



switching out a clothes washer made before 2000 with a 2010 Energy Star model could save up to \$135 per year on a consumer's electric bill. Replacing a refrigerator made before 1993 could save up to \$65 annually. However, 44 percent of refrigerators that could be retired and recycled are converted into a second fridge, given away, or sold—keeping inefficient technology in American homes. That's something Michigan co-ops are trying to remedy with their appliance recycling pick-up service and rebate.

In the wake of Energy Star's success (over 2 billion Energy Star-rated products have been purchased), DOE is pushing for more items to meet efficiency standards. In January, manufacturers sent energy use data on more than 600,000 residential appliances in 15 product categories to the department.

Silent Energy Drains

Oddly enough, many electronic devices draw power while waiting to be used. Very likely, your big-screen TV, DVD player, and stereo burn kilowatt-hours even when turned off. According to IEA, this standby or "vampire" load accounts for more than 5 percent of residential electricity demand.

Although the amount of standby power used by individual appliances may be small—often between 0.5 watts and 10 watts—a typical home may have 20 appliances on standby at any given time. For the last decade, IEA has encouraged appliance manufacturers around the globe to cut this wasted power to no more than 1 watt. The Energy Star program takes this measurement into account when certifying many appliances.

Cash for Appliances

Thinking about replacing an old refrigerator or washing machine? This spring the last of the state-specific "Cash for Appliances" programs, mandated by the federal stimulus bill, went into effect. These programs provide rebates ranging from \$50 to \$250 as an incentive for Americans to switch from energy-guzzling, outdated appliances to new Energy Star-rated alternatives.

In February, Michigan was allocated \$8.8 million for this program, and as of March 22, there was \$5,276,805 in rebate funds remaining. When the funds are gone, the offer ends. For Michigan-specific details on how you can take advantage of this offer, visit energysavers.gov/rebates or mirebates.com.

Megan McKoy writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Do Tankless Water Heaters Live Up to the Hype?

An unlimited supply of hot water sounds like a sweet deal to many homeowners. So do reduced water heating costs, instantaneous hot water on demand, and more space in utility closets.

These are all promises made by companies selling tankless water heaters. But does the technology really deliver?

Unlike traditional electric resistance or gas-fired water heaters, tankless models do not store hot water—they heat water only as it's consumed. Heating elements within a tankless water heater are activated when a hot water faucet or valve is opened.

'Unlimited' Hot Water?

An unlimited supply of hot water sounds great, but even the largest whole-house unit may not supply enough hot water for simultaneous, multiple uses.

For example, such a unit may be able to supply only two showers simultaneously or perhaps one shower, a dishwasher, and a sink. If users demand too much water, temperatures will drop. As a result, a tankless system probably won't meet the needs of a large family.

Hidden Costs

Tankless water heaters do not require a lot of space, but they do require an upgrade in electrical service. This is something most home improvement stores often don't mention, and a chief reason electric co-ops generally don't recommend these appliances. This means consumers who want to replace an existing conventional water heater with a tankless unit or add one as part of a home-remodeling project will incur additional costs.

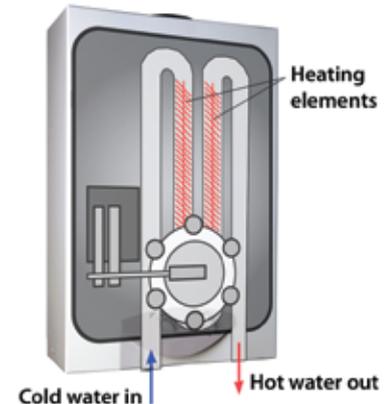
For example, a traditional tank water heater with 4,500-watt elements operates on #10 wire and a 30-amp circuit breaker. One whole-house tankless model boasts four 7,000-watt elements for a total electrical load of 28,000 watts, requiring wire and a circuit breaker that will handle at least 120 amps.

If a tankless water heater is installed in an existing home without upgrading the electrical service, low voltage or sudden voltage drops are likely. This will cause dimming lights, blinking lights, and other problems.

The extra load also requires a larger and more expensive meter loop and main breaker panel for the house. In some cases, consumers also must pay for new wiring between the

A tankless water heater at work

Unlike a traditional water heater, a wall-mounted tankless model does not store hot water. It heats water only as it is used with heating elements inside the water heater that are activated when a hot water faucet or valve is opened. Consumers can generally save more on energy costs by using traditional water heaters (with a tank) efficiently.



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

distribution transformer and electric meter. Check first with a licensed electrician or your electric co-op to determine if you would need to improve your electric connections.

While gas-fired tankless water heaters generally do not need basic service upgrades, the same considerations must be made when determining how many hot water faucets will be turned on at any given time and how far the heater is from sinks and showers.

Other Options

Consumers looking for an efficient water heater should consider a heavily insulated electric resistance tank unit. These appliances are often the most cost-effective option over the long term. And because of their hot water storage capabilities, many electric co-ops employ electric resistance water heaters as a key component of load management programs that shave power costs during times of peak demand—a proven way to help keep electric bills affordable.

The Oak Ridge National Laboratory also suggests using simple and low-cost efficiency measures such as tank insulation, temperature setback, timers, heat traps and low-flow showerheads. All of these are more practical and provide a greater return on investment than putting in a tankless water heater.

—NRECA Cooperative Research Network

Dress Up Your Home—and Cut Energy Costs—With Landscaping

Landscaping does more than make a home look nice. It prevents air leaks and provides shading.

People tend to appreciate landscaping for its aesthetic value, but proper landscaping also impacts the energy efficiency of your house. From an environmental standpoint, good landscape design also minimizes the need for mowing and other lawn care. This not only saves you time, but you may be able to get by with a push mower or a battery-operated mower to eliminate gasoline costs.

In addition to increasing your home's efficiency, wise landscaping can reduce the need for watering. In the past, this was an issue primarily for the Southwest. Today, water shortages are an issue across the nation. Even if there's adequate water available, it takes large amounts of energy at municipal waterworks facilities to process and pump domestic water.

