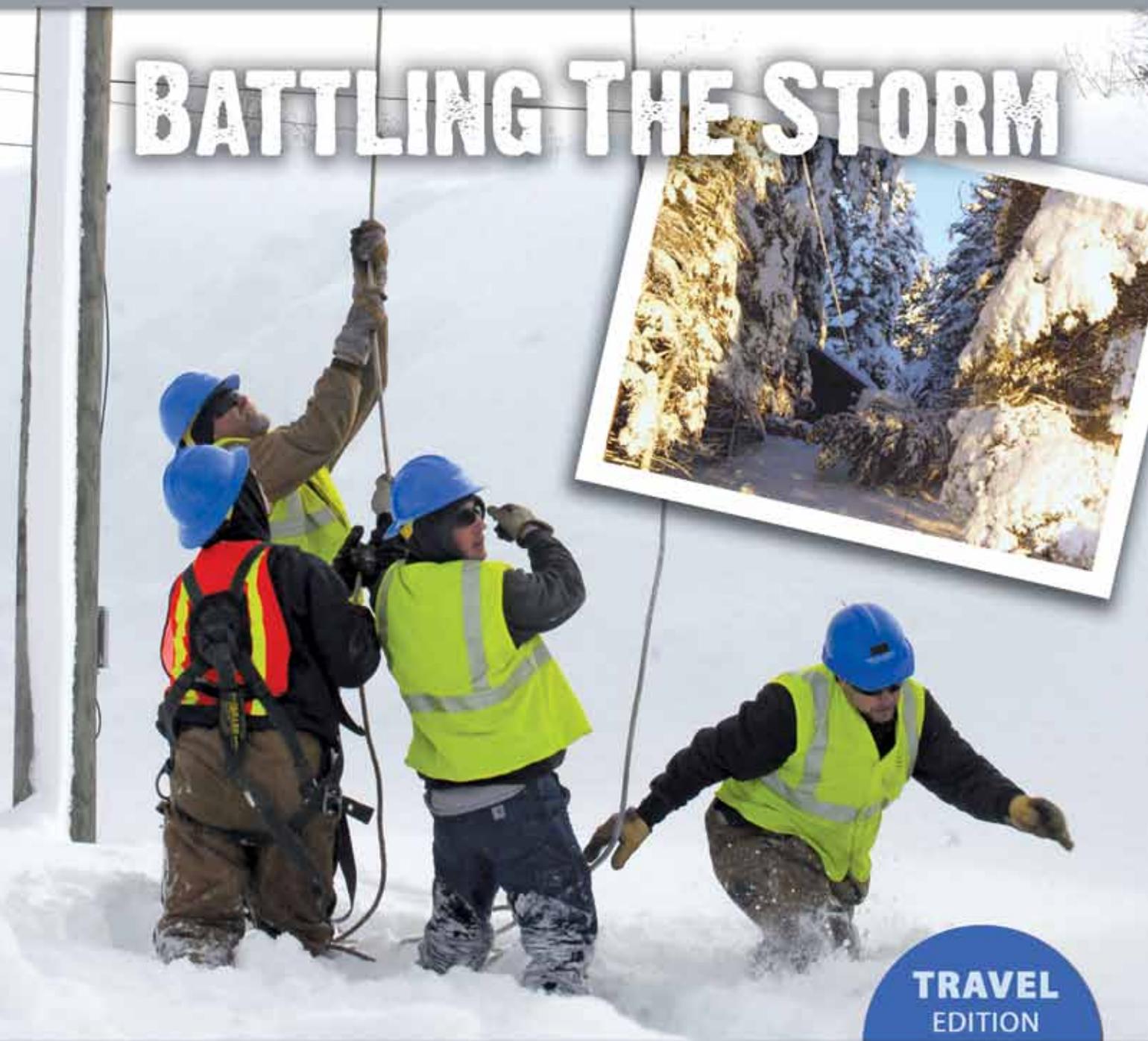


Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

BATTLING THE STORM

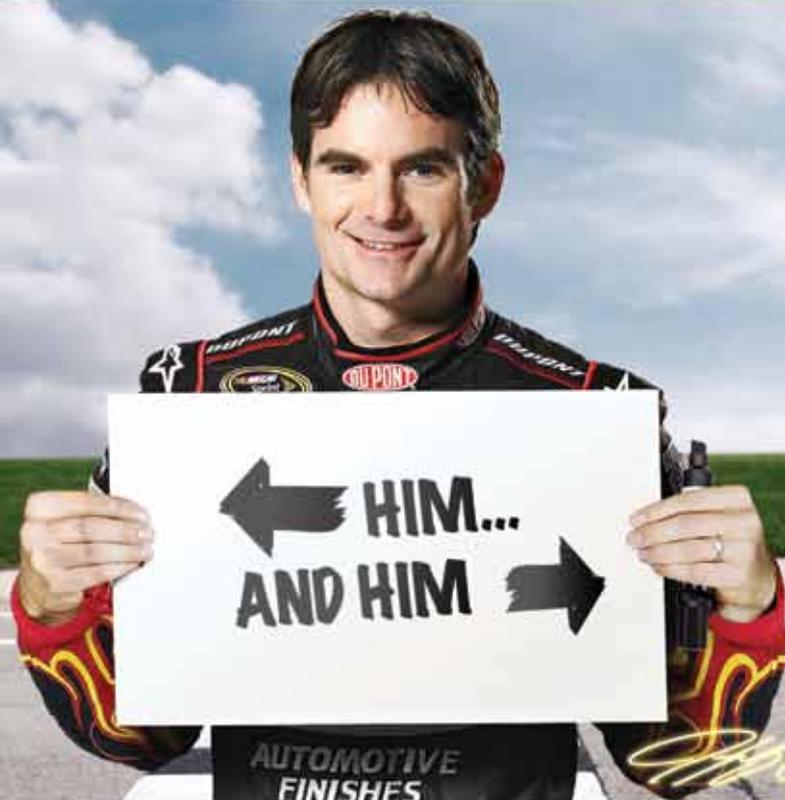


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EDITION

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9 Comic Books Were Part Of Growing Up



A WATERFURNACE GEOTHERMAL UNIT IS LIKE TAKING TWO CARS OFF THE ROAD

(Sorry, you can't pick *which* two...)

Jeff Gordon's office is a bit more extreme than most. It's hot. It's loud. You don't want to know what he spends on gas. So when Jeff gets home, he wants to be comfortable without spending a fortune on fuel. That's why when it was time to decide how to condition his house, Jeff chose a WaterFurnace geothermal heat pump. A WaterFurnace geothermal system uses the clean, renewable energy stored in your backyard to save up to 70% on heating, cooling and hot water. It's the environmental equivalent to planting an acre of trees or taking two cars off the road. It's good for the environment, it's great for your budget and thanks to a 30% federal tax credit, now is the best time to act. For more information, contact your local WaterFurnace dealer today.

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Editor
Gail Knudtson

Associate Editor
Doug Snitgen

Design Editor
Cindy Zuker

Publisher
Craig Borr

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& Midwest Energy versions: Pictured Rocks
National Lakeshore, in the U.P.

Photo - Shawn Malone/LakeSuperiorPhoto.com

Cherryland Electric Cooperative & Great Lakes
Energy versions: The March storm.

Photo - John Russell/Great Lakes Images



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

TOM VAN PELT

President

386-5234 • tvanpelt@cecelec.com

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946-4623 • tlautner@cecelec.com

MELINDA LAUTNER

Secretary

947-2509 • mlautner@cecelec.com

RICK DENEWETH

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929-4526 • rdneweth@cecelec.com

BETTY MACIEJEWSKI

Director

947-0463 • bmaciejewski@cecelec.com

JOHN OLSON

Director

938-1228 • jolson@cecelec.com

JON ZICKERT

Director

631-1337 • jzickert@cecelec.com

GENERAL MANAGER

Tony Anderson

CO-OP EDITOR

Nick Edson

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.– 4 p.m.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

231-486-9200 or 1-800-442-8616 (MI)

ADDRESS

P.O. Box 298, Grawn, MI 49637

WEBSITE

cherrylandelectric.com

PAY STATION

Cherryland Electric office
5930 U.S. 31 South, Grawn

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Million Dollar Storm

As I write this on Friday, March 9, we have 150 lineworkers out in the field trying to wrap up the last 900+ outages on day seven of the worst snow storm to hit Cherryland Electric Cooperative (CEC) in the last 35 years.

It could be the worst in our history, but I just haven't had time to find a retired employee who dates back farther than that amount of time.

The first round of thanks goes out to all the Cherryland members who suffered without electricity. Some were out one day, while others endured for seven days. We did get some negative comments and even a threat or two (luckily the threats were directed at me and I am able to take those in stride).

But, after honest and sincere member criticism is duly noted, I choose to focus on the thousands and thousands of members who remained calm, made the best of a bad situation, and showed patience reminiscent of decades past when electricity was not taken for granted. Our members clearly stepped-up with support and pioneer spirit worthy of the "up north" lives we have all chosen.

The second round of thanks goes to all the employees at Cherryland. Employees from every department maintained a grueling schedule in conditions that ran the gamut over the week-long event. We had wet snow and wind at the start, warm temperatures and rain in the middle, and then back to cold, wind and lake-effect snow at the end.

Through it all, our employees maintained a steady pace while working safely. When you stack multiple 16+ hour days together, it becomes a physical, mental and emotional marathon.

We all talk about our work "family" at times. Like our real families, the whole "family" and "team" at work is tested when everyone spends more time at work than at home for such an extended period. I

am extremely proud of how well everyone worked together day after day. With their backs against the wall, they showed their true colors.

A round of thanks also goes to everyone who provided outside assistance. We received help from fellow cooperatives such as Midwest Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County, Cloverland, and Wolverine Power.



Tony Anderson
General Manager

Outside construction contractors and tree-trimming crews came from United Power, SKF, CC Power, Townsend, Brooks, Hydaker-Wheatlake and Great Lakes

Power & Pipe. The Michigan Electric Cooperative Association was instrumental in helping us find outside assistance during a storm that covered much of northern Michigan and made manpower a scarce commodity.

TCAPS assisted with a bus one night to shuttle a large group of lineworkers to a hotel and back again after a night's rest. By the end of the storm, we had 170 people working in the field. Without question or need to review history, this was the largest workforce ever deployed on the Cherryland system.

In future columns, I will discuss specific issues such as our phone system, public communications and crew rotations. Did we learn some new things? Yes, we learn something after every outage, long or short. The length, wide area (each of our 16 substations had outages) and a never-before amount of tree damage incurred during this event tested every system and plan we had in place.

For the most part, I am proud of how well everyone responded. This doesn't mean we won't spend some time and money on making improvements.

While I think the final cost will be in the \$1 million range, I don't lose sleep over something I can't control, like Mother Nature. I will be well-rested knowing that we took a hard shot from her and together we persevered.



