

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

The Art of Island Living

Writer/Photographer Julie McKay Covert



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Michigan Legislature

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Clear

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For Your Account

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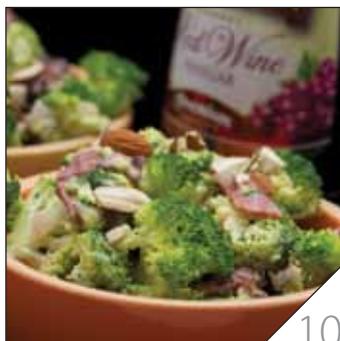
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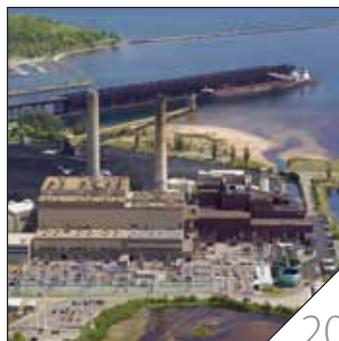
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*Not in all editions

On the Cover*

Writer/photographer Julie McKay Covert is featured with the cover photo from her book, "A Photographic Essay: Art of Winter." The book's photos were taken near her home on Shelter Island, MI.

Visit juliemckaycovert.com

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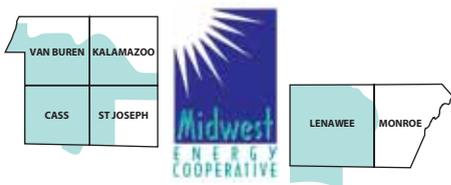
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The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.





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Keeping Lines Clear Makes Your Electricity More Reliable

Sometimes a little perspective is all we really need to see the other side of the story.

In late October, Hurricane Sandy slammed into the East Coast, devastating families, homes and communities. The massive system is estimated to have caused over \$62 billion in damage and resulted in at least 125 deaths and more than 8 million power outages in the U.S. alone.

Many were glued to the TV and internet as images and stories unfolded over the hours and days after the storm. But watching coverage from the warmth and protection of your own home or office, and living or experiencing the destruction, are vastly different things.

Midwest Energy has gone to great lengths to educate and inform our members about our aggressive line clearance efforts. Maintaining a reliable electric distribution system is our chief responsibility, and because trees are a major cause of outages, keeping them away from power lines is our primary approach. People don't always like this approach, and many are quite vocal about that. However, reliability has improved and we have been able to weather some pretty fierce storms across our service territory with minimal impact on power.

Ron Dudek, a Midwest member who previously expressed concern about some line clearance work on his property, was in northern New Jersey when Sandy hit. Several days after the storm passed, he shared the following with us on Facebook:

"Last year I complained when one of my prized fir trees had to be taken down as it was deemed to be too close to the power lines. Well, I spent all of last week in northern New Jersey, and I got to experience Sandy and her consequences from beginning to end.

One thing I noticed as I traversed the streets in New Jersey is the power companies allow trees to grow all through the power lines ... anytime there are high winds wide-

spread power outages always occur. I can't for the life of me understand why they don't see this and do preventative trimming.

My mom lives in a large apartment complex ... her building is the only one still without power today (Monday, Nov. 5), and it is expected to be without power until Friday! The reason: the power line feeding her building was so tangled through a tree that when the tree came down it took a tree removal company two full days to separate them! By that time the power company had moved to another area. Ergo, they won't put the line back up until they come back through her area. This was totally preventable!

Keep trimming the trees, MEC!"

We appreciate Ron's sharing and the perspective he brings. Trees are an emotional issue, and we understand that. We don't expect everyone to like our approach, but we do ask that you attempt

"We don't expect everyone to like our approach, but we do ask that you attempt to understand it from our perspective."

to understand it from our perspective. The reality is that nothing can absolutely prevent all power outages. We deal with a largely overhead system that is extremely vulnerable to many different elements. However, everything we do to keep trees, branches and animals away from that system goes a long way toward improving service and giving you the reliability that you need and deserve.

Details about our line clearance approach and plan for 2013 are on page 3. If you are in one of the areas to be cleared, you will receive telephone notification, followed by a flyer in the mail that will prompt you to contact us prior to the start of work if you have questions or concerns. We don't expect members to necessarily love what we do. We do, however, hope you will attempt to understand the reasons behind the approach and support what we are trying to accomplish.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

Proactive Line Clearing

Reliable electricity is not just a luxury; it's an expectation. Our chief responsibility as your electric co-op is to provide a reliable and safe system of electric distribution to our members, and one of our biggest obstacles is trees. With a goal of improving your service experience, we employ an aggressive, proactive line clearance program that has been proven to significantly reduce outage hours.

What We Do and Why

Our line clearance standard is to obtain a ground-to-sky clearance of 15 feet, free from all obstructions, on each side of the power line. Where our facilities cross personal property, easement gives us the right to access and use that property to maintain those facilities. An easement can be recorded, meaning it is signed and on file at the Register of Deeds office in the county of service, or prescriptive, meaning the land has been used in a continuous and open manner for the statutory period of 15 years for utility purposes.

Prior to beginning line clearance, we survey the area and determine the work to be done by looking for trees growing under power lines, overhanging branches and limbs, hazardous trees, or trees with the potential to contact power lines in the near future. A plan is developed based on the standards above, and contact is attempted by telephone and mail to alert members to necessary line clearance work on their property. It is the member's responsibility to contact us if there are questions or concerns about the project.

This approach is aggressive, but we are responsible to our members for providing a highly reliable electric distribution system, and line clearance is a critical part of that.

Our Commitment to Safety

Safety is another priority. Mother Nature provides an amazing playground for curious kids of all ages, but it can turn deadly when an unsuspecting hand reaches into the tree and contacts a power line. Any tree that's too close to a power line can present a safety hazard and will be removed.

Other circumstances may also require a tree to be removed. Midwest will work with the property owner and/or community prior

to removal, and may be able to offer other alternatives upon request, such as burying or relocating the line, at the member's cost.

Members are reminded to always be aware of downed power lines as they also pose a serious safety hazard. It is impossible to just look at a downed wire and determine if it is energized. Cable TV and telephone lines may also become energized if they come in contact with an electrical line. If you see any downed line, consider it dangerous, stay away, and call us.

Jobsite Cleanup

Our contract crews will dispose of branches and limbs in the most economic and practical manner possible. During regular line clearing activity, crews will remove branches and limbs within maintained or landscaped areas and leave wood for use by the homeowner or resident. In unmaintained areas, crews will leave wood, branches and limbs for use by the homeowner or resident or to decompose naturally. Midwest does not remove stumps after tree removal, and does not return to remove wood, branches and limbs. During emergency power restoration, crews clear trees from our facilities and move to the next location.

Planning Guide

Trees and power lines do not mix, which is why careful planning is important before you begin any landscape plan. It's important to note what's overhead, on the ground, and underground prior to beginning any work. Please contact us for information and resources.

Service Line Trimming

Midwest Energy will trim along the service line running from the transformer to your home when the tree is in contact with the power line. We do not remove trees located near service lines. If you want a tree removed, we would be happy to drop the line so that you can have the tree safely removed. Please contact us and provide at least a 24-hour notice before any work is to begin.

For More Information

For more information about our line clearance procedures, please contact our Customer Care Department at 800-492-5989.



Before ▲ and after ▼ shots of a line circuit in Dowagiac. A newly cleared right-of-way can look extreme at first, but as the growth returns the landscape regains its natural beauty.



▼ The ground-to-sky approach to line clearance helps to make sure that trees don't form a canopy over the lines.



During 2013, we will clear about 200 miles of line in the following Michigan townships:

Almena	Antwerp
Constantine	Covert
Fabius	Florence
Flowerfield	Lockport
Marcellus	Mottville
Oshtemo	White Pigeon

All members on the circuit(s) to be cleared will receive telephone notification, followed by a flyer in the mail that will prompt you to contact us prior to the start of the work if you have questions or concerns. It is your responsibility to call for information or alternatives that may be available prior to the start of work.

Governor Says 'Work Together On Energy, Environmental Issues'

Adaptability has to be the foundation of every energy decision we make," Gov. Rick Snyder said in his December message on energy and the environment. "First," he emphasized, "we need to make sure our energy supplies are reliable." Using the adaptability theme, he noted three pillars that every decision must stand on:

#1 Reliable Energy

- Upgrade the transmission and electrical system to keep the economy growing.
- Michigan has growing reliability challenges, for example, the U.P. has 12 "yellow alerts" every year (meaning all it takes is for one more thing to go wrong and everybody's power could be out for days). Another is when the electrical grid went down in 2003, causing a widespread blackout in Michigan and the eastern U.S.
- The Wolverine Power/We Energies plan to save the

Presque Isle Power Plant (see p. 20) is a good start, but "let's connect the Peninsulas" with electricity.

- Use more of our natural gas assets; many are on state land, it's better than coal, and we have prime areas to store it.
- "Fracking" to retrieve natural gas. "It's been done here safely for over a decade because we're doing it the right way."

#2 Affordable Energy

- Our electric prices are the highest in the Midwest because we have to import coal.

• Energy efficiency supports jobs, saves energy, money, and is good for the environment.

- Conserve more energy. Since 2010, over 1,700 Michiganders have used funds from the "Michigan Saves" program (michigansaves.org) to improve their homes and save about \$350 in yearly energy costs. The program is expanding to include businesses like small grocery and convenience stores.
- In 2012, private financial institutions statewide offered over \$68 million for efficiency improvements in buildings.
- Energy use in state buildings has been reduced nearly 25 percent; upgrades continue.
- Find steady funding to help low-income people with heating costs. Utilities must work closer with people before shutting the power off.