Proper landscaping includes the use of ground cover, dwarf and full-size shrubs, climbing vines, and trees. Ground cover is typically some type of plant, grass or gravel. The selection you make depends on your climate and specific house. Within the same neighborhood, a combination that works well for one house may not be the best for a home just one street away.

In general, try to use low-growing ground cover plants or gravel instead of grass. Other than some unique types, most common species of grass require maintenance. Grass is still the best choice for areas of your yard where children play or pets roam, but try to keep it to a minimum.

In all but the most humid climates, placing low-growing ground cover plants near your house helps keep it cool during summer. The leaves block the sun's heat from being absorbed into the ground, and they give off moisture. This evaporation of water from the leaves, called transpiration, cools air near the home—similar to when we perspire.

In hot, humid climates, gravel which is shaded from the sun can be more effective than ground cover plants. Using gravel also eliminates the need for watering, but it may increase the air temperature around your house. The thermal mass of the gravel stores the afternoon sun's heat, causing the heating effect to last into the evening. Though not helpful during summer, during winter gravel



Dwarf shrubs block the wind and the rocks capture the sun's heat during winter. During summer, trees shade the house wall and rocks.

Photo: James Dulley

provides an advantage.

When selecting ground cover plants, consider their specific characteristics (mature size, water needs, propagation, foliage density, etc.). To minimize the watering requirements, group the plant types based on their watering needs.

Dwarf shrubs are ideal for energy-efficient landscaping because they remain small at maturity (2 to 3 feet high). Plant some near the house foundation and some further away for windbreak ramps. Since they stay small, they require little care and watering.

Dwarf shrubs can also cut your utility bills year-round. The sill plate, the bottom frame along a home's foundation, is one of the greatest air infiltration pathways into many houses. Planting dwarf shrubs near the house, especially evergreen varieties, can block the force of cold winter winds and reduce the amount of air leaking in.

As a windbreak ramp, dwarf shrubs can

be planted to the northwest side of taller shrubs and trees. These smaller plants begin directing the cold winds upward toward the tops of taller trees. The upward wind path continues over the top of your house, not against it.

Planting climbing vines on a trellis can create effective shading to reduce the heat buildup on a wall during summer. In most climates, locate the trellis close to the house to also take advantage of transpiration cooling. In humid climates, locate the trellis a little further away from the wall. This allows the air flow to carry the moisture away, but still provides good wall shading.

Climbing vines are often more effective than trees for shade because you can target specific windows and areas of your house where heat produces the greatest problem. Deciduous vines that lose their leaves

during winter are best so the winter sun still reaches the house. One with a robust stem structure can help disrupt the force of winter winds.

Trees have perhaps the greatest impact upon your utility bills. The actual landscaping details vary for different climates, but some general concepts apply to all. Evergreen trees are effective for the northwest across to the northeast side of a house to block the winter winds. During winter, the sun does not shine from those sides. Deciduous trees planted on the other sides provide summer shade, but allow the winter sun through. You may want to leave a small gap to the southwest to allow summer breezes to reach your home.

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.



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Healthy Habits for Earth-friendly Families

At the tender age of two-and-a-half, my granddaughter has hiked trails, fished streams, waded shorelines, and snoozed in rustic campgrounds. Furthermore, she has mastered an outdoor skill that confounds many a grown woman. When it's necessary (and sometimes even when it's not), Nellie knows how to tinkle in the woods.

I'm impressed. And I'm glad she's learning early to appreciate nature. It should motivate her to care about the Earth's resources, like clean air and water.

Good thing, too, because according to experts who track these sorts of things, Nellie has already gone through about 8,000 disposable diapers. Then there is the environmental impact of baby food jars, formula cans, plastic containers of wipes, scented disposable diaper bags, plastic swings and teething rings, and a crib with all its trimmings.

To tell you the truth, though, I worry more about the impact the environment might be having on her. With new research hinting that everything from autism to hyperactivity might be linked to toxins in our food, plastics and emissions, it just makes sense to avoid as many as possible, while teaching children some habits that will protect the resources we all need.

Go Beyond Baby-Proofing

In its Blue Butterfly Campaign, the Children's Health Environment Coalition suggests "Five Easy Steps" to an environmentally child-safe home.

Avoid pesticides and insecticides. Read labels carefully to choose nontoxic, pesticide-free products for your family. Remove shoes and wash hands immediately after playing outside to prevent chemical-laced dirt from being tracked indoors.

Use nontoxic cleaners. As concerns about household toxins grow, companies are eagerly pushing their "green" versions of traditional cleaning products. Unfortunately, researchers say some potentially dangerous substances can still appear in products that are marketed as green. No matter what cleaners you use, take some simple precautions to minimize the dangers: dilute them; rinse surfaces after use; thoroughly wash sponges

after cleaning or store used cloths in a sealed receptacle, make sure the space that is being cleaned is well ventilated during and several hours after cleaning.

Clean indoor air. Indoor air pollution is linked to a host of health effects, including asthma. Use natural products whenever possible, from upholstery fabric and carpeting, to building material glues and adhesives, to paint and wallpaper. Use nontoxic techniques to scent the house, such as placing orange slices, lemon slices, cloves, or any other herb in boiling water on the stove.

Go organic. The baby food aisle of local supermarkets has seen a substantial increase in organic selections from companies such as Gerber® and Earth's Best®. "But why not think outside the jar?" asks Shazi Visram, founder of Happy Baby, whose frozen meals come in individual cubes in flavors like "Smarter Squash and Wiser Apple." "In our country, babies are started on processed food....but it cooks the flavor and nutrients out," Visram says.

Use plastic products more wisely. Choose smart plastics and avoid putting them in the microwave (where they can release dangerous chemicals when heated) or the dishwasher (where they can degrade in the heat and excessive moisture). Vinyl bath toys and plastic teething and bottles could also contain phthalates and Bisphenol A (BPA), which have been shown to disrupt the reproductive systems of lab animals. You can use the recycling codes to determine content, according to the folks at Healthy Child, Healthy World. If it's marked #1, #2, #4, or #5 it's safer; if it's marked #3, #6, or #7, avoid it.

