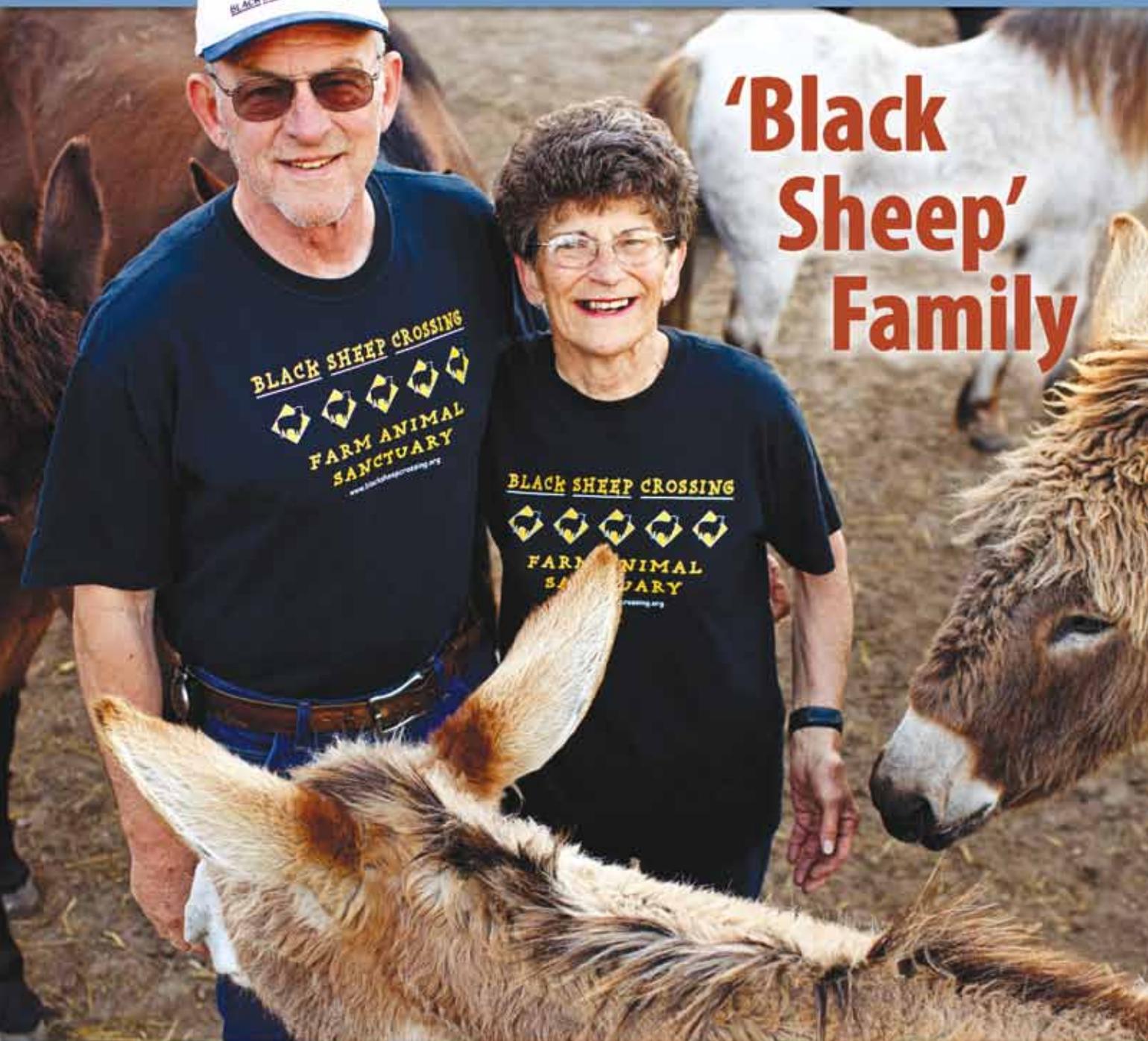


Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



'Black Sheep' Family

3 Co-op Teens Learn Leadership

6 Line Crews Star In National Safety Video

7 HomeWorks Owners Show Generosity



FURNACE ENVY

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Cooperative
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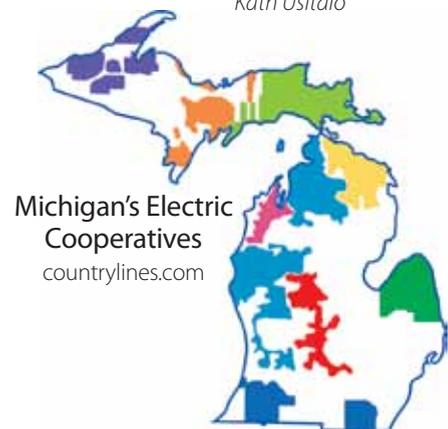
YOUR CO-OP

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On the Cover

Marty and Cherry Scott, owners of Black Sheep Crossing Farm Animal Sanctuary, are shown getting some affection from friends. In the Sanctuary's 15-year history, the Scotts have helped 159 animals.

Photo - Elizabeth Price/pricelessphotography.com



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com

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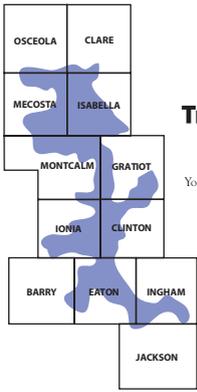
Association officers are **Ken Swope**, Midwest, chairman; **Robert Schallip**, Cloverland, 1st vice chairman; **Jon Zickert**, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and **Tony Anderson**, Cherryland, past chairman. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

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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 2 for contact information.





Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue
Blanchard MI 49310

Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Portland office:

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Portland, MI 48875

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Electric bill/account questions:

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

Pay by phone, anytime:

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Service questions/outages:

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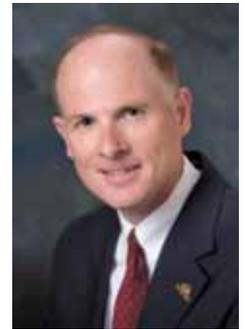
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Speak Up, or Have Somebody Else Speak For You



By the time you read this, your electric cooperative's annual round of district membership meetings will be complete. We will have served thousands of hot dogs and renewed friendships with thousands of the co-op's member-owners.