#3 Protect the Environment

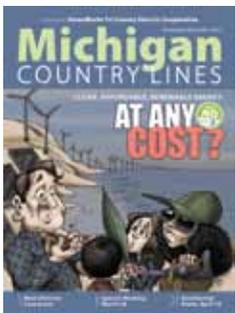
- Energy and the environment must be considered together in preserving land, water and trails. The DNR is to offer better land/trail use options by spring. Link our trails to other states.
- Aggressively educate, prevent and defend against over
- Merge scientific/economic/environmental practices into one water protection system. Invite Great Lakes Governors to a 2013 summit.
- Re-establish a Water Use Advisory Council. Strategize on inland lake and drought issues.
- Battle urban blight and plan for vacant land use (i.e., urban farming). Toughen landlord laws and bar property tax delinquents from land auctions.
- Help farmers and agribusinesses comply with environmental regulations.
- Improve recycling; create a plan by 2014. (Only 21 of 83 counties have strong programs.)
- Raise renewable energy use through legislation—not the Constitution; discuss this year.

Ensuring Michigan's Future

"There are things we can do today that benefit us right now and pay dividends tomorrow, no matter what the future holds."

180 invasive species threatening our waters (i.e., Asian carp).

▶ See the Governor's full speech at: michigan.gov/documents/snyder/EE_Message_FINAL_pdf_404563_7.pdf



Thanks to all who helped electric co-ops support opposition to Proposition 3 on the November ballot. We also thank everyone who took time to write us a letter, whether pro or con, on the issue.

HOW TO SEND A LETTER Readers are encouraged to submit thoughtful, courteously-worded letters, and we print as many as possible in the space and time allowed.

Country Lines reserves the right to print letters at the publisher's discretion, based on length, space and content, and to edit slightly for space and facts. Please limit comments to 240 words or less. Submit by posting online at countrylines.com, email gknudson@meca.coop, or mail to: Editor, Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Feb. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric cooperative.

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone! Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com, or send by mail to *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the March 2013 issue.

The Nov./Dec. contest winner is Jeanne Moore of Gaylord, who correctly identified the photo from the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing.



Electric Co-ops Choose New National Leader

Jo Ann Emerson, a nine-term Congresswoman, was recently chosen as the new CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

Emerson succeeds Glenn English, a former Democratic Congressman who served NRECA well for 19 years.

Coupled with her Congressional work, Emerson's earlier executive roles with the National Restaurant Association and the American Insurance Association, plus extensive knowledge of electric co-op issues, makes her the best choice to lead NRECA, said Mike Guidry, board president. "The respect she has from both sides of the aisle and her proven ability to bridge political and policy

divides to find common ground will serve NRECA and all member co-ops very well."

First elected in 1996, she is the first Republican woman from Missouri to serve in the U.S. House. She has served on the House Appropriations Committee and chaired the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee, which oversees the U.S. Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, and various independent agencies, including the Federal Communications Commission.

Besides leadership roles in agriculture, health care and government reform, she won recognition for her work on energy, including the 2006 NRECA Distinguished Service Award.

"Without reliable, affordable



Photo - Kyle Spradley, Rural Missouri Magazine

U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO), right, NRECA CEO-designate, meets with 2011 Rural Electric Youth Tour students from Missouri outside House chambers at the U.S. Capitol.

electricity delivered by electric cooperatives serving thousands of communities, millions of Americans would be left without the energy that brings economic opportunity, unsurpassed quality of life, and the promise of growth in the future," Emerson said. "NRECA is committed to the electric co-ops of this great nation, and works hard every day

to improve the quality of life for their consumer-members. I am very honored to join an outstanding organization to work on their behalf."

She assumes her new duties March 1, but will be introduced to NRECA members, which total over 900 co-ops, employees and directors from 48 states, at their annual meeting in February.

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Employee Appreciation

In December, 14 members of the Midwest employee family were recognized for a combined 180 years of service at the annual Employee Appreciation Event.

Pictured (left to right): Adam Johnson, 10 years; Jenna Zache, 5 years; Kerri Wade, 15 years; Kevin Clayton, 5 years; Bobbi Lowe, 20 years; Rich Drews, 35 years; Lisa Guyott, 15 years; and Casey Hilligoss, 10 years.

Not pictured: Josh Hance, 5 years; Brad Jensen, 5 years; Bob Hance, 10 years; Lynn Steinman, Tanya Yonker and Mark Kangas, 15 years.

Ray Welburn, who retired at the end of the year, was also honored for his 42 years of service.

**Notice to Members of
Midwest Energy Cooperative
Case No. U-15818
2011 Renewable Energy Plan
Annual Report Summary**

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately 2 percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012 and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, Midwest Energy Cooperative (Midwest) submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2011, Midwest acquired 29,387 renewable energy credits and 1,716 incentive credits from its wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc. (Wolverine). Wolverine will continue to generate or purchase renewable energy and bank unused renewable energy credits for future use and compliance with statutory renewable portfolio standard requirements on behalf of all its members.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan annual report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the cooperative's website at teammidwest.com or by request at any of Midwest's offices.

Rate Change Explained

As we communicated last summer, Midwest Energy filed two rate cases to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) early in 2012. The first was a revenue-neutral restructuring to more accurately recover fixed costs among the various rate classes based on the 2012 Cost of Service Study. The second specifically addressed increased operating costs related to running your cooperative—making sure our distribution system and everything behind the scenes is working so that you have power at the flip of a switch.

A modified version of the filing was approved by the MPSC at their December 2012 meeting. Some rate restructuring was approved, and you will see that represented in the various lines on your bill. The rate change was also approved, which means residential members will see a modest increase of about 2.32 percent. There is no change to the residential service charge at this time. All of these changes will be reflected on your January bill.

Every January, we also implement changes to the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) line on your bill. This is related to the energy supply piece of your bill and based on the previous year's actual power supply costs and projected 2013 power costs. The PCA increase is about 3 percent for residential members.

"We recognize that times are tough for many of our members. However, we also know that you want and need reliable and safe electric service 24/7," says Bob Hance, president/CEO.

Hance explains that two-thirds of the bill is related to the actual cost of power, which is money we collect and pay right back out to those who generate and transmit power to our substations.

Midwest Energy Cooperative Special Charges	
Special service at the member's request	
During regular working hours	\$40
Outside regular working hours	\$70
Meter reading	\$20
Meter test (if less than 12 months since last test)	\$35
Disconnect/Reconnect	
At meter during regular working hours	\$35
At meter outside regular working hours	\$70
At pole during regular working hours	\$45
At pole outside regular working hours	\$85
Collection after written disconnect notice	\$25
Bad check handling (NSF)	\$15
New connections made at member request	
During regular working hours	\$50
Outside regular working hours	\$100

The remaining one-third is related to the cost of running the distribution system.

"As a member-owned, nonprofit utility, we have no motivation to propose inflated rate structures—that serves no one in a cooperative business model," Hance adds. "Our goal is to manage costs and provide a high-quality system and service that provides you with the value you need to live your life. That value is electricity."

Other rate classes are also impacted by the MPSC-approved filing. Specific information will be shared directly with those members.

Midwest *in* the Community

Giving back to our communities is one of the core values of Midwest Energy. We believe in doing what we can, individually and as a family of employees, to strengthen and support the communities in which we live, work and serve. Following are some of the ways we impacted our communities over the last couple of months.

Rachel's Challenge

In October and November, Midwest Energy Cooperative and Touchstone Energy brought a message of kindness and compassion to more than 3,100 students from 16 school systems across our service territory.

Rachel's Challenge is a series of student-empowering programs and strategies that equips students and adults to combat bullying and the resulting feelings of isolation and despair by creating a culture of kindness and compassion. Programs are based on the writings and life of 17-year-old Rachel Scott, who was the first student killed at Columbine High School in 1999.

Representatives from the Rachel's Challenge organization spoke to students in hour-long morning assemblies. Following each assembly, students were invited to accept the challenge by signing a banner that will be displayed at their school. Small groups of students from each participating school stayed for an afternoon student leader training to equip them with tools and ideas to start a Friends of Rachel Club within their school.

"Helping kids understand the power of kindness and compassion not only makes them stronger as individuals, but also strengthens schools, families and the community as a whole. This is an important and life-changing outreach that really demonstrates our community value," said Patty Nowlin, director of communications and community relations at Midwest.

(1) Two young men accepted Rachel's Challenge by signing the banner that will be displayed at the schools.

Pink Flair and Fueling the Fight

Team Midwest, and some of our on-the-road fleet, went pink last October in honor of our efforts to raise money and awareness for breast cancer.

Midwest Propane introduced its inaugural "Fueling the Fight" campaign. The logo was



①



②

included on bulk delivery trucks from August through October to spread awareness of the campaign, and in November a donation of nearly \$4,500 was presented to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. One penny was donated for each gallon of gas delivered in October, accounting for almost \$2,800 of the overall donation. Another \$1,400 resulted from successful Tell-A-Friend referrals and miscellaneous donations.

Other efforts included the 2nd Annual "Pink Flair to be Breast Cancer Aware" event. Over 100 community members and co-op employees donated \$10 to have a pink feather or hair extension styled into their hair in honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The Pink Flair theme also included lobby sales of pink boxing gloves and pink ribbon yard signs. In total, over \$2,600 was donated to support the work of Cass County Cancer Service. The Adrian office efforts generated a donation of \$500 for the American Cancer Society wig bank program at the 110 Madison Avenue Salon in Adrian.



Scan this with your QR reader to visit our online photo album and see more photos from these and other "Midwest in the Community" events.



④

⑤



③

(2) Jenna Zache, administration and finance support specialist, waits patiently as hair stylist Jen Sobasky styles some pink flair into her hair.

(3) Robin Albrecht, Midwest Propane serviceman, shows off the design sported on his truck from the "Fueling the Fight" campaign.

United Way Day of Action

In November, a group of Team Midwest employees joined forces with 470 southwest Michigan volunteers to clean gutters, rake leaves and install plastic over windows to help about 150 senior citizens prepare for winter.