Your Cooperative Scores a Hat Trick

For the third straight year, Cherryland Electric Cooperative has exceeded its energy savings target as set forth in the state-mandated program known as Energy Optimization.

As a quick refresher, all Michigan electric and natural gas utilities are lawfully required to actively pursue reductions in sales of energy to their customers. Utilities achieve reductions by offering their customers cash rebates. One can earn a rebate by replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFLs, recycling an old refrigerator or purchasing new energy efficient appliances.

Of course, as we frequently say in the pages of *Country Lines*, there are no free lunches. To fund Energy Optimization, utilities collect money from their customers through a monthly surcharge. It's labeled "ST OF MICH PA295 MANDATE" on your Cherryland bill.

Since the program started in 2009, Cherryland has billed its members over \$500,000 in Energy Optimization surcharges. Over one-half of those dollars have been returned to members in the form of rebates or free energy-saving products, with the balance being used to pay contractors and auditors, and to offset internal administrative costs.

While surcharges are never a good thing, ours remains well below what most other electric utilities charge. We chose to manage the Energy Optimization program internally, which allows us to continuously look for ways to maximize our energy savings at the lowest possible cost. The decision to handle the

Cherryland's Energy Optimization Summary

	2009	2010	2011	Total
Annual EO Target – kWh	1,025,186	1,777,181	2,698,752	5,501,119
Total Deemed Savings – kWh	2,079,666	2,037,173	3,130,733	7,247,572
Surcharges billed to members	\$111,311	\$223,854	\$235,062	\$570,227
Spent on EO program	\$142,225	\$216,990	\$215,875	\$575,090

Note: The program officially began in July of 2009.

program internally has saved our membership about \$500,000 in additional surcharges.

Our targeted Energy Optimization savings is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh), the same unit of measure we use to bill our members. The targets have increased each

As you can see, Cherryland Electric has met or exceeded the annual EO target set forth by the state each year. However, as the program progresses, the annual target continues to increase into 2012. This year our target is a full 1 percent of total kilowatt-hour sales,

“Cherryland Electric has met or exceeded the annual EO target set forth by the state each year. However, as the program progresses, the annual targets continue to increase...”

year starting at 0.3% of total kWh sales in 2009, followed by 0.5% and 0.75% of total kWh sales for 2010 and 2011 respectively. That translates into a total reduction of 5.5 million kWhs.

Every time a member earns a rebate for an energy-saving improvement, that improvement has a deemed or calculated energy savings value associated with it. Cherryland counts these energy savings values, measured in kilowatt hours, toward our annual goal. For example, one CFL has a deemed savings value of 44.1 kWh and a recycled refrigerator has a deemed savings value of 1,672 kWh.

The above table is a numerical summary of our Energy Optimization journey.

which means a new target of 3,633,973 kWh. That is a huge number, and is the deemed savings equivalent of 82,403 CFLs!

The good news is that we can count some of our prior year's excesses toward the 2012 goal. While this is helpful, much of the low-hanging fruit has already been harvested. There are only so many old refrigerators in our service area that can be recycled and only so many light sockets waiting for CFLs. In addition, many of our biggest commercial members have already taken advantage of the rebate program. Simply put, our goal is getting bigger while our pool of opportunity is drying up.

Clearly, we could use your help. If you are thinking about investing some money in your home to make it more energy efficient, visit cherrylandelectric.com to see what rebates we currently offer. Commercial members should contact me directly at 231-486-9250. Not only will you save money on your energy bill, you can help us stretch our winning streak to four consecutive years. That would be an amazing accomplishment that benefits us all!

The Power of Information

Now you can...

- View your hourly, daily and monthly electric usage
- Analyze your usage patterns
- Compare your billing over multiple periods
- Compile and save your historical reference notes
- Study the relationship between your usage and weather



As a member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, you now have more tools than ever to effectively manage your electric usage. Visit **“Account”** at cherrylandelectric.com and get started today!

Kevin Cragg is the member services manager at Cherryland Electric and oversees the Energy Optimization program.



Letters

Praise and advice regarding the recent storm, more on apples and hospital costs, CFLs, and guidelines for tree-planting. It's all here in your reader letters.



Photo - John Russell, Great Lakes Images

"Thanks to all of the line crews who worked on getting power restored to customers." — George Granlund

Storms & Power Lines

In light of the recent snow we had here in Leelanau County, I would like to make a suggestion regarding the power lines. We could take a more proactive approach to the emergency that arises by burying the power lines. I heard this is very expensive, but if put in perspective of the cost of restoring power to business and homes, not to mention the loss of commerce, and personal inconvenience, I wonder just how much more expensive this process of burying the lines would be.

— Anneke Wegman-Plamondon,
Lake Leelanau

Editor's Note: *It costs about three times as much to install underground cable. This equates to tens of thousands of dollars more per mile-of-line. Further, the life span of underground cable is shorter than overhead, and it is much more time-consuming and costly to locate and fix underground outages.*

Each time they upgrade a section of line, electric co-ops evaluate the cost/benefit of underground lines and review outage history over a period of years. Because they are member-owned and nonprofit, co-ops constantly balance their

responsibility to keep the lights on with maintaining affordable rates.

Thanks To Storm Crews

Thanks to all of the line crews who worked on getting power restored to customers. We went 42 hours without power, but survived. [I have some] suggestions for *Country Lines* articles:

- An hour-by-hour narrative of how Cherryland handled the storm.
- A description of how to use a generator to power a furnace or other appliances in an emergency. Both good and bad practices.
- What to do in an emergency, such as preserving food, keeping warm safely, etc.

The storm can be a real learning experience. Again, thanks to the crews for the hard work.

— George Granlund

Editor's Note: *There's a storm story on pages 12-13, and electrical safety stories are scheduled for all issues (always p. 25).*

Safety information on using generators and around downed power lines appeared in March (also on countrylines.com), and the May issue will feature storm safety. Thanks for asking about these important topics.

An Apple A Day

Enjoyed reading the "An Apple a Day" story in the February issue of *Country Lines*.

We have one such Yellow Transparent apple tree on our farm in Garden (Upper Peninsula). Mike Buda suggests that, "If you have a tree, treasure it." The tree is about 100 years old and is starting to "deteriorate" with old age. About five years ago, my neighbor and I decided to keep the tree living as long as possible. Every fall, we give it some necessary maintenance. We currently have a cable wrapped around the trunk to keep it from splitting any further. Mike is correct about the deliciousness of the fruit from this tree. My mother made great pies and sauce with the apples from this tree over 60 years ago. The threshing crew and family loved her delicious homemade apple pies.

— Steve and Roseanne
Pscodna, Garden and Lansing

Who's Paying Hospital Costs?

Let me offer a possible answer to Mike Buda's January "Ramblings" column, where he wonders who is paying the costs for his hospital roommate, Roger. Most likely, everybody who pays health insurance premiums or out-of-pocket for medical services shares the expense of Roger's health care. This is one of the reasons why medical care and health insurance premiums cost so much. If Roger's on disability, then taxpayers pay.

Any society has to decide whether they treat their fellow citizens or let them die. While some in our country would choose the latter (as shown in

recent debates), most of us living in a civilized society choose to treat people in need of care. As it should be.

If you choose to drive, you are required to be insured. You can choose not to drive. You can't, no matter how healthy or careful you are, choose not to get sick or injured. That's why the Individual Mandate (requires that everyone be insured) part of the new health care law is crucial to making this law work.

Until now, the burden of paying healthcare costs for the "Rogers" among us was left to the insured (through higher rates), or to taxpayers when the "Rogers" go on disability. In 2014, when the Affordable Care Act kicks in, everyone will be covered, and everyone will pay into the system. The burden of caring for "Roger" will be shared by many rather than few, if we are going to continue our moral tradition of treating our neighbors instead of letting them die. Then Mr. Buda won't have to wonder, because Roger will be insured.

— Jeff Lange, Alanson

Geothermal Heating/Cooling Contractor?

I need help finding a contractor for my house in Rosscommon, MI.

— Kevin Forrest

Editor's Note: *Visit the Michigan Geothermal Energy Association's website at earthcomfort.com for contractor and other information, or email info@earthcomfort.com.*

Burned About CFLs

I want to tell you I resent being told what kind of lightbulbs to use (CFLs). It takes them much longer to come on, and I am used



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Use motion sensors on your lights to save on your electric bill. These sensors turn on lights automatically when someone enters a room and turns them off after a person leaves.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

to flipping the switch and having light. Not so with these new bulbs. For me, it will be more costly as they do not give enough light for me to see, and I'll have to use more of them. You claim it will save 25 percent energy, but on the other hand, if I have to use two instead of one, how is that saving energy? Where I use a 75-watt now I have to go to 100-watt in the new bulbs. That is not saving anything. They are also harder to dispose of. Maybe that is what they want them to do is use more. Everyone I talk to says the same thing. In fact, I know people buying up the regular lightbulbs by the case hoping to have enough to last their lifetime. I paid almost \$10 for a 3-way one and it doesn't fit any table lamp I have with the shade on, and I can't afford to buy new lamps. I took the shade off to make room for the bulb and used it, and it lacks a lot of being anywhere near as good as the old 3-way bulbs. Try doing hand work at night with those new bulbs, and you just can't see. Yes, I have had my eyes checked. My son and his family have had two of them start smoking between the base and the spiral. No, it did not burn out, but it is not safe and they will not use them. What's next? Have we no freedoms?

— Dorothy Hemenway, Decatur

Art Thayer Responds: (Energy Efficiency Programs Director, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association)

Thank you for your letter concerning frustration with CFLs. Although you are using a 100-watt CFL equivalent bulb to replace a 75-watt incandescent bulb, you are still saving energy because the 100-watt equivalent CFL only consumes 23 watts, reducing your energy consumption by over 50 watts every time you use the bulb. As with any appliance, there are vast differences in quality and performance between brands. Consumer Reports (consumerreports.org) has tested and rated

several CFL brands and this is a good source for finding the best-performing bulb. If your electric co-op has an energy advisor they may also be able to point you in the right direction for proper bulb replacement and the best brand. Yet, even the best CFL brand may not be the best fit for your particular use. The federal government is rethinking the requirement to phase out incandescent bulbs and has pushed the effective date of the 100-watt phase out from January 2012 to October 2012. The new incandescent bulbs are more efficient than older incandescent bulbs. Slight smoking and discoloration (brown or black, over time) at the base of the CFL bulb is normal.

Nuclear Opinions

The water flowing through the Saint Clair and Detroit Rivers at each end of Lake Saint Clair has perhaps more energy than three or four nuclear power plants could produce if a reasonable plan to harvest this otherwise wasted energy could be formulated with perhaps the cooperation of Canada or mirror facilities on each side of the border.

— David Shepard

Don't Plant Near Power Lines

The weather is warming and gardeners are getting ready. Please consider an article on planting trees, shrubs, grasses, forbs and rain gardens under electric and power lines. Not only homeowners plant under lines ... I've seen landscapers do the same! In ten years, when the trees are just starting to look good, they'll have to be cut down.