Want to do more?

If you're really serious about protecting your child and the planet, a few extra actions can



©Stockphoto.com/Stefan Witas

earn you some bonus points.

Eat local, and in season. Sometimes you just need a tomato or strawberry, but eating foods raised or grown locally and in season is cheaper, better tasting, and better for you. It's better for the planet, too, since local products have less packaging and require fewer transportation resources.

Choose "Green Schools." Or work with your child's school to conserve valuable resources to ensure future availability and save money. Schools like Rapid River Public Schools near Escanaba are joining a growing number of "green schools" that provide more healthy, comfortable and productive learning environments, while saving energy, resources and money. As a result, kids are learning more and spending fewer days out of school. Plus, they're learning how to take care of the environment they will inherit.

Diaper-free? A small, but growing movement to abandon diapers completely might be the ultimate in "natural" parenting. DiaperFreeBaby now has groups and mentors in 35 states and 11 countries—but none in my neighborhood, if the reactions of the young moms I queried can be trusted.

Even if you're not ready for a move that extreme, consider taking one or two steps this month to make your family friendlier to the planet so that Earth can remain a safe and healthy place for our kids.

RESOURCES

HealthyChild.org Healthy Child, Healthy World is a nonprofit on a mission to inspire parents to protect young children from harmful chemicals. Their website offers a wealth of information and tips for families to get started.

EarthDay.net April 22, 2010, marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, which makes this a great month for families to take up the challenge to protect the planet and keep our kids healthy now and for generations to come. Learn more and (maybe) find local activities.

Energy Optimization



About Energy Optimization

Energy Optimization programs offer solutions that can reduce your energy use and deliver significant savings on your electric bill. These programs are brought to you in partnership with the utilities listed below.

Online Energy Profile

Is your home wasting energy? Use the online Energy Depot to get details on:

- Your energy consumption
- Your home energy use
- How to save on your utility bills

Free energy-saving kit with the completion of a full profile.

Appliance Recycling

Is a second refrigerator or freezer running up your electric bill? Older units can use 2-3 times more energy than newer ones, quite often to chill only a few beverages. Turn in your old working appliance through this recycling program and:

- Get a \$30 Rebate
- Save Money & Energy
- Protect the Environment

Residential & Small Business Energy Star® Program

This program provides incentives for installing Energy Star® qualified products.

Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Great rebates on select energy efficient air conditioners, ECM motors, water heaters and pipe wrap encourage eligible consumers to reduce electricity consumption.

- Municipal electric consumers should call 877-296-4319 for more information
- Electric co-op members should contact their electric provider for details.

Energy Efficiency Assistance/ Income Qualified

If you're having trouble managing your energy bill, this program offers assistance. Improvements can be made to your existing home at no cost. To qualify, you must be eligible for the Department of Energy's weatherization program and your household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

To enroll in this program, please contact your local Community Action Agency.



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Contact us for more information
877-296-4319
or check out our website at
www.michigan-energy.org



City of Stephenson



Ontonagon County REA



Newberry Water & Light Board

Morels!



May is Morel Month in Michigan. Most of these recipes are from the "Taste Of Boyne 1995 Morel Mushroom Cookbook," a publication of the Boyne City Mushroom Festival (see p. 19). Find even more recipes at countrylines.com.

Rainbow Trout With Morel Stuffing

6-7 oz. fresh rainbow trout fillets
 1/2 lb. smoked bacon
 1 c. fresh spinach, chopped
 1/4 c. domestic mushrooms, sliced
 1/4 c. Shiitake mushrooms, sliced
 1 c. fresh morels or 1/4 c. dried, reconstituted in water, quartered
 1/4 c. chopped leeks
 1/8 t. sage
 1/8 t. basil
 salt and pepper
 3 c. flour
 3 eggs
 2 c. milk
 1 c. chopped walnuts
 1 c. bread crumbs

Sauté bacon until golden brown. Drain off grease, reserving 2 tablespoons in sauté pan. Add shiitake, domestic and morel

mushrooms; sauté gently. Add leeks and continue cooking on low heat. Add spinach and sauté until spinach becomes soft. Finish with sage, basil, salt and pepper to taste. Lay trout, filleted open, skin side down. Spoon on stuffing and fold over in half carefully. Combine walnuts and bread crumbs and place in shallow pan. Beat together eggs and milk. Roll each fillet in flour, then dip in egg wash. Roll in walnut-crumbs mixture. Place in an oven proof, preheated sauté pan. Brown fillets on each side. Place in a 400° oven; bake 10-15 minutes.

Stafford's, Boyne City

Chicken-Morel Bisque

3/4 c. butter
 3/4 c. flour
 2 minced shallots
 2 c. Half and Half®
 6 c. good quality chicken stock
 2 c. chopped, cooked chicken
 1 c. heavy cream
 1/4 t. grated fresh nutmeg
 salt and white pepper
 1 oz. dried morels, reconstituted and drained
 1/4 c. butter

1/2 lb. fresh morels

Sauté reconstituted, dried morels in 1/4 cup butter; set aside. Melt 3/4 cup butter in a 3-quart saucepan; sauté shallots for 2 minutes to soften. Whisk in flour and cook for 2-3 minutes without allowing to brown. Add Half and Half and whisk smooth. When thickened, gradually add chicken stock and cook for 5-6 minutes; stirring constantly. Stir in chicken, morels and heavy cream. Season with salt and pepper. Heat to serving temperature but do not allow to boil. Makes 8 servings.