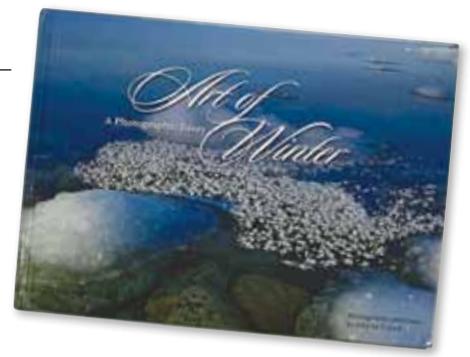
A number of those who benefited expressed their sincere thanks, and following are just a few of the comments:

"Thank you ... you know it's kinda hard. My husband passed away a year ago and I just got all of his doctor bills caught up, but there just doesn't seem to be enough money to go around for extra things."

"That takes a big load off my mind. I tried to do it last year, and I'm 74. It just wears me out; it's too much. Thank you!"

"I really appreciate what you're doing. I sure do thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Leaves were tackled from both ground and roof approaches by team volunteers **(4)** Cathy Teeter, customer care representative, and **(5)** Joe Sobieski, apprentice lineman.



The Art of Island Living

Julie McKay Covert likes to sit at her dining room table, cradling a steaming mug of hot chocolate and looking out over the treetops at Lake Huron. Two sides of the dining room are windows, and from this vantage point on the second story of her snug, 1,200-square-foot house, she has a bird's-eye view. Depending on the season, the daily show includes cedar waxwings, warblers, snow buntings, ravens, and even bald eagles.

The variety and abundance of wildlife on Shelter Island is just one of the trade-offs that Julie, and her husband Hugh, embrace in their life as the only people living on the 40-acre island they own in Lake Huron. The island is located just off

the southeastern tip of Drummond Island, in the far eastern Upper Peninsula. Hugh works as a captain of tall ships, among other pursuits, and bought the island nine years ago and built a home and lifestyle that reflect his love for sailing the Great Lakes. He designed the open-plan house to withstand the rigors of wilderness living.

The first story of their house is used for storage and utility areas, in order to be thoroughly bear-proof—the second story is their living space.

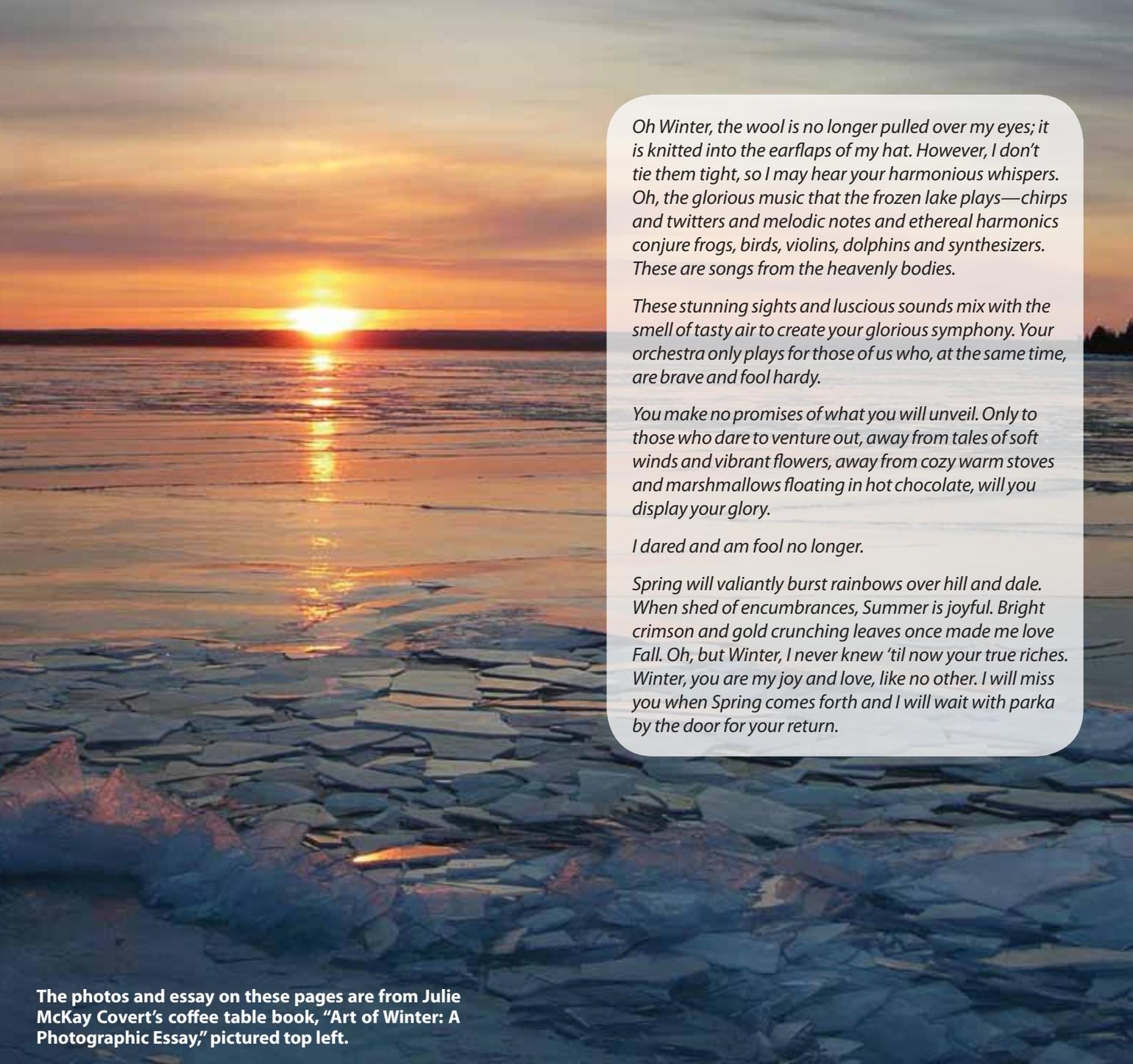
“We enjoy all of our fuzzy, furry friends that live out in the woods with us,” Julie says. The thin topsoil cover precludes gardening, and the wildlife and isolation make the idea of owning pets or farm

animals like chickens or pigs impractical for the Coverts. “How do you ask someone to come out and care for animals when you live where we do?” she laughs.

A massage and bodywork therapist, and book author of “The Insightful Body,” Julie spends much of her time traveling to conduct classes for her business, Island Wellness Center, located on Drummond Island. At work, she is a member of Cloverland Electric Cooperative, but at home, the Coverts live “off the grid.” Three years ago, as a bride, Julie moved into an island home that uses wood and propane for heating, cooking and refrigeration, and solar panels for electricity.

“I loved it immediately,” she says. Her new husband encouraged her to explore all





Oh Winter, the wool is no longer pulled over my eyes; it is knitted into the earflaps of my hat. However, I don't tie them tight, so I may hear your harmonious whispers. Oh, the glorious music that the frozen lake plays—chirps and twitters and melodic notes and ethereal harmonics conjure frogs, birds, violins, dolphins and synthesizers. These are songs from the heavenly bodies.

These stunning sights and luscious sounds mix with the smell of tasty air to create your glorious symphony. Your orchestra only plays for those of us who, at the same time, are brave and fool hardy.

You make no promises of what you will unveil. Only to those who dare to venture out, away from tales of soft winds and vibrant flowers, away from cozy warm stoves and marshmallows floating in hot chocolate, will you display your glory.

I dared and am fool no longer.

Spring will valiantly burst rainbows over hill and dale. When shed of encumbrances, Summer is joyful. Bright crimson and gold crunching leaves once made me love Fall. Oh, but Winter, I never knew 'til now your true riches. Winter, you are my joy and love, like no other. I will miss you when Spring comes forth and I will wait with parka by the door for your return.

The photos and essay on these pages are from Julie McKay Covert's coffee table book, "Art of Winter: A Photographic Essay," pictured top left.

four seasons of the wilderness outside their door. "Go play in the 'big room,' Hugh would tell me. I saw absolutely beautiful sights that the snow, the ice, and the light were creating," she recalls.

Struck by the fleeting quality of the winter beauty surrounding her, she would see a breathtaking arrangement of ice and light and hoarfrost, but passing the same spot 10 minutes later it would all have changed. A long-time photographer, Julie began to carry a camera on all of her

walks in order to capture the changeable winter scenery for family and friends. "I would put pictures on my blog to show people things they'd never see otherwise," explains. She collected enough photos in her wanderings to self-publish a small book as a gift for guests and family. They urged her to seek out a wider audience, and the result is her second book, "Art of Winter," which was published this year.

"I started this for fun," Julie says. "Living like this has always been a dream."



Writer/photographer Julie McKay Covert and her husband, Hugh, enjoy winter on Shelter Island.

Learn more about Julie McKay Covert's books and businesses at JulieMCovert.com or call 443-604-1981, e-mail Julie@JulieMCovert.com, or write to her at 38300 S. Shelter Island, Drummond Island, MI 49726.



SALAD!

Salads can be a great addition to a meal, or even the main event. If you're bored of the same old salads, try one of these.

Pear Salad with Gorgonzola Dressing

(Pictured above)

1 12-oz. bag spring mix lettuce
1 fresh or canned pear, peeled and chopped
dried cherries
candied walnuts

Dressing:

1 fresh or canned pear, peeled and finely diced
1 t. olive oil
1/3 c. white vinegar
1/4 c. lemon juice
1 T. dijon mustard
3 T. agave syrup or honey (add more for sweeter)
3 T. crumbled gorgonzola cheese
dash salt
dash pepper

Mix all dressing ingredients together. Layer lettuce, pear pieces, cherries and walnuts on a plate. You can also add grilled chicken. Serve with dressing and french bread.

Christin McKamey

Tasty Tree Salad

2 bunches broccoli, trimmed and chopped
8 strips bacon, cooked and crumbled
1 c. raisins
1/2 c. chopped onion
1/2 c. slivered almonds
1 c. mayonnaise
2 t. red wine vinegar
3 t. sugar

Mix all ingredients and chill salad in refrigerator overnight before serving. For a lower fat version, use only 4 strips of bacon and substitute plain yogurt for the mayonnaise.