But even though we will appreciate every one of the members who comes out to their neighborhood meeting, the bottom line is that only about 2 or 3 percent of the total membership is involved with running their co-op.

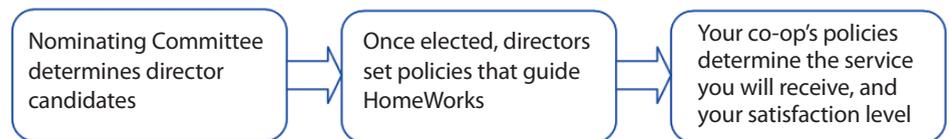
At each district, the members who attended elected delegates, who will each represent 100 of their neighbors. From those delegates, the district officers are elected. These people have an important job: every three years they serve as a nominating committee for the board of directors' seat in your district. And that's

elections. The turnout is higher, true, but in most cases a minority of people are making the decisions that affect every one of us.

And it's not just elections that work better with grassroots participation. Your opinions and comments are needed at every level of government, from legislators to rulemakers, to make sure leaders know what you want and expect, and how you feel services could be improved.

We work with our statewide and national associations to speak on your behalf in Lansing and Washington. Once in a while, as with the "Our Energy, Our Future" campaigns of a few years ago, we've asked you to participate directly.

The time is coming when more voices will be needed. Legislators tell us they pay more attention when one member, one citizen



important because the directors, as a group, set the policies that guide how your co-op is operated.

You can see how having only 2 or 3 percent of the members involved in the process might affect your experience with HomeWorks Tri-County Electric.

What about the other 97 percent? Some are happy with their service and don't see a need to get involved, since everything seems to be running well. Some don't realize they have a say in their electric utility. And some just don't make it a priority in their already-busy lives. "Somebody else" will do it.

It's the same with local, state and national

speaks up, than when an organization talks for them.