The Rowe Inn, Ellsworth

Spinach Balls

2 sm. pkgs. frozen chopped spinach
 18-oz. pkg. Pepperidge Farm® seasoned stuffing mix crumbs
 4 eggs
 3/4 c. butter or margarine, melted

1 med. onion, finely chopped
 1/4 t. thyme
 1/2 t. garlic
 3/4 c. chopped morel mushrooms
 1/2 t. pepper
 3/4 c. Parmesan cheese

Cook spinach as package directs; drain well. Beat eggs; add all ingredients and mix well. Chill mixture for 1 hour. Roll into bite-sized balls and place on cookie sheet. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Serve immediately. These can be made ahead, frozen, then baked as needed. Makes 60-80 pieces.

Deer Lake B&B, Boyne City

Morel and Asparagus Quiche

1 9-inch pie shell, prebaked for 5 minutes
 2 t. butter or margarine
 1 T. minced onion
 6 fresh morel mushrooms, halved or dried morels soaked for 2 hours
 4 eggs
 1 1/2 c. milk
 1/2 c. plain yogurt
 1 t. Dijon mustard
 1/2 t. thyme
 1/4 t. salt
 1 c. grated cheddar cheese
 2 fresh asparagus spears, blanched, cut into 3-inch pieces
 1/4 c. chopped, seeded tomato
 1/3 c. Parmesan cheese

Melt butter in skillet; sauté onion about 2 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté until tender, set aside. In a bowl, food processor or blender, blend eggs, milk, yogurt, Dijon mustard, thyme and salt. Stir in cheddar cheese. Pour egg mixture into pie shell. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes or until filling begins to firm up. Top with mushrooms, asparagus and tomato. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and continue to bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and quiche is golden brown, about 15 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting.

Duley's State Street Inn, Boyne City

Morel and Leek Pizza

pizza dough of choice
 1/4-1/2 c. pizza sauce or pesto sauce of choice
 Mozzarella cheese, sliced or shredded
 morels
 leeks
 spinach
 herbs of choice

Place pizza stone or baking sheet in a 500° oven. Wash and slice morels and leeks; sauté gently in butter; set aside. Prepare dough. Top dough with sauce, sautéed morels, leeks and cheese. Remove pizza stone from oven. Slide

► **Send in your recipes!** If published, you'll receive a free kitchen gadget. Send in: **SAUCE recipes by April 10**, **APPETIZERS by May 10**, and **POULTRY recipes by June 10**. Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email jhansen@countrylines.com.

prepared pizza onto stone and place back in oven. Bake at 500° for 5-10 minutes until golden brown.

Kim Brown, Morel Festival Committee

Morel Mushroom Gravy

1/2 c. dried morels
warm water
4 T. butter
3 T. Wondra® or flour
3/4 c. milk
salt and pepper to taste

Cover dried morels with warm water and soak for 1/2 hour. Strain water from morels through a coffee filter, reserving water; set aside. Cut morels into pieces. In a saucepan, melt butter; stir in flour. When mixed, add milk and morel-flavored water. Stir until thickened. Add morel pieces; heat through. Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Serve over warm biscuits.

Pam Chipman, Boyne City

Moe's Favorite Morel Sauce

1/4 lb. butter
3 green onions with tops, chopped
2 c. fresh morels, quartered lengthwise
1 sm. clove fresh garlic, minced
1 c. heavy cream
flour
1 c. Chablis wine
salt and pepper

Roll morels in flour. Melt butter, sauté green onions, garlic and morels until morels are limp. Add wine and bring to a boil; boil for 1 minute. Reduce heat and simmer to reduce liquid. Add heavy cream; simmer 5-10 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve over char-broiled poultry or steak.

Lena's Wine Cellar, Boyne City

Morel Mayonnaise

6 egg yolks
1 t. salt
pinch white pepper
2 T. wine vinegar or lemon juice
3 c. safflower oil
2 T. mustard, optional
2 lbs. morels
2 c. Madeira wine

Wash morels, soak in Madeira for one hour; set aside. In a non-steel bowl, season egg yolks with salt and pepper and half of the vinegar or lemon juice. Whisk until smooth. Slowly add oil to mixture, adding 1-2 tablespoons at

a time and whisking until combined with egg mixture. When mixture begins to thicken, oil may be added more quickly. Mayonnaise will become hard to whisk, add remaining wine vinegar or lemon juice. Continue beating and adding remaining oil. Place marinated morels and Madeira in a saucepan on medium heat; sauté mushrooms for 5 minutes. Remove mushrooms; cook Madeira until reduced down to approximately 1/4 cup. Blend mayonnaise, morels and reduced Madeira in a food processor until smooth. Yield 1 quart.

Wolverine Dilworth Inn, Boyne City

Salmon Fillets With Wild Mushroom Ragout

3 T. butter
5 shallots, minced
18 oz. assorted mushrooms – morels, oysters, chanterelles
3/4 c. bottled clam juice
2 T. whipping cream
2 t. chopped, fresh tarragon
6 6-8 oz. salmon fillets
fresh lemon juice
2 T. butter, melted
fresh tarragon sprigs

Preheat broiler. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add shallots; sauté 2 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high; add mushrooms and sauté 8 minutes. Add clam juice and wine; boil until liquids are syrupy, about 20 minutes. Add cream to mushrooms, simmer until thickened. Mix in tarragon, and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange salmon, skin-side down on broiler pan. Brush with lemon juice, then melted butter. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Broil just until cooked through, without turning, about 6 minutes. Transfer to plates. Spoon mushrooms over salmon. Garnish with tarragon. Yield 6 servings.

The Tannery Saloon, Boyne City

Boyne City

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May 13-16



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at 800-482-7171 or 8-1-1**

Know what's below. Always call MISS DIG before you dig.
Visit www.missdig.org for more information.



It's Digging Season, Remember to Call

Spring is finally here, and so is National Safe Digging Month! With the snow melted and the ground ready for planting, anxious homeowners, like yourself, are gearing up to start those outdoor digging projects. Before you reach for that shovel to start, remember to call MISS DIG at 811 to ensure that your buried utility lines are marked.