Toni Monton, Custer

Spinach Strawberry Pecan Salad

2 bags spinach, rinsed and dried
1 pint strawberries, sliced
1 c. toasted pecan pieces (toast for 15 min. at 300°; watch closely)

Dressing:

1/3 c. white vinegar
3/4 c. sugar
1 t. dry mustard
1 t. salt
1 1/2 t. minced onion
1 c. vegetable oil
1 1/2 T. poppy seeds

Mix dressing ingredients in blender. Place spinach, strawberries, and pecans in large bowl. Toss with dressing just before serving.

Marianne O'Neill, Dryden

Dill Tuna Salad

4 c. small shells or penne pasta, cooked
1 large can white tuna in water
1 c. celery, diced small
1/2 c. chopped green onions, including tops
1 c. frozen peas
1/4 c. fresh parsley, minced
10 ozs. plain greek yogurt
1 c. mayonnaise
1/4 c. fresh lemon juice
2 T. fresh dill, snipped
1/2 t. salt
1/4 t. white pepper

In a large bowl, combine pasta, tuna, celery, onions, peas and parsley. In a small bowl, combine yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice, dill, salt and pepper. Pour sauce over pasta and toss gently. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

Mary Babcock, Port Austin

Snicker Salad

6 large delicious apples, unpeeled, chopped
6 2-oz. Snickers® candy bars, chopped
1 12-oz. carton whipped topping
1/2 c. pecans, chopped (optional)

In a large bowl, combine apples, candy bar pieces and pecans. Mix well. Mix in whipped topping. Refrigerate. Best served the same day. It's a unique salad that the entire family will love!

Denise Halgren, Niles

Cauliflower Salad

1 small head lettuce, broken up
1 small head cauliflower, cut up
1 small red onion, finely diced
1/4 lb. bacon, fried and crumbled
1/2 c. slivered almonds
8 ozs. mayonnaise
1 small can parmesan cheese
1/4 c. sugar

Prepare veggies and mix with bacon and almonds. Mix together the mayonnaise, parmesan and sugar. Dress veggies with mayonnaise mixture just before serving.

Marlene Pitts, Farwell

Chinese Coleslaw

2 packages chicken flavored ramen noodles (uncooked)
1 c. sunflower seeds
1 small package sliced almonds
4 green onions, chopped
1 bunch fresh broccoli, chopped
1/2 c. oil
1/3 c. red wine vinegar
3/4 c. sugar

Crunch ramen noodles in the bag before opening and set seasoning packets aside. Put noodles in a bowl and add sunflower seeds, almonds, onions, and broccoli. In a separate bowl, mix the seasoning packets, oil, vinegar and sugar together, making sure sugar dissolves. Pour dressing over the noodle mixture and chill 8 to 12 hours or overnight.

Deborah Buck, Cassopolis

Pasta Veggie Salad

2 c. cooked tube pasta, drained and rinsed
1 zucchini squash, cubed
1 yellow summer squash, cubed
1 sweet red pepper, cut into bite-size pieces
1/2 green pepper, cut into bite-size pieces
1 cucumber, cubed
3 to 4 green onions, chopped

Dressing:

1/2 t. black pepper
1/2 t. salt
3/4 t. garlic powder
3/4 t. dried minced onions

Congratulations to our 2012 Recipe Contest Winner!

Paula Brousseau's name was drawn from all those whose recipes we printed in 2012 and *Country Lines* magazine will pay her January electric bill as a prize.

Paula, a Great Lakes Energy member from Bellaire, has been an electric co-op member for over 50 years and tried many recipes printed in *Country Lines* before she decided to start sending hers in, which she has now been doing for years.

Thank you, Paula, and all of our readers who shared their great recipes in 2012!



3/4 t. dry mustard
1/4 c. sugar
1/4 c. white wine vinegar
1/4 c. vegetable oil

Add all vegetables to pasta. Keep salad chilled. For dressing, combine dry spices then add sugar, vinegar and oil. Pour dressing over salad an hour or two before serving.

Michele Jewell, Alba

Mandarin Chicken Salad

2 c. macaroni rings, cooked, rinsed and chilled
2 c. cooked chicken (about 4 breasts), chopped
1 T. minced onion
1 t. salt
1 1/2 c. green grapes
1 c. mandarin oranges
1/2 c. sliced almonds
1/2 c. chopped celery
1 c. mayo

1 c. whipped cream

Combine chicken, onion and salt. Chill. Mix macaroni, grapes, celery, oranges, almonds and mayo; combine with chicken mixture. Just before serving, fold in whipped cream.

Suzanne Hammerstrom, Hancock

Quick Taco Salad

4 c. iceberg lettuce, shredded
1 c. taco cheese
1 c. tomatoes, diced
1 c. nacho Dorito chips, crushed
1 c. uncooked ground beef
1 package taco seasoning
1/4 c. diced green peppers
thousand island dressing, to taste

Dice all veggies and place into a large bowl. Cook ground beef over medium heat and add taco seasoning. Allow to cool before adding to the salad. Toss with thousand island dressing. Add Dorito chips and serve immediately.

Danielle Cochran, Grayling

Grape Salad

2 lbs. red grapes
2 lbs. green grapes
8 oz. cream cheese
8 oz. sour cream
1/2 c. sugar
1 t. vanilla
1 c. brown sugar
1/2 c. chopped pecans

Wash and dry grapes. Beat cream cheese, sour cream, sugar and vanilla. Add grapes and stir. Before serving, sprinkle with brown sugar and pecans.

Marcia Rosa, Chase

Tortellini and Veggie Salad

2 bags refrigerated cheese tortellini
3 jars olives (each different), drained
1 whole red onion, cut into chunks
3 colored sweet peppers, cut into chunks
1 package cherry or grape tomatoes
1 c. celery, cut into chunks
1 c. carrots, sliced
2 cucumbers, with peel, cut into chunks
1 small zucchini squash, cut into chunks
1 package pepperoni slices

Dressing:

1/2 c. balsamic vinegar
1 bottle Kraft Sun-dried Tomato Dressing
2 T. McCormick Salad Supreme seasoning
Cook tortellini as directed and cool. Mix dressing ingredients with tortellini then combine and add the rest of the ingredients 2 hours before serving. Garnish with fresh basil or parsley.

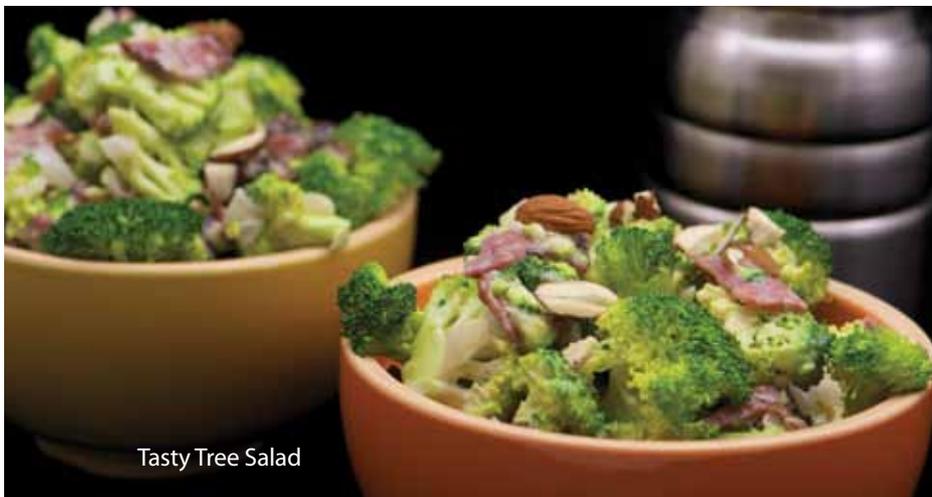
Jan Vaughn, Vestaburg

Swiss Cashew Toss Salad

1/3 c. white vinegar
3/4 c. sugar
2 t. prepared mustard
1 t. grated onion
dash of salt
1 c. vegetable oil
1 t. poppy seeds
1 medium bunch romaine lettuce, torn
1 c. salted cashew halves
4 oz. swiss cheese, julienned

In a blender, combine vinegar, sugar, mustard, onion and salt. Cover and process until well blended. While processing, gradually add oil in a steady stream. Stir in poppy seeds. In salad bowl, combine romaine, cashews and Swiss cheese; serve with dressing. Serves 8 to 10.

Julie Grulke, Cheboygan



Tasty Tree Salad

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE! Contributors whose recipes we print in 2013 will be entered in a drawing to win a prize: *Country Lines* will pay their January 2014 electric bill (up to \$200)! The 2013 winner will be announced in the Jan. 2014 issue.

Thanks to all who sent in recipes! Upcoming: Please send in **ASIAN INSPIRED** recipes by Feb. 10 and **MEXICAN** recipes by March 10. Mail to: *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

Photography by: 831 Creative

Making Strides with Clean-Coal Technology

The Cooperative Research Network pursues new solutions that help Michigan electric co-ops deliver safe, reliable and affordable power to you.

Despite the recent “green” energy revolution and the rapid expansion of natural gas drilling rigs across America, our nation’s primary fuel for producing electricity is coal—as it has been for over a century.

Electricity generated by coal fell from 42 percent in 2011 to 37.5 percent in 2012, largely because of low natural gas prices, the retirement of older coal-fired power plants due to new emissions regulations from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and uncertainty about further regulations.

But coal is far from dead. Electricity from coal is predicted to rise about 3 percent this year while the natural gas contribution drops from 30.5 percent to 27.4 percent, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration’s (EIA) Short-Term Energy Outlook. And, natural gas prices are forecasted to rise this year due to higher demand and a slow-

down in production.