Thank you.

— Beth Clemensen

Editor's Note: The Arbor Day Foundation site at arborday.org has information on "Choosing the Right Tree" that offers planting guidelines, suggests species for different landscape areas, and offers free trees for joining. We've also planned a safety-related story for May.

HomeWorks Youth Serves On National Council

Tyler Orlando, a junior at Chippewa Hills High School in Remus and a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op member, recently returned from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting in San Diego, as part of his year-long service on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council (YLC).



Tyler Orlando

Orlando represented Michigan on the YLC, a leadership group composed of 42 students nationwide. YLC members play an important role at the meeting by assisting at the Congressional Action Center, encouraging members to contact their U.S. senators and representatives on key co-op issues, including protecting consumers and keeping electric bills affordable. The group also kicked off the huge event, which showcased a procession of YLC members carrying their state's flag to open the first general session.

"It was really cool to be part of NRECA's Annual Meeting," Orlando said. "I learned so much about the energy industry and how public policy affects it. And I met people from all across the country. It was an amazing experience."

Orlando was elected by his peers to serve on the Youth Leadership Council during the Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour. The Youth Tour meets in Washington, D.C., every June, where over 1,500 students representing electric co-ops from across the country meet their Congressional representatives, learn about national co-op issues and visit historic landmarks. YLC delegates also attend a summer Leadership Conference in Washington. A national YLC spokesperson is selected during this conference.

Visit YouthTour.coop to see photos and videos and learn more about these electric co-op-sponsored programs.

Why Does the Type of Power We Provide Matter?



Up to 75 percent of every dollar you pay your local electric cooperative goes directly for wholesale power costs. Bucket trucks, poles and wire, right-of-way trimming, payroll, and other operating expenses are covered by the rest.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association



Transformers lower voltage to a level that's safe for use in your home.



Reclosers protect lines and consumers from short circuits and allow temporary faults to clear, which helps keep service energized without needless interruptions.



Capacitors improve the power on the lines—they prevent it from being wasted and help boost the voltage on long distribution lines.

Photos - Shelby Energy Cooperative; United Utility Supply

A Spotter's Guide to Distribution Poles

Ever look up at a utility pole and wonder: “What is all that stuff?”

While wires are easy—everyone knows they carry electricity—how about those attached metal boxes and other mysterious gadgets? What are they called, and what purpose do they serve?

With a little information, you can understand a lot more about the utility lines you pass every day. Not only could “pole spotting” shed light on the work done by your local electric co-op, you just might be able to impress your friends and family. A guide to pole-spotting follows. Please keep in mind:

Utility poles are not for climbing! Looking is okay, but keep a safe distance from all equipment described here.

The measurements and descriptions given here represent common configurations, but in the real world, design varies greatly. Part of why electric co-op employees undergo such extensive training is to enable them to identify components in the field with a high level of confidence and certainty.

Transmission vs. Distribution

First, make sure that the pole you're looking at is a distribution pole and not a transmission pole.

Distribution poles are those you see in your neighborhood, unless your distribution lines run underground. They are generally up to 55 feet high and made of wood. Power running through distribution lines ranges from 4,600 volts to 33,000 volts.

Transmission lines are designed to carry electricity longer distances and at higher voltages—69,000 volts and above. Relative to distribution poles, transmission poles are much larger—from 55 feet to over 100 feet—with the conductors higher off the ground. Some large transmission lines use steel poles and tower structures.

In cases where a pole carries both transmission and distribution lines, the transmission lines will run above distribution lines. An easy rule to follow is the lower the voltage of the line, the lower it is on the pole.

Four Common Devices

- **Transformers** are something most people can already spot—they're hefty metal cylinders that hang off the poles. The transformer that connects your home to a distribution line lowers the distribution voltage to what you need in your house—generally 120 volts for outlets and 240 volts for your air conditioner and clothes dryer. At the top of a transformer, you'll see bushings—ceramic projections with several disks running around the outside. On the inside of bushings are metal conductors; the outsides are insulators, so that when they attach to a transformer the metal casing doesn't become electrically charged.

- **Capacitors** look somewhat like transformers, with bushings on top, but have flat, rectangular casings. While transformers change voltage, capacitors improve the power factor on the utility lines—they prevent power from being wasted and help boost the voltage on

long rural distribution lines.

- **Reclosers** protect lines and consumers from short circuits. For example, if a tree branch touches a line, electric current will flow through the tree, burning it and overheating the wire. Eventually, this will result in a fault that causes a protective device, like a fuse or circuit breaker, to operate and interrupt the power. Circuit breakers “open” the circuit, cutting off the power. Because many shorts correct themselves in a few seconds—as the high current will usually burn a tree limb away from the line—most modern circuit breakers have a mechanism that allows them to reclose a moment later (hence the name recloser). Like transformers and capacitors, reclosers also have bushings. They tend to be rectangular, like capacitors, but squatter.

- **Fuses** are also designed to protect lines and homes from short circuits. But fuses are one-shot devices—a fault, like the tree branch described above, on the load side of the fuse will cause them to burn out. High-voltage fuses look like a bar offset from the pole by one or more insulators. When a fuse blows, lineworkers have to go out and find why the fuse blew, fix the problem, and re-fuse the line to restore power. These four devices are the most common on distribution poles. Once you know what they look like, you'll realize you've been seeing them every day for years.

— Maurice Martin, Cooperative Research Network

Comic Books Were Part of Growing Up

Growing up in the 1960s, my siblings and I thought life was pretty simple.

During the school year, while attending grades K-6, our biggest concern was what games we'd play at recess and what we'd choose to eat at lunch.

During the summer, our toughest choices were which games to play and which comic books to read.

Those are pretty much the same choices kids today have, with one exception.

Comic books seem to have gone the way of baseball cards—adults are now collecting them and have turned them into big business.

It seems that comic books have been left in the dust by computers, smartphones and TV.

But I have to laugh when I hear young people today wonder just how we got by in the 1960s without all this modern technology.

The answer is: We did just fine, thank you. That's not to say I haven't stepped into the modern world of iPads and eBay—I have.

But it seemed like we had plenty to do in the 1960s. We just did things in a different—and simpler—way.

For instance, instead of texting our friends, we went over to their houses to talk. Instead of competing against them in an internet game, we met at the neighborhood ball field and played by the hour.

I'd dare to say we had more social interaction with our peers back then the old fashioned way: face-to-face.

Back in the 1960s, the four Edson kids spent many a lazy summer day in the small Antrim County town of Ellsworth, where our grandparents lived.

Our cousins from Detroit would come up north on vacation and our grandparents had big houses, so we were welcome to stay anytime, which we did.

There were always six to 10 cousins



Nick Edson

around at one time. And, the two staples in my Grandma Patterson's living room, supplied by the grandkids, were a portable record player and comic books.

We'd spin the latest 45s by the Beatles and Beach Boys as we read the new comics—Superman, Batman, Archie, Richie

Rich and Lulu. After that, we'd all change into our bathing suits and walk down to the old swimming hole for the afternoon. We'd come home, eat dinner, then go back to the records and comic books.

Comic books were wildly popular in the 1960s and the latest issues of Superman and Batman were highly prized. The boy cousins sometimes had wrestling matches to determine who would get to read Superman or Batman next. The girl cousins? Not so much.

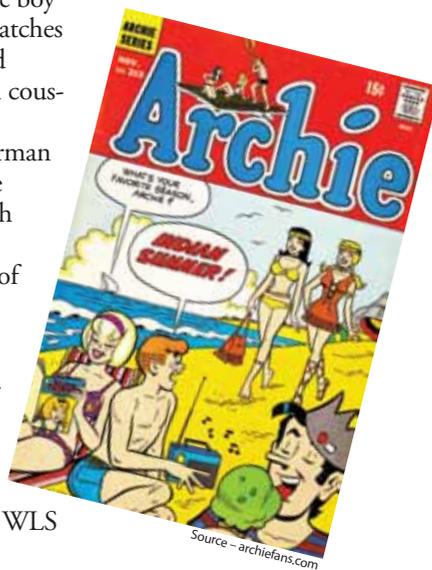
It seemed that Batman and Superman comic books came out every couple weeks, while the Archie, Richie Rich and Lulu comics were published a couple times a week. They weren't, of course, but it did help that Archie had the spinoff comics of Jughead, plus Veronica & Betty.

So our summer days consisted of playing 45s, reading comics and going to the swimming hole. At night, we'd haul out our transistor radios and listen to stations like WLS in Chicago for the latest hits.

outside of swimming and listening to the radio. It's funny, TV was available, but we didn't watch it that much. Our biggest viewing time was probably Saturday morning cartoons.

Those days are mostly gone now—replaced by a new way of doing things and a different way of communicating.

To us—my cousins, brother and sisters—those days were exciting. They must have been, because we still do things like have a “Cousins' Reunion” every year. And one of the topics that always comes up are those wonderful summers spent with each other—not to mention our friends Archie, Jughead & Co.



“It's funny, TV was available, but we didn't watch it that much.”

Then we'd head to the store the next day with our dimes and quarters to buy the latest issue of Teen Beat or other magazines that featured The Beatles or the latest young TV star.

Those teen magazines and comics were about the only entertainment we needed,

BATTLING THE STORM

By Nick Edson

The scene was a mess, and it blanketed most of northern lower Michigan and part of the eastern U.P. with 18-24 inches of wet, heavy snow.

Huge trees were knocked over, pulling down power lines and poles with them.

Two feet of snow blocked roads and driveways.

Over 104,752 homes and businesses were left out in the cold in the service areas of Cherryland, Great Lakes Energy (GLE), Presque Isle Electric & Gas (PIE&G), Cloverland, and Alger Delta cooperatives. The first three were the hardest-hit, but the count doesn't even include consumers affected in areas served by other utilities.

"We had our work cut out for us," said Cherryland line superintendent, Jim Carpenter, of the 20,000 outages in their area. "I've worked here 34 years and I've never seen the kind of destruction that we were facing."

Engineering manager Frank Siepker agrees.

"It wasn't just the amount of damage that was done," Siepker notes. "It was the fact that we had guys walking in waist-deep snow for miles at a time just to get back to where the line was down. We had many places where we couldn't send our line crews until our tree-trimming crews went in and cleared trees away from the road."

The storm hit late on Friday, March 2, and took more than a week of grueling work in fast-changing weather conditions to get everyone's power restored.

Not only were the co-op line crews working 16 hours at a stretch, but outside line, tree-trimming and equipment contracting crews came from all over Michigan and part of Indiana to help. Mutual aid teams, coordinated by safety professionals Joe McElroy and Dan King of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), came from seven other



A crew works to reconnect power lines with the help of a bucket truck. The deep snow and ice produced by this record storm slowed restoration progress, and many outage areas weren't accessible by vehicles, causing some lineworkers to crawl through snow drifts on their hands and knees to reach downed wires.

electric co-ops and nine cities.