National Safe Digging Month was designated to remind us that our land is made up of a complex underground infrastructure of pipelines, wires and cables. Striking an underground utility line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Michigan law mandates that a call must be placed to MISS DIG before every digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs, to building a deck or installing a rural mailbox. MISS DIG also takes calls and notifies the electric company when a project is in close proximity to overhead electric lines.

Here's how it works:

One free, simple phone call to 811 makes it easy for MISS DIG to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig. The call center is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to take these calls.

Call at least three business days prior to digging to ensure enough time for the utility lines to be properly marked.

When you call 811, a representative will ask for the location and description of your digging project.

MISS DIG will notify the affected utility companies, who will then send a professional locator to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines



at no charge.

Once the lines are properly marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the flagged areas.

MISS DIG has processed over 17 million calls in its 40-year history,

and remains dedicated to protecting the public and utility infrastructure in Michigan. You can protect yourself and your utility service by always calling 811 before digging and working safely around the utility marks and lines themselves.

For more information on safe digging practices or any of the programs offered by the call center, please visit missdig.org.

— Eric Urbain, MISS DIG System, Inc.

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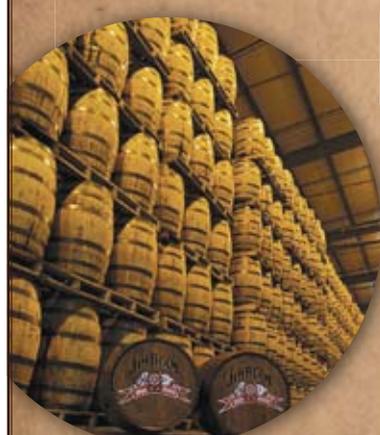
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Michigan Steelhead

...From California With Love

As other anglers along the Little Manistee watched, another angler clearly had his hands full.

His fishing rod was bent over from the weight of a hook-stung rainbow trout, while all marveled at the red-flanked steelhead's power and feisty refusal to quit. It thrashed clear of the water to tail-walk over the stream top before plunging back into the battle.

After several minutes of this give-and-take, the fish finally ran out of steam and another angler waded up to help with a landing net.

The fish's size and beauty is an answer to why it's so popular among Michigan anglers. Subduing this magnificent cold water game fish is a trophy experience in itself, and April is the time to join this game, as steelheading fever spreads.

It is something we can thank early-day fisheries pioneers for when they decided to add this acrobatic member of the Pacific salmon family to the state's waters.

Yes—you read it right. The rainbow trout, once thought to be a true trout of the salmon family, like the brown trout, is actually a close relative of the Pacific salmon—a family that includes the coho, chinook and pink salmon. However, unlike its Pacific cousins, the rainbow often survives after spawning and may, if not injured or over-stressed during spawning, return to the natal streams where it was born (or released to be imprinted) again in future years.

Michigan received its first rainbow trout from California 134 years ago. Michigan's steelhead were first reared and released to state waters from stocks developed primarily from the McCloud River strain. From these original California imports were developed what we now call the Michigan steelhead. Over these 136 years, many additional strains were brought in and have combined, evolved and contributed to the genetic development of the Michigan or Little Manistee strain.

Michigan's steelhead stocks began with both hatchery and wild fish, specifically the

Campbell's Creek and McCloud strains from California; to these strains were added fish from the Klamath River in Oregon. These were first planted in Michigan's AuSable River. Though the Upper Au Sable is noted more for its brown and brook trout fishing, it still has land-locked rainbows that would have been running upriver until they were cut off from Lake Huron by power dams.

The program's success resulted in the planting of rainbows into many tributaries throughout the state. By 1903, Michigan was

One happy steelheader on the Little Manistee River.

planting out 800,000 fry in over 50 of its 83 counties.

By 1908, plantings of over 1 million fish were made, with numbers increasing to 2.5 million by 1911 and 5 million in 1914. Much of the stock reared then came from the Paris fish hatchery along the Muskegon River. These numbers were supplemented by 4 million wild fish from the Pine River (landlocked ancestors of the Pine rainbows still swim and tempt anglers in that watershed today).

From rainbow stocks in the Little Manistee River, the modern steelhead program took off in 1966. Eggs and milt (male sperm) were taken from rainbow trout in the wild Manistee, Little Manistee and Platte rivers. Since 1968, the Little Manistee River has been the major source of Michigan steelhead eggs. Eggs are collected at a weir, stripped from females by injecting air into the egg sac, but leaving these females unharmed and fit to be released back into the stream. Milt taken from the males is then mixed with the eggs, and each batch held for an on-site inspection and health check.

Any infected eggs are destroyed and healthy eggs are transferred to hatchery facilities like Oden, where fingerlings hatch and then go to rearing facilities to grow to release size.

Recent creel studies show that many steelhead caught in Michigan waters are wild fish that have evolved and adapted well since the late 1800s. Michigan has come to the forefront of management and preservation of its great steelhead resource.

Today, the Little Manistee River supports a fishery with annual runs of over 10,000 adult steelhead trout and is maintained entirely by natural reproduction. The Little Manistee facility produces over 5 million eggs each year that go to hatcheries here and in other states.

And now, April is here, bringing a chance to test your luck against what is clearly one of America's legendary game fish.

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Wolverine Clean Energy Venture Update



Wolverine Power Cooperative announced the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture (WCEV) in May 2006. Nearly four years later, the cooperative continues working to advance the project.

The WCEV has two components—a power plant and a wind farm. The proposed power plant would use solid fuels to generate up to 600 megawatts of electricity continuously and economically. The proposed site for the facility is the Carmeuse Lime & Stone quarry near Rogers City.

The proposed wind farm would be sited four miles east of Rogers City. To determine the viability of this project, Wolverine has been collecting weather data at the proposed site, including the temperature and wind speed and direction.

Let's take a closer look at the status of the project.

Power Plant

■ **Permits** – Wolverine and Carmeuse have obtained the permits needed to expand the existing harbor at the Carmeuse limestone quarry. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE) also approved the landfill permit for the project.

Wolverine expected a decision on its air quality permit from the MDNRE in 2009 and continues to wait for word.