“Coal still has a future as a source of electricity,” says Craig Borr, president/CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. “Whether you are for or against the use of coal to generate electricity, the fact is the United States remains home to the world’s largest coal reserves. That’s why electric co-ops are fully behind efforts to explore and test clean-coal technologies.”

One driver is the EPA’s Mercury and Air Toxics Standards rule, designed to significantly curb emissions of hazardous air pollutants (i.e., mercury and arsenic) from coal- and oil-fired plants 25 MW or larger by 2016. Some coal-fired plants will be shut down, rather than retrofitted, because the needed changes would be too costly to implement.

Electric co-ops and their trade association, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), are exploring new

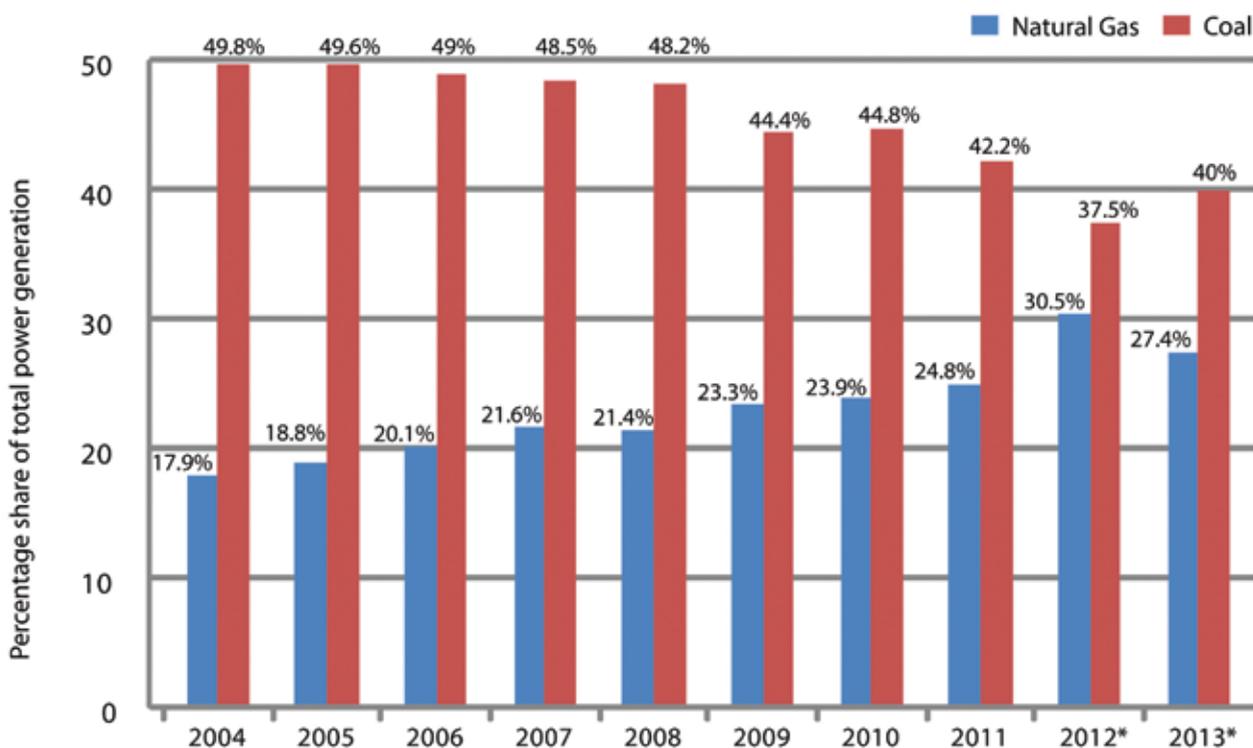
approaches to burn coal more cleanly. NRECA’s Cooperative Research Network (CRN) recently finished demonstrating an innovative new multi-pollutant control system that shows promise for helping coal-fired power plants meet stringent EPA emissions standards at a fraction of the cost of traditional measures.

The demonstration was conducted in July 2012 at an Arizona generation and transmission co-op (G&T). The results showed significant emission reductions by combining mercury controls—which CRN successfully tested earlier at a Texas G&T—with trona (a naturally occurring mineral similar to baking soda). The tested technologies also cut the cost of meeting new environmental rules by a factor of five to 10.

Results for these full-scale power plants were very encouraging, but based on short-term runs, says John Hewa Jr., NRECA vice president of engineering, research & technical services. “To verify long-term performance, the results need to be confirmed with extended trials.”

Electric co-ops support the multi-pollutant control technologies CRN is studying because they can learn how to best use one of our most abundant natural resources, coal, to continue providing safe, reliable and environmentally responsible power at the lowest possible rates.

Coal Versus Natural Gas Use in the United States



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration Short-Term Energy Outlook, October 2012

* Forecast

Your Guide to the Michigan Legislature

Please pull out this guide and use it as you get to know the legislators in your co-op service area.

Who's Your Senator?

The state senators on this page represent districts that overlap electric co-op service areas. Although electric co-op issues are but a small part of their overall responsibilities, they have generally been supportive of the co-op agenda, which rests on the premise that as self-governed, member-owned and not-for-profit utilities, co-ops and their members ought to be treated differently than for-profit utilities.

► **Find Your State Senator** at senate.mi.gov

Alger Delta & Ontonagon



38th District (R)
Tom Casperson
1st Term
517-373-7840

Thumb



31st District (R)
Mike Green
1st Term
517-373-1777

Cloverland



37th District (R) **Howard Walker** 1st Term 517-373-2413
38th District (R) **Tom Casperson** 1st Term 517-373-7840

Cherryland



35th District (R) **Darwin Booher** 1st Term 517-373-1725
37th District (R) **Howard Walker** 1st Term 517-373-2413

Presque Isle



36th District (R) **John Moolenaar** 1st Term 517-373-7946
37th District (R) **Howard Walker** 1st Term 517-373-2413

HomeWorks



22nd District (R) **Joe Hune** 1st Term 517-373-2420
23rd District (D) **Gretchen Whitmer** 2nd Term 517-373-1734

Great Lakes



24th District (R) **Rick Jones** 1st Term 517-373-3447
28th District (R) **Mark Jansen** 2nd Term 517-373-0797
30th District (R) **Arlan Meekhof** 1st Term 517-373-6920
33rd District (R) **Judy Emmons** 1st Term 517-373-3760



34th District (R) **Goeff Hansen** 1st Term 517-373-1635
35th District (R) **Darwin Booher** 1st Term 517-373-1725
36th District (R) **John Moolenaar** 1st Term 517-373-7946
37th District (R) **Howard Walker** 1st Term 517-373-2413

Midwest



16th District (R) **Bruce Caswell** 1st Term 517-373-5932
20th District (R) **Tonya Schuitmaker** 1st Term 517-373-0793



21st District (R) **John Proos** 1st Term 517-373-6960



24th District (R) **Rick Jones** 1st Term 517-373-3447
32nd District (R) **Roger Kahn** 2nd Term 517-373-1760



33rd District (R) **Judy Emmons** 1st Term 517-373-3760
35th District (R) **Darwin Booher** 1st Term 517-373-1725

Find Your State Representative ►

Who's Your State Representative?

Every 10 years, the Michigan Legislature goes through a redistricting process based on census information. Depending on population numbers, some districts were redrawn and some remain the same. Thus, there is a possibility that you may have a new legislator because of changed district lines or, due to term limits, someone new was elected.

In the House of Representatives, Republicans continue to hold the majority of 59-51. There will be 28 new faces in Lansing. Of the 28, 19 are Democrats and 9 are Republicans.

The state representatives on these pages represent a cross-section of Michigan. Whatever their background, most represent districts with large rural populations—areas where electric co-ops serve. In fact, several legislators are electric co-op members themselves.

Legislation affecting cooperatives and their owners most likely originates in those committees covering utilities, energy, technology, transportation, environment, land use, safety and taxes.

► **Find Your State Representative**
at house.mi.gov



Ontonagon REA



110th District (D)
Scott Dianda
1st Term
517-373-0850

Cherryland Electric




101st District (R)
Ray Franz
2nd Term
517-373-0825



102nd District (R)
Phil Potvin
2nd Term
517-373-1747



103rd District (R)
Bruce Rendon
2nd Term
517-373-3817



104th District (R)
Wayne Schmidt
3rd Term
517-373-1766



Alger Delta Electric



108th District (R)
Ed McBroom
2nd Term
517-373-0156



109th District (D)
John Kivela
1st Term
517-373-0498



110th District (D)
Scott Dianda
1st Term
517-373-0850

HomeWorks Tri-County




65th District (R)
Mike Shirkey
2nd Term
517-373-1775



67th District (D)
Tom Cochran
1st Term
517-373-0587



70th District (R)
Rick Outman
2nd Term
517-373-0834



71st District (D)
Theresa Abed
1st Term
517-373-0853



86th District (R)
Lisa Posthumus Lyons • 2nd Term
517-373-0846



87th District (R)
Mike Callton
2nd Term
517-373-0842



93rd District (R)
Tom Leonard
1st Term
517-373-1778



97th District (R)
Joel Johnson
2nd Term
517-373-8962



99th District (R)
Kevin Cotter
2nd Term
517-373-1789



102nd District (R)
Phil Potvin
2nd Term
517-373-1747



Cloverland Electric



107th District (R)
Frank Foster
2nd Term
517-373-2629



108th District (R)
Ed McBroom
2nd Term
517-373-0156



109th District (D)
John Kivela
1st Term
517-373-0498

Presque Isle Electric & Gas



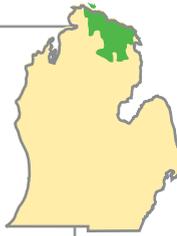
105th District (R)
Greg MacMaster
2nd Term
517-373-0829