About 50 additional crews were called in to assist with Great Lakes Energy restoration efforts alone. By the storm's end, Cherryland had 150 people working in addition to regular staff—the largest workforce ever deployed on their system, and Presque Isle required about 30 additional workers.

"It was a huge undertaking," explains Siepker. "But the bottom line was that we had members sitting in the cold. We couldn't let up until the last one had power."

As the crews struggled to work in harsh conditions, member service representatives were answering phones and updating the media, web pages, and Facebook and Twitter sites with the latest news about power restoration.

"Most of our members understood the monumental task we faced," said Cherryland General Manager Tony Anderson. "But a few became frustrated and voiced that to our employees. That comes along with the job. I'm very proud of the job our employees did handling this massive outage."

At Great Lakes Energy, the state's largest co-op, outages spread over 18 counties and affected over 60,000 of 125,000 members.

"Getting to outage locations took more time with this storm," says Great Lakes CEO Steven Boeckman. "Big line trucks got stuck in the snow. Snowshoes, special tracked vehicles and snowmobiles were needed to get to many trouble spots, and even those sank into the snow."

Rain followed the storm, causing snow to

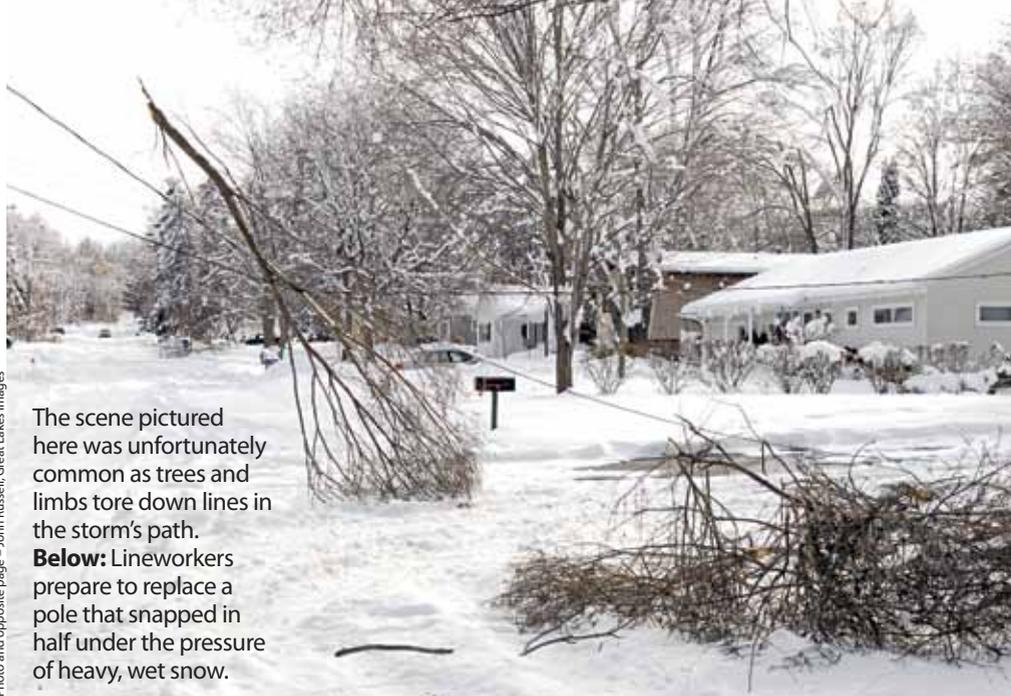


Photo and opposite page – John Russell, Great Lakes Images

The scene pictured here was unfortunately common as trees and limbs tore down lines in the storm's path.

Below: Lineworkers prepare to replace a pole that snapped in half under the pressure of heavy, wet snow.

freeze on some downed wires, and it had to be knocked-off before hoisting them back up into place. Over 50 broken poles were replaced, sometimes using tracked vehicles to haul them in. "Most of this hard, time-consuming work had to be repeated over and over again at each location with downed wires," Boeckman says.

Presque Isle had over one-half of their members—about 18,290 locations—out in their seven-county service area.

Towards the storm's edge, Cloverland and Alger Delta handled their own outages without outside help. "Our line crews began responding to outages early Saturday morning and hit it hard all weekend and continued into Monday morning," says Wendy Malaska, Cloverland marketing/communications director. About 10,000 services across their five-county area were affected, and Alger Delta had 40-50 outages.

"I cannot remember one this bad since the windstorm of '98, and cannot describe how bad it is on the line personnel...extremely challenging!" explains Joe McElroy, MECA's safety/loss control director. Deep snow also means bucket trucks are replaced by lineworkers climbing the slippery poles.

Each co-op has unique stories about how this record storm affected both their members and employees.

Some Cherryland members needed help and came right to the co-op's Grawn office to get it when they needed water for their horses.

They came twice a day, meeting Member Service Manager Kevin Cragg outside as he filled up their big buckets with water. Other times, thoughtful members brought baked goods for employees to eat as they manned the office at all hours of the day and night.

It's not uncommon for co-op employees to

help arrange hotel rooms and meals for field crews, but one co-op even had employees who helped with lineworker laundry and another found a school bus to shuttle crews to and from the hotel after their equipment was stolen in the parking lot.

"It takes everyone to help out by doing things they don't normally do to get the job done," explains Scott Szymoniak, PIE&G's operations/engineering manager. This may mean an accounting employee takes outage calls and member services and management employees run materials and guide outside crews to outage sites.

And sometimes, it means co-op members help, too. Some PIE&G members drove lineworkers on their personal snowmobiles or tracked quads to reach outage sites. "Our members were glad to do anything to help," Szymoniak says.

At Great Lakes Energy, co-op members used snowblowers and tractors to clear roadways and to-the-pole paths for the crews, says operations director Dave Matz. A local restaurant provided meals and refused payment.

On the seventh day after the storm, Cherryland still had 150 lineworkers fixing outages that affected about 400 members; Great Lakes Energy still had 290 members without power; and PIE&G about 25.

The storm's magnitude will incur huge costs for the co-ops that bore the worst damage. For example, Cherryland estimates a final cost in the \$1 million range, Great Lakes \$1.5 million, and PIE&G in the \$500,000 range.

"There were no winners in this thing," says Siepker. "Only survivors. We did the best we could to get power restored. Our members did the best they could to stay warm. Many members told us they would never take electricity for granted again."



Photo – Great Lakes Energy



Photo - Shawn Malone/LakeSuperiorPhoto.com

America's National Parks:

Elliot Creek Falls along the North Country Scenic Trail in the U.P.

Big Value for a Low Price

When it comes to vacations, America's national parks are a perennial favorite. From roaring geysers and sandy seascapes to frontier forts and presidents' homes, these unique treasures boast magnificent landscapes and cultural enrichment.

Lately, they've been getting even better. Visitors are reaping the benefits of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which funded improvements to national park facilities and roads. Ninety-nine percent of these projects are finished, says Jeff Olson, spokesman for the National Park Service (NPS) in Washington, D.C. For example, the scenic Skyline Drive in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park sports dozens of new overlooks with jaw-dropping views and new interpretative signs.

Something for Everyone

National parks, nearly 400 now, offer something for everyone at a relatively low price. Enjoy hiking, biking, swimming, fishing and rafting, shop for locally made crafts at gift

shops, tour museums, explore cliff dwellings, take guided full-moon walks, and learn about science and biology from ranger talks.

The beauty and slower pace of a park vacation also draws people together. Parents are reminded that food cooked over a campfire tastes better. Kids remember how to make their own fun. Those in their '20s finally bond, adult to adult, with their parents. Even the most sullen teenager may crack a smile by the end of a day or two.

"For generations now, people have introduced members of their family to national parks," Olson says. "Parents and grandparents are now introducing their children to parks. These are places where you learn about American heritage and culture."

And, those who enjoy technology won't be disappointed, either. Visitors to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., can use the NPS' free app. The app displays the user's location, highlights historical and cultural points and offers tour suggestions, and gives directions to over 70 sites. Inside other national parks (rural or urban), visitors can deepen their

experiences by using smart phones and other mobile devices at visitors' centers and exhibits. Park websites sport live webcams, podcasts and links to lively social media, as well.

Michigan National Parks

Traveling closer to home, Michigan has its own wonders waiting for discovery within Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw National Historic Park, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, or the North Country Scenic Trail. Together, these national parks hosted 1,912,324 visitors in 2011.

A visit to **Isle Royale**, the country's only island national park, truly means "getting away from it all." At 45 miles long and 9 miles wide (third largest in the U.S.), hikers especially love its remote location and total automobile ban. It's also common to hear distant wolf calls or see a wandering moose or other wildlife in its wonderful, rugged scenery.

Over 160 miles of foot trails, 36 campgrounds, and one hotel are described as ample for those who make the effort to visit "one of the most pristine wilderness areas on earth." Note that the visiting season here is short (mid-April through October), and the Park Service's M.V. Ranger III ferry connects

Isle Royale with Houghton from early June to mid-September.

Established in 1992, **Keweenaw National Historic Park** celebrates life and history on the Keweenaw Peninsula, especially relating to 7,000 years of copper mining. The peninsula houses the oldest, largest lava flow, which created the largest known deposits of accessible pure (97 percent) native copper on Earth. Early miners could break the red metal from the rock to make jewelry and tools, and into coins and electric wire by later generations.

The entire picture of copper mining here, according to Wikipedia, is best-represented by the Village of Calumet (social, ethnic, commercial themes); former Calumet and Hecla Mining Company properties (corporate paternalism and power); and former Quincy Mining Company properties (extraction/processing themes). There's lots more for visitors to experience, from the Quincy Mine Hoist Museum in Hancock to a tour of the Delaware Mine near Copper Harbor, and many other museums, heritage centers, and Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park is nearby, too.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore stretches 42 miles along Lake Superior, and offers 15 miles of giant red, orange and gold-colored sandstone cliffs.

The home of America's first national lakeshore, the rock formations shape natural



Learning about birds of prey from a national park ranger.

Photo - John F. Mitchell

archways, sea caves and waterfalls that are framed by sand dunes. You can see the Rocks close by paddling a kayak through their tunnels, or backpack among the peaks and bases. Most visitors, however, get close on boat tours that depart daily from Munising, or you can hire a plane in Grand Marais or drive to the Miner's Castle overlook.

Other notable sites are many waterfalls,

including Munising Falls, interpretive centers, and nearby forests, lakes and opportunities for four-season activities.

Running through Pictured Rocks is the longest finished segment (581 miles) of the **North Country Scenic Trail**, which also winds through Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and other parts of the U.P. before crossing the Straits of Mackinac into the Lower Peninsula.

Crossing seven northern states, this is the longest of eleven National Scenic Trails. Designed to provide peaceful recreational opportunities in some of our country's outstanding landscapes, it will stretch 3,200 miles from North Dakota to Vermont when it's done. Over 2,100 miles are already certified.