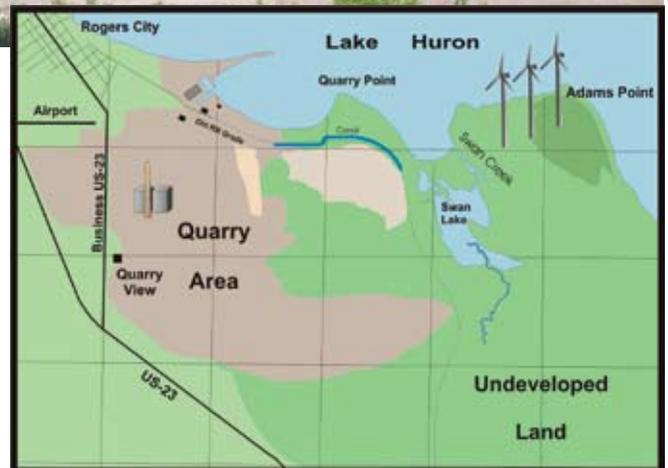
Permit documents were filed in September 2007.

“The air permit is the most critical for the power plant,” says Eric Baker, Wolverine president and chief executive officer.

■ **DOE Grant** – The United States Department of Energy (DOE) awarded Wolverine a \$2.7 million grant for development of a carbon capture and sequestration demonstration project at the power plant site. Additional grant monies may be available provided the Wolverine demonstration project is selected by the DOE.

■ **Biomass** – Wolverine's work with Michigan Technological University and Michigan State University in planting and maintaining biomass crops continues. Biomass is renewable organic matter including wood, woody forest and mill residues and switchgrass. Up to 20 percent of the fuel for the WCEV plant could be sustainable biomass.

Plans for 2010 include new plantings of hybrid poplar trees and switchgrass on 15-acre, operational scale plots. Previously, smaller tracts of land were planted for testing, and these trial plots will continue to be monitored.



Above is a computer rendering of the proposed Wolverine Clean Energy Venture power plant near Rogers City, with an accompanying map drawing of the project layout.

Wind Farm

Weather data collected at the proposed wind farm site indicates the project could be viable. However, development of the wind farm would correspond with development of the power plant. The wind farm is not likely to be financially feasible without the power plant.

Bottom Line

Wolverine is pleased with its progress on the WCEV, yet time is not on the cooperative's side. The air permit is needed.

“The window of opportunity for this project will shrink as interest rates begin to rise,” Baker explains. “However, we continue to believe in Rogers City. It's a world-class site for electric generation.”

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland Feb. 22, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the annual distribution performance standards report that each utility must submit to the Michigan Public Service Commission, measuring such things as outage response time and duration, how quickly phone calls are answered, and the time needed for construction of a new service.
- Read and approved “Board Policy 110—Delegation of Authority from the Board to the General Manager” and “Board Policy 113—Member Access and Use of Cooperative Records.”
- Discussed the Portland facility renovation project, which is nearing the end of the planning stage and will soon go out for bids.
- Learned of member focus groups held by Missy Robson, manager of member services, to seek comments on a re-design of the electric bill form.
- Re-elected Laverne Hansen to represent the cooperative on the Wolverine Power Cooperative board of directors, and Dean Floria and Mark Kappler to serve as representatives on the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association board.
- Reviewed preliminary January 2010 and updated December 2009 financial statements, and learned there were 65 new members for the month.
- Acknowledged the January safety report, with two safety meetings listed.



HomeWorks Tri-County members have used Co-op Connections® Card pharmacy benefits

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Chris Reed Named Line Supervisor

Chris Reed has been named Electric Line Operations Supervisor for our Portland District Office.

Chris joined HomeWorks in 1988 as an apprentice lineman and assumed progressive responsibility, serving the last ten years as crew leader.

During his service as crew leader, Chris also has periodically served as backup to Matt Miller in his role as electric line operations supervisor.



Line Supervisor Chris Reed

Chris has attended several technical and leadership training programs sponsored by MECA, along with safety coordinators' workshops for more than 10 years. He is a member of our safety committee, working to develop and refine policies and procedures, and serving on accident investigations.

“As a long-term employee, I have developed an appreciation for providing first-class service to our members,” Chris says.

Chris is a 1982 graduate of Portland High School and completed the Wolverine Joint Apprenticeship & Training Committee program in 1992. He and his wife, Lisa, live near Portland with their two daughters.

“We were very fortunate to have an outstanding group of qualified internal candidates for both this position and electric operations manager, for which Matt Miller was selected,” says Mark Kappler.

“In fact, most of our last several openings, including newly created positions, have been filled by current employees. It's a testament to our solid training and leadership programs, and it says a lot about the high quality of the employees who make up the HomeWorks family.”

People Fund Helps Special Campers

Meeting March 3, the Tri-County Electric People Fund made nine grants for a total of \$10,441.79.

• \$500 to EightCAP, Inc., of Greenville, to help with expenses for Camp Wah-Wah-Tay-See, providing summer camp for adults and children who use special education services;

• \$800 to Hope's Pantry in Stanton, to help stock the pantry;

• \$750 to Ionia County YMCA for their Strong Kids campaign;

• \$1,000 to Richland Township Library in Vestaburg to purchase books;

• \$881.78 to a Clare County family to help with housing expenses;

• \$996 to an Ionia County family to assist with expenses after a medical crisis;

• \$1,385 to a Montcalm County family for dental expenses;

• \$1,645.80 to another Montcalm County family to assist with medical expenses; and

• \$2,483.21 to a Montcalm County family to help install a new roof.

You helped make these grants possible by

choosing to round up your monthly energy bill to the next dollar.

The difference, which averages less than 50 cents a month, adds up quickly when many members participate. Since the program began in 1993, the People Fund has made over 1,000 grants for more than \$1.5 million to families and community organizations in need.

How To Apply For a People Fund Grant

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI 48875. We'll send you an application form, grant guidelines and other helpful information. You'll also find information and application forms on our website at homeworks.org.