106th District (R)
Peter Pettalia
2nd Term
517-373-0833



107th District (R)
Frank Foster
2nd Term
517-373-2629



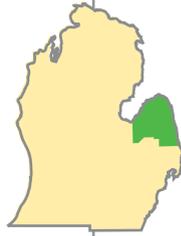
Thumb Electric



83rd District (R)
Paul Muxlow
2nd Term
517-373-0835



84th District (D)
Terry Brown
3rd Term
517-373-0476



Midwest Energy



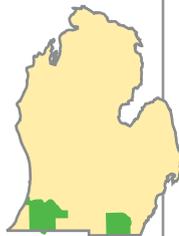
56th District (R)
Dale Zorn
2nd Term
517-373-2617



57th District (R)
Nancy Jenkins
2nd Term
517-373-1706



59th District (R)
Matt Lori
3rd Term
517-373-0832



61st District (R)
Margaret O'Brien
2nd Term
517-373-1774



63rd District (R)
Jase Bolger
3rd Term
517-373-1787



65th District (R)
Mike Shirkey
2nd Term
517-373-1775



66th District (R)
Aric Nesbitt
2nd Term
517-373-1784



78th District (R)
Dave Pagel
1st Term
517-373-1796



79th District (R)
Al Pscholka
2nd Term
517-373-1403

Great Lakes Energy



70th District (R)
Rick Outman
2nd Term
517-373-0834



72nd District (R)
Ken Yonker
2nd Term
517-373-0840



73rd District (R)
Peter MacGregor
2nd Term
517-373-0218



74th District (R)
Robert VerHeulen
1st Term
517-373-8900



80th District (R)
Bob Genetski II
1st Term
517-373-0839



87th District (R)
Mike Callton
2nd Term
517-373-0842



88th District (R)
Roger Victory
1st Term
517-373-0836



89th District (R)
Amanda Price
2nd Term
517-373-0838



90th District (R)
Joseph Haveman
3rd Term
517-373-0830



91st District (D)
Collene Lamonte
1st Term
517-373-3436



97th District (R)
Joel Johnson
2nd Term
517-373-8962



100th District (R)
Jon Bumstead
2nd Term
517-373-7317



101st District (R)
Ray Franz
2nd Term
517-373-0825



102nd District (R)
Phil Potvin
2nd Term
517-373-1747



103rd District (R)
Bruce Rendon
2nd Term
517-373-3817



104th District (R)
Wayne Schmidt
3rd Term
517-373-1766



105th District (R)
Greg MacMaster
2nd Term
517-373-0829



106th District (R)
Peter Pettalia
2nd Term
517-373-0833



107th District (R)
Frank Foster
2nd Term
517-373-2629



Be a Fam With a Plan

Resolve to be emergency-ready this year by making an easy plan that can save lives and property. Following these simple steps can help your family, home, business and community prepare for a fierce winter storm or other disaster...

BEFORE

Communicate. Talk with your family about who to call, where to go, and what to do during an emergency. Talk with neighbors about how to work together if disaster strikes.

Educate. Plan different strategies for different situations. Map out a fire escape route from all areas of your home, and establish a safe place to go during threatening weather. Make sure all family members know their full name, address and phone numbers. Agree on an out-of-town relative or friend to call if everyone gets separated, and have an ICE (In Case of Emergency) contact in your cell phone that first responders can call. For example, if you had to evacuate, where would you go? How would you reach your kids at school or your spouse at work? Also consider being an educator for safety and emergency preparedness in your community by calling your local Citizen Corps.

If you are a parent, or guardian of an elderly person with special needs, including kids and adults with disabilities, make sure schools and care providers have emergency plans. Ask how they will communicate with families during a crisis, whether they store adequate food, water and other basics, if they are prepared to “shelter-in-place,” and where they will go if they must evacuate.

Prepare. Use technology to help, for example:

- Learn how to send updates by text and internet from a cell phone to contacts and social channels in case voice communications become unavailable.

- Store important documents such as personal and financial records in the cloud or on a USB stick that can be kept ready and accessible from anywhere;

- Visit ready.gov or call 800-237-3239 (text 800-462-7585) or ready.gov/michigan to stay informed and get free templates for creating emergency documents and plans for homes and businesses;

- Make sure fire detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are working by installing fresh batteries annually. Use a battery-

operated weather radio for advance storm warnings, and subscribe to your local Office of Emergency Management alerts by text or email, if available.

- If you have a land-line phone, it will work without electricity; keep emergency numbers next to it.

Keep an emergency supply kit:

- Five days worth of non-perishable food and water, first aid supplies, phone numbers (including your electric co-op and other utility outage numbers), medicines, and cleaning supplies.

- Include items for meeting unique needs, such as:

- Prescription medications and glasses;
- Infant formula and diapers;
- Food, extra water, and a leash and collar for your pet;
- Important documents, such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container;

- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for kids;

- Keep an emergency kit in the car, too, including water, food and first aid supplies in the event you lose power or get stranded in the car during a winter storm. (Consider including a cell phone charger that works in the car outlet).

DURING & AFTER

Keep calm. Think clearly and follow your plan. Use the resources you prepared.

Be patient. Wait for all danger to pass. If an area is evacuated, never re-enter without permission, and remember to use caution when you go back into your home—you can't always see danger, such as a ruptured gas line.

Avoid delayed danger. Do not approach downed wires or power lines, watch for rising waters, and see the box on this page for more electrical safety tips.

Practice your emergency plan, and encourage friends and community members to take these simple steps, too. — Kelly Trapnell

Winter Storm Electrical Safety Tips

- ▶ Never touch a fallen power line and report it immediately to your local electric co-op. Assume all downed wires are electrically charged. Avoid contact with overhead lines during clean-up and other activities.

- ▶ In an outage, an alternate fuel or wood-burning heating source—such as a fireplace, propane space heater, or wood stove—may be used, but use extreme caution by following the manufacturer's directions and venting them properly.

- ▶ Do not use a gas oven for heating—it may go out or burn inefficiently, leading to carbon monoxide poisoning.

- ▶ Make sure carbon monoxide and smoke detectors are working properly.

- ▶ Do not use a gas or charcoal grill inside the home, and do not use charcoal briquettes in the fireplace.

- ▶ If using a portable generator to power a heating source, be sure the generator is located outside your house for proper ventilation. Do not use a generator in an attached garage, and follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.

- ▶ Do not overload a generator. Use properly-sized extension cords that have a grounded three-prong plug and are in good condition. Never run cords under rugs or carpets.

- ▶ Never connect generators directly to power lines—the reverse flow of electricity can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

- ▶ Watch the elderly and young kids for signs of hypothermia, which include shivering, drowsiness, and mental and physical slowness. Call 911 immediately.

— Chris Grammes

A Blizzard of Kindness

No one will forget the “big one” of March 2nd, 2012. Over 2 feet of heavy, wet snow fell overnight throughout northern Michigan, and left thousands of people without power. Some weren’t prepared and needed food and water. Cars were left vacant in ditches on the roadside. Others were stuck at home because the snow was too heavy and deep to shovel. Fallen trees canvassed the landscape and roadways, making it hard to navigate and dangerous to even walk your dog. But the blizzard, in all its fury, couldn’t match the warm generosity and overflowing kindness that began to grow...

Love Thy Neighbor

After waking up to a gorgeous view of trees blanketed in snow it was time to dig out and get households in order. Snowplow trucks, snow blowers, and the occasional front loader quickly turned a serene, quiet morning into a full war on snow removal.

Amy Rose of McBain was one of those who felt blessed when her driveway was suddenly cleared. “A young man with a front loader showed up on my street and just started clearing driveways, expecting no money in return. He helped so many people that day!”

Mark Gabrick of Lake Ann and Trevor McClain of Traverse City logged in 36 hours clearing driveways and roadways of snow and fallen trees. Amy and Kyle Rosa were one of the first recipients of Gabrick’s generosity. “My husband Kyle is a deputy for Benzie County and needed to get his patrol car out for work. Mark came over with his loader right away and wouldn’t take any money for it,” says Rosa. “It was just another day in the work of the Lord,” says Gabrick. “We saw the need and answered the call.”

Feeling Good in the Neighborhood

Tom and Laura Phillips of Traverse City felt guilty about having a generator while others went without power, but they didn’t sit selfishly by and watch their neighbors muddle through. “Tom helped neighbors turn on their gas fireplaces and pitched in shoveling



Snowed Under: A shovel could only clear what snow blew under the covered patio at the writer’s Platte River home. **Right:** Mark Gabrick (driver) and Trevor McClain worked long hours helping their neighbors clear snow and downed trees and branches after the historic March 2012 storm.



driveways,” says his wife, Laura. Laura did her part by using her generator-powered kitchen to make large pots of chili and goulash, and distributed them to the neighbors so they could have a warm meal.

Gary and Lori Florip, of Lake Ann, were just coming off a 12-hour EMS shift, but instead of going home to sleep they continued to help their friends and neighbors. Tera and Scott Konchek, also of Lake Ann, and their three children weren’t able to get out of their driveway and were low on food. Scott suffers from Devic’s disease, a disorder of the central nervous system involving inflammation of the optic nerves and spinal cord, so Tera wasn’t going anywhere anytime soon. “They brought us food and cleared my driveway. They are two amazing people that went out of their way to help our family and many others without stopping to think of themselves,” Konchek says. “People helping people—that’s why we moved to Northern Michigan.”

Unplugged and Loving It

Why is it so frustrating when our internet or cable service is temporarily interrupted, yet when the power was out for days most

of the people have fond memories of rediscovering family time and connecting with neighbors? Perhaps it’s because we were all in the same predicament. We had a good “excuse” not to be tied to our cell phones and constantly checking email messages.

Linda Snow, of Traverse City, fondly recalls passing the time with her grown children. “We played cards, had fun melting snow on our gas stove, and my daughter Torre made bracelets,” Snow says. They even brought out the old “I Spy” books from the kids’ younger days. “We were all playing cards when the power came back on. I was actually disappointed our ‘Little House on the Prairie’ days were over.”