The North Country Scenic Trail is accessible mostly on foot, by hiking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, although bicycles and horses are allowed in some designated areas.

Most Michiganders know that a visit to **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore** has to include "climbing the dunes," but while you're around, try the seven-mile-long Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. This route takes you through several hundred feet of changes in elevation, vegetation, climate and great views of Lake Michigan. From the top of Sleeping Bear, you can see the Manitou Islands, a favorite place for campers and scuba divers.

Michigan also has 1,776 National Register of Historic Places listings, one National Heritage Area, 12 National Natural Landmarks,

Continued ▶

Admission to Most National Parks Is Free!

Most of America's national parks don't have an entry fee.* For parks that do, admission is from \$3 to \$25 (good for an entire carload of people for a week). There are also bargain annual passes, good at over 2,000 federal recreation sites, including a seniors' pass for \$10. In Michigan, you can now buy a pass when you renew your driver's license.

The National Park Service has fee-free days in 2012 at over 100 national parks that usually charge entry fees. The dates are:

- **April 21-29** – National Park Week
- **June 9** – Get Outdoors Day
- **Sept. 29** – National Public Lands Day
- **Nov. 10-12** – Veterans Day weekend.

Search nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparksbystate.htm by park name or state to see which states are offering fee-free days, call 202-208-3818, or connect on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Also, visit the Public Broadcasting Service's website for enriching park stories at pbs.org/nationalparks.htm.

Many park-related hotels, restaurants, shops and tour operators offer specials on fee-free days (see National Park Hospitality Association at parkpartners.org/Special-Offers-for-2011.html and National Parks Promotions Council at nationalparksonline.org/special-offers/).

To find other free attractions (zoos, museums, concerts and festivals) check free-attractions.com or a city's visitor center, chamber of commerce or state tourism websites for ideas in the area you're traveling. Washington, D.C., and New York City boast an array of free activities at washington.org and nycgo.com.

*Fee waiver includes entrance fees, commercial tour fees, and transportation entrance fees. Other fees such as camping, tours, concessions and third party fees are not included, unless stated otherwise.

National Parks, from page 13

and 34 National Historic Landmarks, according to the tourism website at michigan.org.

Lodging = More Than Camping

For lodging, people sometimes picture a grand historic lodge or a tent campground. While these are great options, there are typically other choices through concessioners in the park or in nearby towns. One reason that Great Smoky Mountains Park is continually ranked as most popular U.S. national park is accessibility. It's close to Gatlinburg, TN, and Cherokee and Bryson City, NC, which cater to visitors with a wide variety of affordable accommodations, restaurants, shops, museums, and other attractions.

Popular Acadia National Park in Maine has no "roof" lodging, but the nearby historic village of Bar Harbor offers house vacation rentals, cottages, motels and bed-and-breakfast inns that suit all budgets.

Planning Ahead Is Key

Consider your travel priorities—do you want to drive your car, or fly to the closest airport and rent one? Cook or eat out? Sleep under the stars in the back country or on a real bed? Do you prefer to be near cities or to venture out?

People are surprised that some parks are close to major metropolitan areas. Cuyahoga Valley National Park, blessed with a winding river and fascinating canal history, is only 30 minutes from Cleveland. It also hosts scenic train rides and evening concerts. Stanford House, a bed-and-breakfast inn in the park,

has a self-service kitchen and wireless internet. The renovated farmhouse's room rates, which include a continental breakfast with cereal and fresh fruit, start around \$50 for a small room with a bunk bed and shared bath.

If staying in a quaint cabin is for you, primitive ones can be rented in Shenandoah. The large capacity cabins (roughly \$30-\$45 nightly) have no running water or electricity, but are equipped with mattresses, cookware, and either a wood fireplace or woodstove. In most cases, you carry your items in from between a few tenths of a mile to several miles in. Returning guests rave about the mountain views and the cabins, booked through Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, an authorized concessioner.

Another get-away-from-everything place is Big Bend National Park in Texas. It has

spectacular canyon and mountain scenery, with lots of plants and animals and more types of birds than any other national park in the United States.

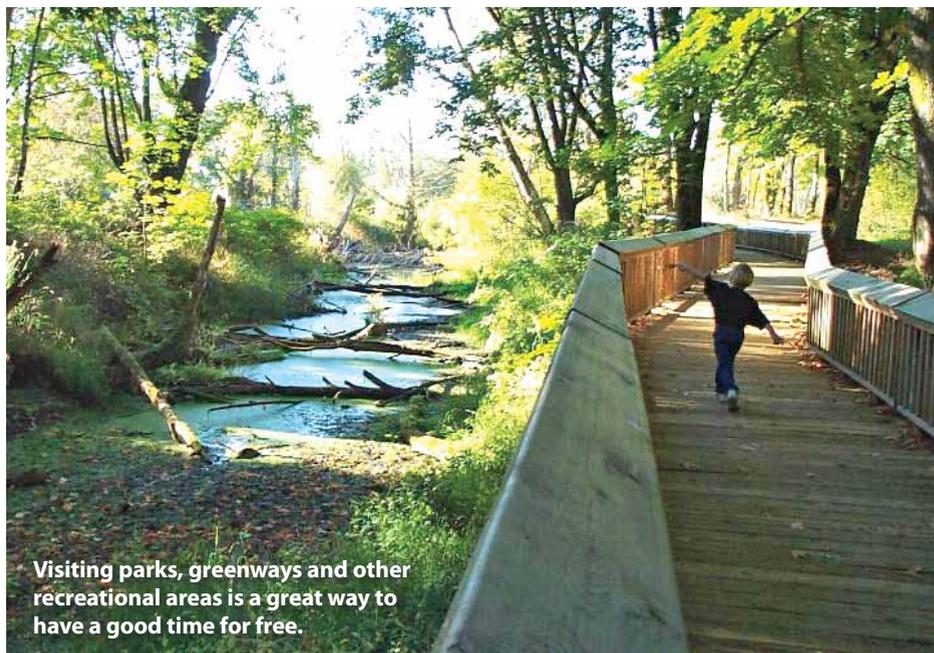
It pays to do your homework. Biscayne National Park boasts urban proximity, colorful coral reefs, and first-rate scuba diving and snorkeling. It's within sight of downtown Miami, but that doesn't mean its logistics are easy. More than 95 percent of this marine park is covered by water, so transportation is by boat here.

Finally, stay open to lesser-known parks. A newer park, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado, receives a fraction of the Grand Canyon's numbers. However, its canyon's combination of narrowness and vertical drop are unmatched by any other in North America.



Grotto Falls in the Great Smoky Mountains

Source - Great Smoky Mountains National Park



Visiting parks, greenways and other recreational areas is a great way to have a good time for free.

Source - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Finding Other Travel Deals

Popular websites such as tripadvisor.com, smartertravel.com or travelzoo.com offer advice from fellow travelers about places to eat, play and stay, plus a wide variety of planning tools, including searches for flights, hotels, restaurants and vacation rentals.

There are also many free or inexpensive cell phones apps that help travelers save money, too. Check user reviews before downloading, and some travel websites (tripadvisor.com) and companies offer free mobile apps.

Social media is great for getting current travel advice. From photos to tweets on great-and-not-so-great deals, insiders dish about lodging, food and attractions. One of the oldest is virtualltourist.com.

Other handy sites for travel deals include affordabletours.com, restaurants.com, hotels.com, and ecruises.com.

Making Better Food

Today, most people only see glass milk bottles in antique stores, or maybe on a dining table holding fresh flowers. But in midwest Michigan, where Hilhof Dairy is based in Hersey, you'll find them in many independently-owned grocery and health food stores.

"It's a healthier way to store milk," says William Straathof Jr., who runs the farm with his wife Connie, and their family. "Plastic leaches formaldehyde. And when not recycled, it fills up our landfills."

Milk products produced by the 48-cow certified organic farm include whole, 2 percent, skim and cream—all packaged in glass bottles that customers can return to the store for a \$2 deposit. They are later picked up and taken back to the farm, where they are sterilized and used again.

"We pasteurize our milk for 30 minutes at 145 degrees, and then it goes directly into the glass bottles with a cream line," he explains. "When cream is left in its natural state (not homogenized), it's 100 percent digestible, and contains more nutrients."

"No homogenization also means a shorter shelf-life, so our products come to customers fresher," William continues. "The milk isn't being trucked long distances or stored in silos."

And, the use of glass bottles is just one example of how the Straathofs practice sustainable agriculture. In addition to milk products, the family also raises and sells organic, grass-fed pork and beef.

"We sell our pork in the summer months—ham, pork chops, sausage and more—and we're sold out in two months," William adds proudly. Their beef products—from New York Strip to ground beef and everything in between—are available year-round.

The Straathof's get all this work done with the help of their children, Karston, Ana and Bianca, and their families. The farm has been in the family for over 50 years, since William Sr. named it "Hilhof Farm" by combining his last name with Hillenaar, his wife Nellie's last name. William Jr. took over the business in the late '70s after his father passed away.

A typical week includes milking the cows, running the farm's retail store, delivering



Photos courtesy-Hilhof Dairy

Operating Hilhof Dairy takes a whole family, including (front row, L-R) Connie and William Straathof Jr., Dave and Ana (Straathof) DePew with their children (Ana holding Landyn and back row, Maddie and Kendal), with Bianca Straathof, Nate Kidder and Karston Straathof on the far right. The DePew's are members of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative.

products to customers, and keeping detailed records for organic certification.

Ana DePew, the Straathof's daughter, and her husband David, a lineworker for Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, started raising certified organic chickens and eggs at their own farm last year. They sell most of their eggs at the Hilhof Dairy store and, if available, to three other grocers. "We can't raise enough chickens for the demand of organic eggs out there!" Ana exclaims.

"One of the biggest challenges in organic farming is that we cannot use man-made chemicals or fertilizers on our land, and if an animal gets sick, we can't use antibiotics," Ana adds. They have had to find more natural ways to keep their land and animals healthy, and they do so by talking to other organic farmers and doing a lot of research.

While achieving organic certification takes time, the pay-off is substantial even for small operations like Hilhof Dairy. They stopped

using man-made chemicals and fertilizers in 1996, and the farm was certified in 2004.

The Dairy's organic products are available at their farm store, and at over 46 stores including the Cadillac, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Brighton areas. (You can also visit online at HilhofDairy.com.)

"And, we now offer chocolate milk made with Dutch cocoa," William adds. Using half the sugar and more cocoa than commercial companies gives it a superior chocolate flavor, he adds.

"More stores want our milk, but we don't want to get too big," William says. "We want to stick to the basics—making better food for people."

Jodi Bollaert is a native Michigander and consummate advocate of Michigan-made. Visit her Facebook page at [facebook.com/FavoriteMichiganProducts](https://www.facebook.com/FavoriteMichiganProducts) for regular posts about the wonderful things made in the mitten.

Tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product. Email czuker@meca.coop or send to: **Country Lines**, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to share why you like it, or a unique story to go with it.