How You Can Help Support the People Fund

Tri-County customers can opt in or out of the voluntary Operation Roundup program anytime. Just enclose a note with your bill payment, or call us at 1-800-562-8232.

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What Members Collect

Ed Frenak of Rochester Hills has been collecting chipmunks for 10 years.



Many of Jeanne Furman's trinket boxes come from antique stores or as gifts. She has collected them for over 20 years. Jeanne lives in Shelby.



Bonnie Smith of Johannesburg collects anything with an owl on it. She has over 1,000 items in her collection.



Do you collect something *unusual*? We'd like to hear about it! Please send your name, address/phone, and a color photo (not from a computer printer) of your collection to Editor, Michigan Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864, or by email to czucker@countrylines.com.

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Harley Jaques Retires After 32 Years With HomeWorks

Safety and reliability have been two key words during Harley Jaques' career in line work.

As a lineman and since 2000 as manager of electric operations for HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Harley has been a leader in making sure young lineworkers are trained on all aspects of their job, in keeping a continual emphasis on safety, and in cutting down trees that threaten co-op members' electric service.

A Family Leaning

Harley, raised with six brothers and sisters on a small dairy farm near Hawkins, west of Reed City, grew up in a family that leaned toward line work. His father had helped build Michigan's rural transmission system, and his



Harley enjoys teaching; here, he's showing members at a 2004 district meeting the wire being used to upgrade power lines.

older brother Dave became a lineworker as soon as he completed high school.

"David had the biggest impact on me becoming a lineman. I followed his path through my career," Harley laughs. "I always wanted to be one step better than my big brother."

Dave retired from two Michigan electric co-ops as operations supervisor; Harley's twin, Gary, worked for Wolverine Power Cooperative most of his career.

Starting Out

After high school, Harley worked for L.E. Myers Co. for about a year, building transmission towers in the Flint area. He and Gary were drafted in 1968 and assigned to the same base for advanced infantry training, plus training as field wiremen (the military equivalent of linemen).

After serving a tour in Viet Nam, Harley returned to L.E. Myers and completed his apprenticeship. He then joined Hydaker-Wheatlake, a contractor from his hometown, and also took on assignments for Wolverine. "They needed someone to hot stick their transmission system, changing insulators on the energized lines," he recalls.

Coming to Tri-County

While working on Wolverine's lines in the Portland area, he connected with Herm Fedewa, line superintendent for Tri-County Electric, and John Fredricks, the Blanchard area operations supervisor; in April 1974, he was called to work at Blanchard.

In 1979, Wolverine offered a position in Big Rapids, his wife Beck's hometown. Harley worked for Wolverine until June 1983, when he decided to return to Tri-County Electric and soon after moved to the co-op's Portland office.

Over the next 15 years he worked as a lineman and crew leader. In 1998, Operations Manager Ray Bouvet asked him to become supervisor at Blanchard and for personal reasons, he says, it was a good move for him.

Because of the distance between the offices, with technology just starting to close some of the communication gaps, there were "some stresses and difficulties," he remembers. As luck would have it, there was a tremendous

windstorm in 1998 that caused so much damage, everyone had to work together to get the power back on for the co-op's members, and that opened the door to better working relationships.

"That was the biggest storm I can remember here. We lost every substation and the transmission system. We brought in at least 15 crews from all over the state," Harley recalls.

Training and Safety

Harley got involved with apprentice training early on, instructing a monthly class for a program that became the Great Lakes Apprenticeship Program. While he no longer teaches, Harley stayed involved by serving on the program's oversight committee.

Training also leads to safer lineworkers, he feels. "MECA (the co-ops' statewide associa-



Harley as a Tri-County lineman in 1989.

tion, that also publishes *Country Lines*) and national safety accreditation brought our standards up. It made us look at safety altogether differently, all the time and every day.

"We went 8 and one-half years without a lost-time accident, until two minor incidents in 2009. I hoped I would go out without a lost-time accident, and we almost made it," he says.

Any look at Harley's career would be incomplete without mentioning the emphasis he placed on removing trees from power line rights-of-way. "We took the word 'trim' right out of former manager Scott Braeger's vocabulary," he recalls. "But the board backed us up and we got our outage times going down."

Into the Future

With retirement, Harley can quit commuting between work and his "beautiful wife Deb." They met nine years ago in Gaylord, where she lives, and since they married last year, have racked up some impressive frequent-driver miles.

He plans to do some remodeling work at their older home, build Deb a new garage, and to enjoy his sons and their families as much as possible.



Harley accepts a safety accreditation certificate from former MECA safety director, Bob Palmbo, in 2004.

Spring Cleaning & Energy Efficiency Work Together

Spring cleaning? Consider using some of your springtime energy to improve energy efficiency around your house. Here are some simple steps, that cost little or nothing, that can cut your energy bills.

Keep the cool air in:

Some of the same low-cost things you did to keep the warm air in during the winter months help keep cool air from escaping during the summer.

▶ Caulk cracks around windows, doors, water pipes and dryer vents. Weather strip



doors, windows and seal leaks around fireplace dampers and attic air vents.

▶ Close the fireplace damper when the fireplace is not in use.

▶ Wash or change your furnace filters every month.

▶ Be sure to have your central air conditioning system cleaned and tuned up before the season. It'll work more efficiently to keep you comfortable, and preventive maintenance now can save you repair bills later.

▶ Trim back any plants or vines growing around the outdoor air conditioner unit.

Light for less:

▶ A bright cheerful home uses less energy when you let the sun shine in. Clean your windows and pull the curtains back during the day. You'll take in more natural light and warmth from the sun.

▶ Of course, when those really hot, sunny days get here, close the curtains on windows facing south and west to keep the sun out

and keep the indoors a little cooler.

▶ Also consider investing in some insulated, thermal-backed drapes for your windows. They'll help keep your home cool in summer and warm in winter.