In a chaotic world where criminals and corruption sometimes take center stage, it was heartwarming to witness the human spirit at its best. The kindness and generosity of compassionate people and the fun and creative ways we passed the time brought us all closer together. Even though March came in like a lion last winter, the spirit of goodwill left an impression in our hearts that will get us through another winter and perhaps encourage us to have a little creative fun with any down-time caused by bad weather.

Energy Optimization REBATES:

Back By Popular Demand!

You know the story. The clock strikes midnight and millions of people make resolutions to change. But, if something is working great, why fix it? Our thoughts exactly. Midwest Energy is keeping its most popular 2012 Energy Optimization (EO) rebates for 2013. It's your turn to save this year.

Reducing energy use is a win for everyone—homeowners, businesses, and the buildings themselves. Did you know that one of every two people prefer to make his/her home more energy efficient instead of more beautiful because of the short- and long-term benefits? That's because **saving energy gives you more control, increases your freedom, and improves your home.**

The list at right shows the energy rebates your fellow Michiganders used the most in 2012. All of these rebates help you save energy easily, keep you comfortable, and provide the best value.

Find more rebates at michigan-energy.org. Email (michigan-energy.org/contact) or call (877-296-4319) with questions about applications or product eligibility.

REBATE & FEATURES	INCENTIVE AMOUNT
ENERGY STAR® DEHUMIDIFIER	\$20
Choose any ENERGY STAR model; use 15% less energy	
EFFICIENT HVAC—FURNACES with electric commutated motors (ECMs)	\$150
Effectively converts energy to generate heat instead of energy waste; save as much as \$800 in the next 10 years	
ELECTRIC WATER HEATERS	\$50
0.93 energy factor (EF) or higher	
HEAT PUMP WATER HEATERS	\$100
Heat pump model 2.0 EF or higher	
ENERGY STAR REFRIGERATOR	\$20
FREE appliance recycling; choose any ENERGY STAR model; use at least 15% less energy	
ONLINE HOME AUDIT (Home Energy Optimizer)...	FREE Energy-Saving Kit (\$30 value)
Pinpoint where your home wastes energy; access at michigan-energy.org , select your energy provider, and click "Home Audit"; receive free EO kit (contains five CFLs, energy efficient aerators, and a showerhead) when you complete the online assessment.	

ATTENTION FARMERS! The Energy Optimization Farm Program invites you to get a **free** engine block heater timer. Call 877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org/heatertimer.



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- ★ **\$20 Rebate ENERGY STAR dehumidifiers**
- ★ **\$20 Rebate ENERGY STAR refrigerators**
- ★ **\$50 Rebate Electric water heaters**
- ★ **FREE online home audit and energy-saving kit**
- ★ **\$150 Rebate ECM furnaces**

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Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.



Your Perspective PHOTO CONTEST



November

The votes are tallied and the last three monthly winners for the 2012 Your Perspective Photo Contest have been determined.

Stephanie Knepple, of Vandalia, won for September with her entry "Excited!" featuring her son on his first day of kindergarten.

"You looking at me?" was October's winning entry, submitted by Dallie Nichols, of Constantine, and featuring a favorite photo from her trip to our Customer Appreciation Day at the Toledo Zoo.

The November winner, "Playing in the leaves" was submitted by Edwardsburg member Allison Yeo.

Over the course of 2012 we received dozens of entries for this contest, and the 11 winners were selected based on the number of votes received through our Facebook contest page. All winning photos will be reviewed and the grand prize winner featured in the February issue.



October



September

There's an App For That!

Midwest is providing new innovations and solutions for member convenience.

The power of data is in your hands with our new SmartHub mobile application. Developed to provide convenience for our members and customers, SmartHub provides access and two-way communication with Midwest Energy Cooperative online via your mobile device of choice—Android, iPhone and other iOS devices. It delivers accurate, timely account information and allows you to make payments in a secure environment with the touch of a button right from your mobile device.



SmartHub application features include:

- **Bill & Pay:** Quickly view your current account balance and due date, manage recurring payments, and modify payment methods. You can also check your account history right from your mobile device.
- **Contact Midwest:** Got a question or concern—we're just a quick click away!
- **News:** Stay up on what's happening at your co-op with our handy news feed.
- **Map:** Locate the nearest district service center.
- **Service Status:** Report a service issue or find out if there are any known issues related to your account.
- **My Usage:** Access detailed information to better understand and manage your energy use.
- **Outage Map:** Get a quick glimpse of outages across our service area, and a listing of outage numbers by zip code.
- **Social media:** Check out what Midwest is up to on our YouTube Channel and Facebook page.

Provided by Midwest Energy Cooperative, this free application provides a safe and secure method of accessing your account through your smartphone or mobile device. It's another great innovation and solution from your electric cooperative.

Learn more or access your SmartHub app today at TeamMidwest.com.

Thanks for Your Survey Response

Last summer, we asked members to complete and return a comprehensive survey to help us update accounts with contact and appliance use information. The more we know about what you use and how you use it, the better able we are to serve as your energy efficiency resource.

In total, over 3,400 completed surveys were returned—a phenomenal response rate! Thanks to everyone who took the time to provide us with this valuable information. Ten lucky members were selected by random drawing from all completed entries returned for a \$100 energy credit. Congratu-

lations to: Tad Funnell, Stryker, OH; Robert Haigh, Three Rivers; Gordon Jackson, White Pigeon; James Loar, Palmyra; Janet Owens, Elkhart, IN; Dorothy Ruitter, Paw Paw; Glenn Schmidt, Adrian; Richard and Elna Schug, Marcellus; Richard Simpson, Cassopolis; and Richard and Janet Yeider, Manitou Beach.

Please contact us at 800-492-5989 anytime you have a change to your account contact information or if you do something to dramatically change your energy consumption. No information is ever shared with outside parties; it simply allows us to be a better resource to you!

Wolverine, We Energies Agree to Joint Ownership of U.P. Power Plant

Wolverine will fund a new air quality control system.



Aerial view of the Presque Isle Power Plant in Marquette.

Wolverine Power Cooperative and We Energies agreed in late November to pursue joint ownership of We Energies' Presque Isle Power Plant. In exchange for an approximate one-third ownership interest in the facility, Wolverine will fund construction of a state-of-the-art air quality control system for the plant.

The plant, located along the shore of Lake Superior in Marquette, consists of five coal-fired units capable of generating approximately 344 megawatts of electricity. In October 2011, We Energies announced the plant's potential retirement, targeted for 2017.

"We met with executives from We Energies in November 2011 to discuss opportunities for working together," explains Eric Baker, president and CEO of Wolverine. "The discussion led to a proposed joint venture that would keep the Presque Isle plant open and meet new air quality requirements."

Wolverine will invest between \$130 million and \$140 million to retrofit the plant's units. In return, the cooperative will own approximately 30 percent of the plant's output to serve its members, including Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Midwest Energy Cooperative and Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op.

We Energies and its employees will continue to operate the plant, as well as the air quality control system.

The two companies must first obtain approvals for joint ownership, as well as installation of the air quality control system, from state and federal agencies, including the Michigan and Wisconsin public service commissions, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

"The Presque Isle Power Plant provides needed baseload power supply for our members, in addition to protecting grid reliability in northern Michigan," Baker says. "We are pleased to have a quality operating partner in We Energies."

Governor Joins Wolverine, We Energies to Announce Power Plant Opportunity

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder was in Marquette in late November to express his support for the continued operation of the Presque Isle Power Plant.

"The partnership of We Energies and Wolverine Power Cooperative to keep the Presque Isle Power Plant open is good news for the current and future availability of a reliable electric supply for businesses and residents in the Upper Peninsula," Snyder said. "The agreement will also be good for the economy with more than 100 workers remaining on the job, and for the environment with the plant's new state-of-the-art emissions equipment. This is a great example of how, through relentless, positive action, we can come together to make Michigan a better place to live and work."



Insulate Cracks, Gaps for Maximum Efficiency

Q: *The wall and blown-in attic insulation in my fairly new house are at recommended levels, but my utility bills are still too high. What other areas should I check for inefficiency?*

A: You are correct that the walls and ceiling are the areas of the greatest heat loss from a house—proper insulation in those areas is of utmost importance. But it's also possible that many other areas in the exterior “thermal envelope” of your house have insulation voids or air leakage which can contribute to unnecessarily high utility bills.

First, check your walls and attic. As your house is “fairly new,” you can probably rest easy that the walls are adequately insulated, most likely with faced batts that fit tightly between wall studs. “Facing” refers to a material that acts as a vapor barrier.

ATTIC INSULATION – Since you have blown-in attic insulation, check its depth. Depending on how it was blown in, it may have settled and no longer reaches the required depth and R-value for your climate.

The U.S. Department of Energy has a calculator that figures the amount of insulation you need for your climate zone at: ornl.gov/~roofs/Zip/ZipHome.html

Also, using a rake, make sure it's level across the attic floor. Wind coming in the attic vents can blow it around, creating high and low spots.

WALL OUTLETS – Where there's a break in the thermal envelope of your home, there's potential for energy loss. One common spot is electrical wall outlets and switches on outside walls. Often, they are completely uninsulated and the vapor/air barrier is not taped tightly to them.

Switch off the circuit breaker to these outlets and switches. Remove the faceplate. If you can get the tube from the urethane foam spray can into the wall around the conduit box, shoot some expanding foam in there. This should fill insulation voids and seal it.

Even if you were able to shoot in insulation, and definitely if you could not, install

foam draft sealers behind the faceplates. They add only a slight amount of insulation, but they will improve the overall seal to reduce air infiltration.

RECESSED CEILING LIGHTS are another typical area of energy loss. These are particularly bad because they get hot, which creates a natural upward draft. The most efficient option is to replace your old canister recessed lights with new, efficient sealed models.

Don't just pour or pack insulation against recessed lights in the attic. This can cause older styles, which were not designed to be insulated, to overheat. You can caulk around the hole in the attic floor and the canister, but some room air will still leak out through the canister itself.