Photo - Nichols Arboretum

Preserving the Peony

Peony lovers everywhere will go gaga over the Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum in Ann Arbor.

Each year a magical fairyland comes alive in shades of white, pink and red peony blossoms, floating over their expansive rectangular beds. Celebrating its 90th anniversary, the Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum displays over 800 peonies, including 270 varieties from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

W.E. Upjohn, a doctor and founder of the Upjohn Pharmaceutical Co. in Kalamazoo, gifted the Peony Garden to Nichols Arboretum in 1922. “He was a major peony connoisseur, with a peony garden covering several acres,” comments David Michener, the Arboretum’s curator.

Upjohn donated hundreds of his own peony cuttings as a legacy to the public through the University of Michigan, his alma mater, which oversees the Arboretum.

“A landscape architect by the name of

Aubrey Tealdi was the Arboretum’s director at the time,” recalls current director, Bob Grese. “There’s a good chance that Tealdi may have done work for the Upjohns, and that was how the connection was made.” And, “Tealdi designed just the right site with perfect drainage, facing north, which protects the shallow-planted tubers from winter thaws and gives them full sun during the bloom season,” adds Michener. “Some people may find the rectangular beds boring (design-wise), but they were actually quite innovative at a time when the baroque Victorian curvy-edged beds were the rage.”

Around 2005, Grese, who was long-interested in historic gardens, was looking for the best way to steward the Arboretum’s Peony Garden into the future. With help from a friend at the American Peony Society, he put together a Peony Advisory Council comprised

of international experts and enthusiasts. One of those members, Scott Kunst (of Old House Gardens in Ann Arbor), recommended that the Peony Garden follow the English model of historic preservation by insuring that plants are backed up and do not disappear—thus, the “Peony Project” was born.

Besides providing a spectacular site to view peonies, the Peony Project is establishing resources for peony lovers and historic garden curators alike, with five primary goals:

Verification & Identification

There are still some plants of questionable identity in the Garden. “We use sources like the American Peony Society, old gardening magazines and antique nursery catalogs to help us identify questionable plants,” says Carmen Leskoviansky, collections and natural areas specialist at Nichols Arboretum.

Restoration

“We have the original map from 1927 showing the layout,” states Leskoviansky. “While many plants are original, some were replaced with modern varieties and other plants are no longer in the trade. So, working with the advisory board, we decide which plants to use in the restoration.”

Expansion

“Last fall we added 14 tree peonies from American and European varieties, and we’re hoping to add a large collection of tree peonies from China,” comments Leskoviansky.

Backup

“We’ve already started to back up the peony collection offsite by partnering with the Girl Scouts of Michigan, who took divisions and placed them at Girl Scout Camps throughout the state,” says Grese. And, Michener is working with the North American Plant Collections Consortium to establish the Peony Garden as “the” reference collection by providing peony cuttings to gardens throughout the continent.

Education

The Peony Finder website allows gardeners to browse past and present varieties. “This new site is under construction and won’t be released until July, but gardeners who would like to help test the website can email Michener at mbgna.curator@umich.edu.



The “Do Tell” peony is a Japanese variety with soft, shell-pink pedals and a deep pink center.



This distinctive “Lois Kelsey” peony is called a “semi-double” variety.

The Peony Garden’s 90th anniversary celebration runs June 2 to June 10. To learn more, visit lsa.umich.edu/mbg.

Camping With Kids

My oldest daughter and I have always seen eye-to-eye on one very important issue: no camping. While my husband and youngest girl revel in the idea of nights spent under the stars, Berit and I put the kibosh on camping every summer.

But then, last summer, my husband signed us up for an entire long weekend of camping without running it past me first. Before I could feign illness or enlist my pint-sized partner in refusal, we were tucked into a forest of tall trees using bottled water to brush our teeth. And I'll be darned if it wasn't that oldest kid who was first to leap barefoot into the dirt, to wonder at animal tracks and calls, to fall asleep filthy after tracking shooting stars. I couldn't help it: I loved watching my family camp.

You'll notice I didn't say that I loved camping, too. Doesn't matter. Have you ever seen what camping does to kids? When their toys are left at home they pick up sticks—sticks!—and do stuff with them. They build dirt mountains and jump on top. They eat almost anything without complaining.

And it turns out camping isn't just good, dirty fun. The U.S. military has found that kids who spend lots of time outdoors have more complex sensory abilities. An 18-month study of 800 military personnel found that the best bomb spotters were rural people—those who'd grown up in the woods hunting—as well as those from tough urban



Photo - © iStockphoto.com

neighborhoods, where it's equally important to be alert. They tend to take in the entire environment, versus focusing on one piece of information at a time.

So, maybe you don't aspire to send your kid bomb sniffing, but there's more. Research suggests that too much time indoors is linked to nearsightedness, while outdoor play that uses all the senses and a good dose of spatial awareness leads to an increased ability to learn. Another great benefit? These kids know how to sense and avoid danger. And the toasted marshmallow on top: folks who spend a lot of time outdoors as kids tend to more fully engage in life.

Camping is a tough pill to swallow for a lot of people these days, who are pressed for time or live in an area rich with museums and playgrounds. Considering camping, with its lists of items needing to be packed, assemblage of various sleeping quarters, and

resulting pile of dirty laundry (and we're talking real, scrub-inducing dirt here), makes a lot of parents want to head for the nearest Chuck E. Cheese.

But consider this: In 30 years, when you're gathered with your children and grandchildren sharing memories, what will you say? Will you reminisce over Junior's high skee-ball score? Or will you laugh about the time Dad flipped the canoe? And more importantly, how will these memories have shaped who your children have become?

Mitten-State Camping

With more than 1,000 campgrounds statewide, Michigan has a lake, river, beach or forest for your family.

Not ready to hit the trail on your own? The DNR is hosting over 200 camping events, called "Rec 101," in 2012. They'll provide gear and expert instruction on everything from archery to windsurfing, all for free.

Be sure to get a "Recreation Passport" (instead of the old "state park sticker") for \$10 when you renew your license. It gives you discounts at over 800 Michigan businesses, and is good all year.

Michigan State Parks see about 22 million campers in the parks annually. Get out there with them this year. To learn more, visit michigan.org and click on "Camping & Recreation," or call 800-784-7328.



Keep It Simple: Tips For A Great Camping Trip

- **Be safe.** Learn about the wildlife where you're going, and be prepared to deal with it. Have your kids wear a whistle and teach them to blow it if you get separated.
- **Make them help.** It's not always easy, but involving kids in set-up and camp chores will teach important, brain-boosting skills and give them a healthy dose of confidence.
- **Show, don't tell.** Point out landmarks to give kids a sense of direction and place. Gather around footprints and talk about the animal that made them. Figure out why a particular place has its name (Sleeping Bear Dunes, for example).
- **Be outdoors.** Don't bring along video games. Find things to do outside, like paddle ball, cairn-building, fairy house crafting, and shell collecting.
- **Other resources.** Check your local library or bookstore for "Best Tent Camping in Michigan," by Matt Forester, 2011.

Lisa Doublestein is a regular Country Lines freelance writer, educator and mom.





Mediterranean Inspired
Chicken Wraps

Mediterranean Dishes

The colorful, flavor-filled dishes known as “Mediterranean cuisine” originate from countries that border the Mediterranean sea—Morocco, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Italy, France and Spain. This region not only produces a variety of tasty meals, they are good for your health! Those on Mediterranean diets are less likely to have high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or become obese. It’s hard to ignore the benefits of eating this marvelous food.

Photography by: 831 Creative

Mediterranean Inspired Chicken Wraps with Cucumber Dill Sauce

Cucumber dill sauce:

- 1½ c. plain low fat yogurt
- 2 t. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 c. cucumber, diced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- pinch of salt and pepper
- 2 T. fresh dill, chopped

Chicken:

- 3 T. olive oil
- 2 T. fresh dill, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 t. Italian seasoning
- 2 T. fresh lemon juice
- 1 t. kosher salt
- 1/2 t. black pepper
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- tortillas, pita bread, or flat bread
- tomato slices
- thinly sliced onion

In small bowl, combine all sauce ingredients. Cover and refrigerate. In a large storage

Crushed Lentil Soup

- 1 med. sweet onion, finely chopped
- 2 T. olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 c. vegetable broth
- 3 c. water
- 1/2 6-oz. pkg. Steamed Lentils from Trader Joe’s or 3 c. cooked lentils
- 1 pinch saffron
- 1 t. coriander
- 1 t. cumin
- 1 t. pepper
- 1 t. salt
- 1 t. pepper
- 1/4 c. lemon juice

onion is translucent. Add broth, water, lentils, and all spices (do not add lemon juice). Reduce heat and bring to simmer. Cover and cook 10 minutes. Puree in blender or with hand blender until smooth. Let sit at least 30 minutes before serving for best flavor.

Christin Russman



Crushed Lentil Soup

bag, add oil, dill, garlic, Italian seasoning, lemon juice, salt and pepper. Seal bag and smush around until combined. Add chicken, reseal bag, and shake chicken inside to coat. Put bag in refrigerator for at least 2 hours. When ready, grill chicken for 8 to 10 minutes per side on med-high heat or until no longer pink. Thinly slice chicken on cutting board. To serve, put several pieces of sliced chicken on bread. Add tomato slices and onion. Top with a few tablespoons of dill cucumber sauce.

*Kirsten Kubert, Cherryland
comfortablydomestic.com*

Spinach Cups

2 eggs
1 clove garlic, minced
1 8-oz. package crumbled feta cheese, garlic/herb flavor
1 small onion, minced
2 10-oz. boxes frozen, chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
4 packaged pre-baked mini phyllo dough shells
1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
Mix first four ingredients in large bowl. Mix in spinach. Place phyllo shells on a baking sheet; fill each with spinach mixture. Sprinkle small amount of cheese on top. Bake at 400° for 8 min.

Connie Foltz, McMillan

Cucumber, Tomato and Feta

6 c. coarsely chopped cucumbers (2 lbs.)
2 lg. tomatoes (1 lb.), coarsely chopped
1 bunch scallions, chopped
1 c. pitted olives, halved
1 7-oz. package feta, crumbled, divided
1/2 c. coarsely chopped fresh mint
6 T. extra virgin olive oil
1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Combine cucumbers, tomatoes, scallions, olives, half the feta, and mint in a large bowl. Whisk oil and lemon juice in a small bowl; season with salt and pepper. Pour over salad; toss and coat. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle remaining half of feta over and serve.

Lisa Bechaz, Petoskey

Moroccan Style Potato Pancakes

1 lb. yellow-fleshed potatoes
1 carrot, finely diced
2 T. canola oil
2 c. finely chopped onion
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 c. frozen peas
3 large eggs, beaten

1/2 t. turmeric
3/4 t. salt
1/8 t. ground pepper
4 scallions, white and green, chopped
1/2 c. chopped cilantro leaves
Peel and cut potatoes into even-size chunks. Place in saucepan; cover and boil until tender. Drain and mash. Meanwhile, sauté carrot and onion in olive oil until tender. Turn off heat and mix in garlic and frozen peas. Cover and let sit while potatoes are cooking. Mix together potatoes, vegetables, eggs, spices, scallions and cilantro. Form into patties. Gently sauté in canola oil in frying pan until golden brown, turning once.