▶ When you do need the lights on, save money by installing energy-saving compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) wherever they're a good fit.



▶ Take advantage of our \$1 per CFL rebate if you haven't already!

Dial down for savings:

▶ Make sure your central heating is set for the warmer weather, or switch it off altogether.

▶ If you don't already have a programmable thermostat, now is a good time to look into one. You can adjust the times you turn on the heating or air-conditioning according to a pre-set schedule. As a result, you don't operate the equipment as much when you are asleep or when the house is not occupied.

▶ And, you can qualify for a \$20 rebate from HomeWorks, which gets the savings started!



Spruce up your appliances:

▶ Wash/dry full loads of clothes during the evening and use cold water as often as possible (save up to 4 percent on water heating costs).

▶ Buy a new Energy Star® clothes washer and qualify for a \$50 rebate through HomeWorks.

▶ Check the seals on your refrigerator and freezer doors to make sure they are clean and tight. Your refrigerator accounts for up to 11 percent of your household's total energy use.

▶ If you have an older, less efficient refrigerator or freezer, in working condition, we'll pay you a \$30 bounty for each if you arrange through HomeWorks to have it picked up for recycling.



Nick Rusnell
Energy Advisor

Be a fan of energy savings:

▶ Change the airflow direction on your ceiling fan. In winter, let the fan push warm air toward the floor and in summer, switch the direction and draw air upward, cooling the room and ensuring constant airflow.

And a few more ideas:

▶ Look at your foundation walls. If you have an unfinished basement or crawlspace, check for air leaks by looking for spider webs. If there's a web, there's a draft. A large amount of heat is also lost from an uninsulated basement.

▶ Does your home have a sliding glass door? Make sure to keep its track clean. A dirty track can ruin the door's seal and create gaps where heat or cold air can escape.

▶ Flush out the sediment from the bottom of the water heater tank, and set its temperature to 120 degrees.

▶ Wrap the water heater in jacket insulation. And you can qualify for a rebate of up to \$4 on pipe wrap, which helps the water stay hot on its way from the water heater to your sink, tub or shower.

▶ Many appliances, such as microwaves, computers, some battery chargers, TVs and VCRs, are constantly drawing power to run clocks and sensors—more than 50 watts in a typical home. When possible, unplug devices that are used only occasionally.



Nick Rusnell

Giving Hope to Haiti

After spending a week amid the devastation and desperation in Haiti, Lane Wildfong went back to work at Cherryland Electric Cooperative literally counting his blessings.

Haiti was hit on Jan. 12 by an earthquake that measured 7.0 in magnitude and reportedly killed more than 150,000 people and left hundreds of thousands more homeless.

"It really hit home to me how good we have it here," said Lane, a 29-year-old apprentice lineman who has worked at Cherryland almost four years. "The irony is that one day, near the end of our trip, we went to the ocean. When we were looking out toward the ocean, it looked like heaven. When we turned around and saw all the destruction on land, it was like we were in hell."

But that didn't stop Lane and seven members of a Buckley church group from rolling up their sleeves and helping out for a week in early March. In fact, Lane says the experience was life-changing.

"I witnessed a miracle from God when I saw a little 10-year-old girl survive after being told earlier in the night that her chances of living were 10 percent," he said. "We were told she had cerebral malaria."

In fact, he said that particular night was one he'd never forget. In addition to helping doctors and nurses keep tabs on the ailing girl, Lane was called away to deliver a baby.

"As an EMT, I had always wanted to experience a birth, but not quite the way this happened," he said. "The mother delivered standing up, so I caught it coming out. There were a few other people there to help, but the baby and the mother were fine. In fact, within 15 minutes after the birth, the mother, baby and her friend left to go home."

In the meantime, the 10-year-old girl began to show improvement during the night. By the light of morning, doctors said she would survive.

"It was quite an emotional night," said Lane. "I got back to the little Wesleyan church we were staying at nearby and began to cry like a baby. It's funny, the first three days we were there, we were so busy



Donations are still needed in Haiti. Here are a few reliable sites for giving:

ClintonBushHaitiFund.org
RedCross.org
Care.org

Lane Wildfong visiting with Haitian children.

and everything was so new that we just took everything in. But after that, when small miracles happened, we cried quite a bit—mostly tears of joy."

What struck Lane as much as the destruction in Haiti was the upbeat attitude of the Haitian people.

"They are beautiful people in every sense of the word," he said. "They would always smile and greet you. And physically, they are mostly slender and dress up on an everyday basis as much as they can. That surprised me."

Lane and his church group spent the first part of the week helping to build a 16 x 24-foot clinic to treat people. Before the clinic was built, patients were seen under tarps to shield them from the harsh temperatures.

"It was hot all the time," Lane said. "It was in the 90s during the day and in the 80s at night."

The second half of his week was spent helping the Haitian people in any way he could. Lane and his group ate some of their own food they brought over, but were also treated to some "fantastic" meals by the Haitian relief group.

"With my electrical background at Cherryland, I did the wiring for the clinic," he said. "But they didn't have electricity yet. I just got it ready to be hooked

up when electricity becomes available."

For Lane and his group, the experience was both spiritually rewarding and eye-opening.

"In just the week we were there, you could see how hard the Haitian people were trying to keep going, trying to forge ahead," he said. "Markets were going back up and people appreciated the little things that we brought over with us, like flashlights, toys and candy."

"I think what we did—and what the relief effort is doing—is offering a glimmer of hope to these people again. And they are responding with kindness and smiles. That's what kept us going."

But it also made Lane yearn to return to his family.

"It made me realize how blessed we are here and how we take the great lives we have for granted," he said. "When I got home, I hugged my wife and kids so hard. My wife and I cried together for a half hour when I got home."

"It made me feel good to know that we helped in a small way," he said. "And little by little, their conditions are improving. That's what keeps them going. That's what gives them hope."

Nick Edson is communications coordinator for Cherryland Electric Cooperative.

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11:30 Save with Energy Optimization

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12:30 Personal Home Energy Audits

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