CEILING PADDLE FANS are another place to check. If you installed them yourself after the house was built and added support blocking, the insulation level will be less there. There may also be air leakage where you cut the hole to run the wiring. Push the insulation away and caulk the attic floor hole around the wire, then cover it with additional insulation.

DOOR AND WINDOW FRAMES – Next time you are painting the trim around doors and windows, pry off the decorative molding. You may find quite a large uninsulated gap between the rough opening and the door or window frame. Apply low-expansion foam in the gap—but use it sparingly because it can deform the frame as it expands.

SILL PLATES AND RIM JOISTS – The sill plate is the piece of lumber that rests on the top of the foundation. The rim joist rests on top of the sill plate, and your house walls rest

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.

Visit dulley.com for more home improvement and do-it-yourself tips.



Seal gaps around recessed light fixtures, but keep attic insulation away from direct contact with canister, unless you have newer models that have been approved for insulation.



Make sure the hole cut in the ceiling for fan wiring is sealed on the attic side.



Apply expanding foam insulation in gaps between foundation top and sill plate.

on the rim joist. The rim joist, often 2x10 feet or larger lumber, typically is not insulated.

Buy kraft paper-faced fiberglass batt insulation and cut it into short lengths to fit against the rim joist between the floor joist. Standard wall insulation batts are effective. With their short length and the floor joists, they should stay in place without stapling.

FOUNDATION WALL INTERFACE – While you are looking at the rim joist and sill plate, you will probably see a gap between the top of the foundation and the sill plate in spots. The top of a concrete foundation wall is seldom perfectly level and smooth. Apply urethane foam insulation from a can all along the sill plate/foundation wall interface. This will block outdoor air leakage and add some insulation value to that area.

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



Neighbors Create New Plow to 'Bully' Winter



Paul Starner demonstrates an eco-friendly, easy-to-use snow plow that he and his neighbor, Jerry Schichtel, developed and call the "Snow Bully." Their website is TheSnowBully.com.

Tired of being "bullied by the snow," Paul Starner and Jerry Schichtel, of Traverse City, decided to fight back.

They created the Snow Bully, a four-wheel steel shovel with a 34-inch blade that clears snow easily.

"It was an invention of necessity," says Starner, a Cherryland Electric Cooperative member who's in charge of marketing the product that Schichtel created.

"I have a lot of physical challenges and I don't move around very well. I needed something to move snow with that didn't take very much effort," Starner explains. "That's what the Snow Bully is."

Five years ago, Schichtel watched neighbor Starner struggle as he attempted to use his snow blower. That gave Schichtel an idea. He and his brother had already created the prototype for the Snow Bully back in the 1940s when they were growing up on a farm. It was made out of wood.

After watching Starner finish up that day, Schichtel walked over and told him about his idea to re-create his wooden snow remover.

Starner listened, and then asked Schichtel to make a modern version. It took five attempts, but they finally came up with a product both liked, and so they shook hands and became partners.

The next step was finding someone to produce the Snow Bully. Starner, who has spent his career in the real estate business, searched the state and found Mark Goodman of MDG Welding in Blissfield.

"Last winter was our first selling the Snow Bully, and wouldn't you know it, we didn't get much snow," Starner laughs. "Still, we sold 161 of them."

It sells for \$249, plus \$29.95 shipping in the U.S.

"We market our product on the internet," Starner says. "People can go to our website and do it all—read about it, see pictures and videos of it in action, and then order it. The orders go directly to Mark Goodman in Blissfield and UPS ships them from his business."

Starner not only likes the ease of using the Snow Bully, he calls it "eco-friendly."

"You use calories, not gasoline," he says. "It is very friendly to the environment,

and we're in the process of creating attachments for the Snow Bully. We're working on a scraper blade, a garden cart basket, and we're also looking at an eco-mower. That would make this something you can use year-round and not use any gasoline."

So far, the Snow Bully has been an internet hit.

"We've sold it to as far away as Newfoundland," Starner explains. "And in the states, from Washington to Maine and then from New York to North Carolina."

"Social media is the new way to market. Not only do we have our internet site, we post videos on YouTube," Starner adds. "Jerry and I really don't see the product after we give the okay to have it made. People agree to buy it online, pay for it through their PayPal account, and then it's shipped from Blissfield. It's all pretty clean."

And it's all pretty satisfying to Paul and Jerry.

"There's nothing more frustrating to me than moving snow," Starner says. "That's why the 'Snow Bully' is great...it's just simple. You don't need to have much upper body strength to move snow."

ELEVATE YOUR FUTURE



YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

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Learn and have fun, too, like these Midwest Energy students (above) did at last year's **YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT (YLS)**, presented by Michigan's electric cooperatives. This unique, high-energy experience will help you develop your leadership habits, explore career opportunities in the electric industry, and learn how to be actively involved in the democratic process.



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>> SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE TO LEARN MORE, OR TO APPLY ONLINE

Tortured Text

I recently wrote a note in a card. It was a simple note in a simple card for my wife Barbara's birthday. The card was bought years ago, but never given for one reason or another. (I have cards, bought for immediate use, stashed away for happy and sad occasions that haven't seen a stamp yet. I'm not a big fan of cards, paper or digital, which is a different animal and doesn't deserve to be called a card. I don't like shopping for cards, and the novelty of digital cards wore off after about two.)

But this is not about the card, it's about the note and how awful it looked after I finished writing it. "Writing" isn't the right word, because I couldn't read the note after I finished. I even butchered her name. At first glance, it looked like "Bondt," which isn't really close to "Barb."

I used to laugh-off my handwriting. Now it embarrasses me. I have to warm up just to sign my name; otherwise, my hand muscles won't follow my brain signals in any recognizable pattern. My signature is worse than any doctor's. At least a doctor mangles his or her name in the same way consistently. Their signature is a mark that the pharmacist knows on sight; it doesn't matter that the name isn't readable.

Some say our signature is important because it's our legal mark, without which we couldn't enter into contracts, cash checks or approve credit card payments. I think those digital signature pads in grocery and other stores must have some other way of verifying who I am because they certainly can't tell by my signature. It's different every time. Who can write on those things, anyway?

It wasn't always so. I once had decent handwriting. It flowed, one letter to the next, in an unbroken line, with recognizable letters and little upturns at the ends. This skill was taught, almost religiously, in grade school, following the precepts of popular programs, such as the "Palmer

Method," a rigorous set of rules for hand and arm control of a pen that swooped and swirled on lined paper until pages and pages were filled with the same whirly strokes. It was pretty, but not many of us write like that anymore.

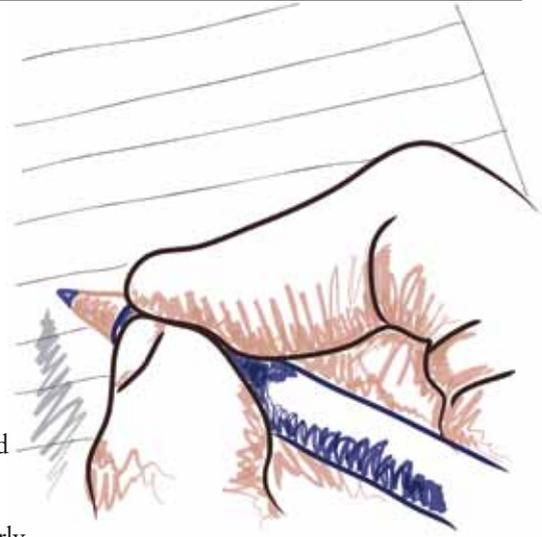
My mother's writing is beautiful, and so is Barbara's Aunt Jeanette's. They spent a lot of time practicing in the 1930s. Since then, the teaching of handwriting skills has steadily disappeared from many school curriculums.

The likely cause of all this is that we don't have to write much anymore. Now we have mechanical messaging, with keyboards and texting, even voice recognition software that takes dictation. It's easier to use a phone than a pen. It's quicker to text than write. We can reach more friends on Facebook than we can with a card. No wonder the Post Office is in trouble—but that's another issue.

The point is, handwriting—that is, "cursive" writing—seems doomed. Once our kids learn how to print, they get little instruction in cursive penmanship before they move on to computers. It's not out of the curriculum yet, but penmanship as a skill is in sharp decline. As with most states, penmanship is still required to be taught in Michigan schools, but it is not included in national curriculum guidelines set for 2014.

Before you bemoan the loss, consider that handwriting for the masses is a relatively recent phenomenon. Its use grew in 17th century Britain along with the Industrial Revolution and the growth of business, which sought to standardize writing to make it faster and more legible. Our Declaration of Independence, rewritten in impeccable longhand by a professional writer, from Thomas Jefferson's original cursive, is a prime example of connected writing at its best.

Austin Palmer introduced his method in 1894 to compete with the typewriter.



At its peak, the Palmer Method was promoted by certified instructors who emphasized regimentation. They suggested that the Method would improve discipline and character, change lefties to right-handers, and even reform delinquents. In its early years, advanced penmanship was seen as the way to a job, even after 8th grade.

The schools doing away with cursive instruction say time is better spent on other skills – those needed in today's job market. But cursive instruction has its defenders, too. They say penmanship practice improves kids' motor skills, eye-hand coordination, and artistic aptitude. Plus, they ask, if kids are not taught cursive, how will they read historical documents like the Declaration of Independence?

Barbara's Aunt Jeanette sends us handwritten notes that are models of penmanship. The letters flow into each other like waving fields of grain. They're easy to read and look good on the page. My writing, however, looks like I'm a tortured soul. Our sons, who had cursive instruction, are also converts to the dark side.

It turns out, though, that we're not alone. Studies have shown that my tortured script is commonplace. In fact, most people abandon the strict cursive writing they learned in school in favor of a more casual combination of cursive and block print that has the advantage of being a more natural, and faster, way to write.

Still, it would be nice if you could read it.

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



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