Margie Guyot, Ellsworth

Lamb Sliders

2 lbs. ground lamb
1 large yellow onion, grated
2 garlic cloves
1/2 c. chopped parsley
1/2 t. cumin
1 t. allspice
1 t. ground coriander
salt and pepper to taste
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 red onion, thinly sliced
2 tomatoes, sliced
1 pkg. of 12 whole wheat dinner rolls
Combine meat, onion, garlic, parsley, and spices. Add egg; mix until thoroughly combined. Form 12 balls of meat mixture and flatten into patties slightly larger than dinner rolls. Grill or pan fry patties until medium-well. Cut dinner rolls in half; butter and toast on grill or broiler until lightly brown. Garnish

with red onion, tomato and tzatziki sauce.

Tzatziki Sauce

3 T. olive oil
1 t. white vinegar
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 t. salt
1 c. Greek yogurt
1 c. sour cream
2 cucumbers peeled, seeded, finely minced
1 t. dill
Combine oil, vinegar, garlic and salt in bowl. Mix well. With a whisk, blend yogurt and sour cream; add the oil mixture and mix well. Add cucumber and dill. Chill for 4 hours.

Jeff Cullen, Bellaire

Penne Puttanesca

4 t. chopped garlic
2 t. red pepper flakes
2 T. butter
1/4 c. olive oil
1/4 c. grated Asiago cheese
1 tomato, chopped
1/4 c. sun dried tomatoes, crushed (opt.)
12 black olives, pitted and chopped
1/2 c. Chardonnay
2 T. capers
6 anchovy fillets, finely chopped
1 lb. pasta, cooked (penne or mostaccioli)
Sauté the chopped garlic and pepper flakes in butter and olive oil over medium heat for 2 minutes. Add all other ingredients, stirring constantly. Simmer for 5 minutes. Spoon over freshly cooked pasta. Add additional cheese if desired. Don't forget the anchovies, they are the key ingredient! Serves 4.

Eva Braganini, Mattawan



Spinach Cups

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE! Contributors whose recipes we print in 2012 will be entered in a drawing. We'll draw one winner in December and pay their January 2013 electric bill (up to \$200) as a prize.

Thanks to all who sent in recipes! Upcoming: Please send in **RECIPES FOR KIDS** by April 10, **FRESH FROM THE GARDEN** recipes by May 10, and **MULTI-MEAL** recipes by June 10. Mail to: *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.



Help a kid.



One Call 231-486-9214

or



One Click marathon4kids.com

helps



One Kid *Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan*

WHAT IS IT? Marathon 4 Kids is a fundraiser developed by Cherryland General Manager Tony Anderson to raise money for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan.

HOW DOES IT WORK? Tony's goal is to complete 50 marathons, one in each state. So far, he has run marathons in 20 states.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO? 100 percent of the money goes towards serving kids in northwest Michigan through Big Brothers Big Sisters.

MORE INFORMATION? Contact Tony at 231-486-9214 or marathon4kids@gmail.com, or visit marathon4kids.com.



Great Lakes Stainless, Inc.

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Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan



THE BANK OF
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Annual Meeting Set for June

Cherryland Electric Cooperative's 74th Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, June 14, 2012 at Wuerfel Park.

The Traverse City Beach Bums of the independent Frontier League, play their home games at Wuerfel Park, which gets its power from Cherryland.

Registration runs from 3-5 p.m. on June 14, with the business meeting from 5-6 p.m. Cherryland members will receive a free ticket to the game and a food voucher, which will entitle them to a hot dog, chips and soft drink. The Beach Bums game starts at 7:05 p.m.

More details about the Annual Meeting will be upcoming in *Michigan Country Lines* magazine.

Cherryland Cares Seeks Grant Applications

Area nonprofit agencies who are seeking financial help can apply for a grant through the Cherryland Cares program.

Cherryland Cares is a five-member board, made up of Cherryland Electric Cooperative members, who distribute money from Operation Round Up to area nonprofits. The board's next quarterly meeting is Monday, June 18. The deadline for applications is Friday, June 8.

Operation Round Up money comes from Cherryland members who volunteer to round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar every month. This amount averages \$6 per year.

To receive a Cherryland Cares grant application or to join Operation Round Up, contact Nick Edson at Cherryland. His direct line is 486-9222 or email him at nicke@cecelec.com.



'Like Us' On Facebook

For the latest news about your co-op, visit cherrylandelectric.com and click "follow us on Facebook" at the bottom left corner of the home page. Or, search "Cherryland Electric Cooperative" from Facebook.



Next Member Input Session Will be June 18

The board of directors at Cherryland Electric Cooperative is offering another opportunity for members to provide direct input to the board on a quarterly basis. Members will be able to talk to the board next on Monday, June 18, at 9 a.m. at the company office in Grawn, 5930 U.S.-31 South.

Members are asked to come to the lobby and request to speak to the board. Members are also asked to keep their comments to 5 minutes. Member attendance at the board meeting is allowed for the public input portion of the meeting only.

Cherryland members are afforded a chance to meet with the board on a quarterly basis during meetings in March, June, September and December.

Cherryland Members Will See Savings on PSCR

One of the line item charges that appears on your monthly electric bill from Cherryland Electric Cooperative is the "PSCR Charge."

This charge represents a cost recovery by Cherryland for the increases or decreases in the cost of fuel and purchased power.

"Right now, we are over-collected on our PSCR, so we are not going to be charging members for the next couple of months," said Cherryland CFO Mark Wilson. "That started with the March bill."

For the average Cherryland homeowner, this will mean a savings of about \$5 off their bill.

Pay Your Cherryland Electric Bill Online

Want to save money and pay your Cherryland Electric Cooperative bill online?

It's easy to do. You can set up your account to get only an e-mail bill—no more paper bills!

To sign up, access your account on cherrylandelectric.com. It will prompt you immediately after you sign-in to make a decision on whether or not you want the paper bill to continue; if you do, check the box. If not, simply press "update."

Questions about online payment can be answered by Cherryland's Member Service Department at 486-9200.

Harvest Wind Farm's Annual Output Increases Again

Favorable weather conditions in 2011 led to record output for the Harvest Wind Farm. The project's 32 turbines generated 142,819 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity during the year, surpassing 2010's mark of 138,737 MWh.

Wolverine Power Cooperative is purchasing the total output of the Harvest Wind Farm under a long-term contract and supplying the electricity to its members.

"Harvest began commercial operation in December 2007 and is Michigan's first commercial-scale wind farm," says Dan DeCoeur, Wolverine's vice president of power supply. "This past year marked its fourth complete year of production."

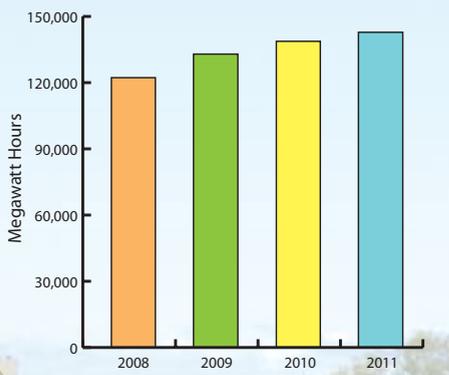
Minimum wind speeds of eight miles per hour are needed to generate electricity at the Harvest Wind Farm. Prior to moving forward with a project like Harvest, a developer will spend months collecting weather data at a proposed site to be sure weather conditions are ideal. Meteorological towers standing about 200 feet in the air are used to evaluate potential sites. They monitor wind speed, wind direction and temperature.

The turbines at the Harvest Wind Farm measure 393 feet in height. Turbine towers, consisting of four sections each, rise 262 feet high, and the blades tack on another 131 feet. Each turbine at the wind farm required 100 acres of property leased from landowners. The spacing of the turbines across 3,200 acres ensures each turbine has the footprint needed for maximum output.

"When all turbines are operating at top speed, the wind farm has a total capacity of 52.8 megawatts of electricity, enough to serve about 15,000 homes," DeCoeur explains. "We are pleased to be affiliated with this project and proud to be a leader in renewable energy in the state."

Harvest is owned and operated by Exelon Wind. It is located in Michigan's Thumb area, between Elkton and Pigeon, and represents an investment of \$94 million.

Electricity Generated Annually by the Harvest Wind Farm



State Requires Renewable Energy

Electric providers in Michigan are required to meet a renewable energy standard under Public Act 295 of 2008. Compliance begins in 2012 and builds to 10 percent of total retail sales by the end of 2015, where it remains for 2016 and each year thereafter.

With its long-term commitment to purchase the entire output of the Harvest Wind Farm, in addition to power supply from a small hydro project, Wolverine Power Cooperative and its members meet the requirements of Public Act 295 for the next several years.



Source - TimberTech

DIY Outdoor Lighting

Q: *I'd like to add outdoor lighting by my deck and landscaping, but need something that's safe, efficient and easy to install. Is low-voltage lighting a good option? What are the best types?*

A: Low-voltage lighting is an excellent outdoor option for deck spaces and landscaping. It is safe, efficient, and relatively easy to install for the experienced do-it-yourselfer.

Efficiency

The energy efficiency of low-voltage lighting is fairly similar to standard line-voltage (120 volts) outdoor lighting. If you are interested in brightly lighting a large area, line-voltage lighting fixtures, such as low-pressure sodium,

are your most efficient choice.

The newest and most energy efficient low-voltage landscape lighting uses super-efficient LEDs (light emitting diodes) instead of standard incandescent bulbs. This type of technology is becoming more common, even for standard indoor lamps.

The LEDs are considerably more expensive than other alternatives, but use less than one-fifth as much electricity as equivalent incandescent bulbs and last as much as 10 times longer. The light from LEDs is more directional than from incandescent bulbs, so multiple LEDs are often used inside one fixture for broader lighting patterns and brightness.

Each low-voltage LED fixture may use as little as 1 watt of electricity compared to about 11 watts from a typical snap-in wedge-base low-voltage bulb. Some of the brighter fixtures, such as bollards, use a 2-watt LED, and floodlights use three LEDs. The light quality from LEDs is very white and pleasing.

Installation

The most difficult part of installing a low-voltage lighting system is making sure the total wattage of all fixtures on a line does not exceed the rated output of the transformer.

This composite deck railing has built-in low voltage lights under the post caps and in the balusters.

The maximum 12-volt output wattage will be listed on the transformer, and instructions for the fixtures should list their individual wattages. A prepackaged low-voltage lighting kit will include the proper size transformer for the number and types of lights.

When purchasing a low-voltage system, be sure to select a transformer with a built-in timer so there is no chance of accidentally leaving the lights on all night and wasting electricity. Photo-eye controlled transformers are the most convenient and provide the most sequencing options. One of the more convenient and efficient is "on" at dusk, "off" in a set number of hours (6, 8, 10). For security, an "on" at dusk, "off" at dawn is a good option, but uses more electricity.

Many homeowners prefer a variety of path, deck and floodlights to meet their landscape lighting needs. For much of the general lighting where the fixture is not noticeable, inexpensive plastic fixtures are fine. For more exposed areas, decorative metal fixtures with stained and etched glass are attractive. Another attractive option is natural wood fixtures.

To edge a path, snap-together lighted plastic simulated bricks are effective. The electrical connectors are built into the bricks so wiring will only need to run to the first brick along the edge. To light a deck, several decking material manufacturers offer built-in post and baluster lights with hidden wiring.

Safety

For those that do a fair amount of landscaping and gardening, safety is another advantage to choosing low-voltage lighting. There is very little risk of electrocution when digging with metal garden tools because the wires on the ground carry only 12 volts of electricity. You will not be shocked if you accidentally nick one.

If you have a question for Jim, please email jdulley@countrylines.com, or mail to James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to let us know which electric co-op you receive service from.

NEXT STEPS:

Ready to tackle your own DIY outdoor lighting project? Here are some companies that manufacture low-voltage lights:

Argee Corp.:

(800) 449-3030 • argeecorp.com

Idaho Wood:

(800) 635-1100 • idahowood.com

Kichler Lighting:

(866) 558-5706 • kichlerlighting.com

Malibu:

(888) 295-7348 • malibulights.com

Nightscaping:

(800) 544-4840 • nightscaping.com

Troy Landscape Lighting:

(800) 677-6811 • troylandscapelighting.com

James Dulley is a nationally recognized mechanical engineer writing about home energy issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Appliance Innovations

Rebates and standards transform kitchens and laundry rooms, but are consumers really saving energy?

Does your refrigerator have Wi-Fi or a door with a view? Some new dishwashers self-dispense detergent and clean based on the number of dishes. And, you might be surprised to hear some ovens double as refrigerators. Leave dinner in the oven in the morning, then send a text message for the oven to switch from cooling to cooking mode.

“When it comes to appliances in the kitchen, things are getting smarter,” claims Kevin Dexter, senior vice president of home appliance sales & marketing, Samsung Electronics America. “We’re listening closely to consumers and adding improvements that busy moms want.”

During the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show, Samsung unveiled several appliance twists, including an LCD refrigerator featuring Wi-Fi with a grocery app and a Flex Duo Oven using a Smart Divider to cut wasted cooking space.

Other manufacturers are also looking for twists to make appliances smarter and keep consumers happy.

“At GE Appliances, we’re rapidly expanding our Energy Star® offerings because it’s what consumers demand and it’s the right thing to do,” explains Rod Barry, director of efficiency and environmental relations. He claims a kitchen equipped with GE’s eco-magination appliances reduces electricity use by 20 percent compared to standard models.

But not all innovations make energy sense. Appliances use 13 percent of a home’s energy—a hefty chunk.

Setting the Standard

Manufacturers are constantly enhancing appliances to comply with consumer requests and meet changing federal efficiency standards. These standards, first enacted in 1987, drive efficiency innovations and are credited with saving over \$300 billion in electric bills over the past 25 years, notes the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy.

Current standards set the bar for furnaces, air conditioners, water heaters, refrigerators



Samsung’s refrigerator with WiFi capability.

and freezers, washers, dryers, motors, lamps, and other products.

Most manufacturers also strive to meet a higher bar of excellence—the Energy Star certification. Launched by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1992, this is a voluntary, international standard for rating energy-efficient consumer products. Appliances carrying the Energy Star® logo not only meet federal standards, they exceed it by using 10 to 50 percent less energy and water than standard models.

Rebate Revolution

After an influx of appliance rebate funds—almost \$300 million—from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, many consumers bought efficient appliances in 2010 and 2011. Although rebates were also offered for HVAC systems and water heaters, kitchen and laundry workhorses were the clear favorites, garnering 88 percent of all redeemed rebates. About 586,000 consumers added refrigerators, 551,000 added clothes washers, and 297,600 dishwashers.

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimates this influx of efficient appliances will save \$48 million in energy costs annually. But these savings are only realized when consumers follow the adage, “Out with the

old, in with the new.” Unfortunately, a national electric co-op survey shows that isn’t always the case.

“A lot of folks buy these great new Energy Star refrigerators, then put the old ‘energy hog’ model in the basement as a soda fridge for the kids,” says Brian Sloboda, a program manager for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN). The Network monitors, evaluates and applies technologies to help electric co-ops control costs, increase productivity, and enhance service to their members. “As a result, a lot of potential savings are lost. Sure, it’s convenient to have the extra space, but these folks are paying significantly more just to have cold drinks handy.”

CRN partnered with E-Source, a Colorado-based efficiency group, to conduct a national appliance survey.

The study found 19 percent of American households plug in two refrigerators, and 40 percent run a stand-alone freezer, adding expensive cold storage to electric bills.

Older models drain energy dollars. A refrigerator from the 1970s costs \$200 more to operate every year than a current model; a 1980s fridge isn’t much better, wasting \$100 in energy dollars annually.

Some co-ops offer rebates for recycling old refrigerators too, which helps consumers achieve expected savings.

Research & Compare for Savings

Consumers should look beyond fancy bells and whistles and research appliances to guarantee energy savings, notes the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The agency enforces mandatory EnergyGuide labels to help consumers compare brands and shop effectively.

“Most of the differences are on the inside—in the motors, compressors, pumps, valves, gaskets and seals, or in electronic sensors that make appliances ‘smarter,’” warns the FTC. “Even if two models look the same from the outside, less-obvious inside features can mean a big difference in monthly utility bills.”

Visit TogetherWeSave.com to see how updating appliances and making other changes can impact your electric bill.

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Common Ground Alliance

Pity the Reader...

I'm hooked on a book by Stephen King. It's "11/22/63", his latest and maybe the first of his I've read. I say 'maybe' because I don't remember reading any others. But that says more about my memory than it does about the quality of King's books.

This is one of the better-written novels I've read in some time. At 849 pages, though, it's long enough to scare me away. I've been burned more than a few times by books much longer than they needed to be. I suspect that some publishers are afraid to edit their most popular writers

"I'm not getting any younger. Passing the time with bad writing is not in my best interest."

for fear of offending them. So, you end up with 1,000-page Tom Clancy novels that are so dense with detail they're almost impossible to get through. And they seem lazy, as if Clancy doesn't really care about the reader or the quality of his work. It's not like he always wrote this way. He wouldn't have gotten published if he did. But now he's a factory writer and quantity seems more important than quality.

Clancy's not alone. Many popular authors and their publishers have given up on quality writing in favor of formulaic copycats that promise a quick profit for their investment. I'm sure the publishers are happy, but if you're like me, you feel like you're being taken advantage of.

I'm not getting any younger. Passing the time with bad writing is not in my best interest. Wouldn't it be nice if authors and publishers respected that and took a little of their time to make their books a little slimmer for all of us? Think of the time we'd all save.

Fiction isn't the only area that needs a sharp knife. I can't count the number of business and non-fiction books I quit reading halfway through because the authors kept repeating themselves. Some of them

would be better as magazine articles.

They should take the hint in this quote often misattributed (including by me) to Mark Twain:

"I have made this letter longer than usual, only because I have not had time to make it shorter." (17th-century French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal, 1623-62, written in a letter to a friend.)

Sure, it takes time to write a better, shorter book.

Among the authors I've found to be blessedly tight writers are Lee Child (the Jack Reacher novels), John Irving, P. D.

James, the late Tony Hillerman, Margaret Atwood, Richard Ford, and Elmore Leonard. The gold standard is still Ernest Hemingway.

King's book could be shorter, too, but since there are two overlapping stories, I'll cut him some slack on this one.

King's writing style is deceiving in its simplicity, yet powerfully evocative in its description and dialogue. In case you don't know, the novel deals with a 40-something teacher from 2011 who finds himself transported in time to 1958 to try preventing the assassination of President Kennedy. It's a bit preposterous, but if you're willing to make the jump with King it turns into a satisfying trip to a different time and place. King evokes an era that is gone, but not forgotten, and when you're finally immersed in the music, language and styles of the late '50s and early '60s, it's hard to pull yourself out.

For pure escapism, "11/22/63" is hard to beat. It's not the Great American Novel, but it is a darn good story. (Hey, he even mentions the Upper Peninsula.)

I'm reading the book on a Kindle, a device that only could have been imagined in 1958. I suppose, to be true to the novel,

I should be reading it in an actual book. (If it's not in book form, can we still call it a book?) But there are a lot of good reasons to use an e-reader: They're light and easy to hold in any position, travel well, hold a ton of books, remember your place and, with adjustable type, make reading easier for many of us.

The downside is their impact on bookstores. Amazon.com was already pushing bookstores to the edge with online book sales, but with the popularity of the Kindle and other e-readers, actual bookstores are toppling over. That's too bad, because there's something warm and fuzzy about bookstores. They are key attractions in our best towns and cities. Among our favorite bookstores are Bestsellers Books & Coffee in Mason, five Schuler Books & Music (and their wonderful Chapbook Cafes) in the Lansing and Grand Rapids areas, Horizon Books in Traverse City, Petoskey and Cadillac, and McLean & Eakin Booksellers in Petoskey. They are spaces to savor, or, as the slogan for Snowbound Books in Marquette goes: 'The place for people allergic to life without books.'

There are close to 100 independent bookstores around Michigan. It's a tough business, but they're making it by providing personal services you can't get online—and by selling online themselves. They host authors and reading clubs, promote local talent, provide a gathering place—often with a cup of Joe and gourmet food, give kids a place to explore books, and help you find out-of-print books.

When Barnes & Noble closed their East Lansing bookstore a few months ago, a local student lamented on TV that she was soooooo sorry to see it go because she loved to browse through the books. It was a great place to spend time, she said. What she didn't spend was money.

We may use e-readers, but bookstores still draw us in, because we still like to buy actual books and have them around—as long as they're not two-pound monstrosities.

Mike Buda is editor emeritus of Country Lines. Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com or comment on his columns at countrylines.com/column/ramblings



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*Home Renovation & Lifestyle Expo @
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Here's What About 50¢ Will Get You...



About 50¢ a Month Makes a Difference to Your Northern Michigan Neighbors in Need.

So far, 4,000 of you have signed up for Operation Round Up, rounding your electric bill up to the next dollar. That generosity provided much-needed funding to dozens of local organizations in the last year. Plus, just for signing up you'll be entered to win \$50!

♥ Share the Love and Win \$50

Sign up at: facebook.com/cherrylandelectriccoop or on our website at: cherrylandelectric.com/cherrylandcares.



**I'm so glad we
have food tonight.**

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Thank you!

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