We hope you'll speak up when you're asked—when it's time to run your co-op, to run your state government, or to run your country. These issues are too important to leave for "somebody else" to take care of.

Mark Kappler
General Manager





Teens Enjoy Leadership Summit

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative students who participated in this year's Michigan Youth Leadership Summit were (right, from L-R): Ethan Simmer, DeWitt; Alora Rayburn, Lyons; Maddie Karcher, Blanchard; Jillilyn McVeigh, Orleans; and HomeWorks accounting supervisor Pat Simmer. At left, Alora Rayburn steps out on the ropes-and-wires course, new this year. Learn more about this annual co-op sponsored program at miYLS.com.

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Tariff and Rule Changes Effective June 1, 2013

The HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors adopted the following change to the Cooperative's tariffs and fees at a Special Open Meeting held April 22, 2013, in accordance with P.A. 167.

1) Reconciled the 2012 Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor collections and ordered the collection of the net under-collection of \$225,706. Based on projected kWh sales through December 2013, a factor of (\$0.00187)/kWh will be utilized.

For specific details of any HomeWorks tariffs or fees, please call us at 1-800-562-8232 or visit homeworks.org.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Blanchard, April 22, your board of directors:

- In a special Open Member Meeting, reconciled the 2012 Power Supply Cost Recovery (PSCR) factor and ordered collection of the net under-collection of \$225,706 through an increased PSCR in June-December 2013.
- Authorized staff to retire capital credits to 118 estates at a discounted cash value of \$61,700.
- Agreed to make a \$2,500 donation to NRECA's International Fund.
- Adopted a Record Number and Date resolution, setting the lists of members eligible to vote at the 2013 district membership meetings.
- Read and approved "Board Policy 105 – Political Activities" with no changes, and approved minor wording changes to "Board Policy 106 – Director Replacement."
- Reviewed the components of the cooperative's Equity Management Plan and comparisons of equity levels with other co-ops

across the US or of similar size.

- Moved the August meeting forward one week to August 19.
- Learned there were 96 new members since February.
- Acknowledged the April safety reports, listing employee training as well as employee and public incidents.

Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting are available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject.

The next board meeting is scheduled for June 24 at Portland.

Members who need directions to the office, or who wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

Letters & More

Reader letters, Michigan Heritage Quilt, stealing copper, energy tip and more. It's all here on your Reader's Pages.



Wood Furniture & Dogs

I know this is probably a very unusual request, but in the May issue of *Michigan Country Lines* there is an article on page 24 (Ramblings/ Mike Buda/ "For the Love of Wood"). [It's about the beauty of handcrafted furniture.]

I have on a few different occasions run into people that have a dog just as is pictured in the top right of the article. I like the looks as well as the behavior of the breed. What is the breed of the dog in the picture? Do you know the owner of the dog and might they tell me a little about the breed? I know this is a highly unusual request...but if you have the time it would be appreciated.

— Jerry O'Kenka
Perrysburg, Ohio

The dog is mine—an Australian shepard named Bandit, and

I wrote about him just after I adopted him 2½ years ago. Aussies are not really Australian, but were developed by Australians who were brought to the American West in the 1800s to herd sheep. They probably descend from border collies and regular collies. They are very smart and good family pets, although they bond to one person. They make good house pets, but would rather work, so walking is a good substitute. Bandit gets me out walking most days, or he follows me around the yard when I'm outside. I think they are wonderful dogs.

— Mike Buda

Saskatoon Berries

Country Lines has numerous requests for more information on Neil Moran's May story on Saskatoon berries ("The Saskatoons Are Here," at countrylines.com). Some are calling this blueberry copycat a new "superfruit" because of it's health benefits and ability to withstand both drought and harsh winters.

Two sources for buying the plants are: Michigan Saskatoon Farm & Nursery, 7924 Saylor Road, Williamsburg, MI 49690; call 231-360-0311 (see saskatoonmichigan.com); or call Gurneys Seed and Nursery, 513-354-1492.

See facebook.com/SaskatoonBerryInstituteOfNorthAmerica to blog with people who like to grow them.

— Gail Knudtson, Ed.



Quilt Needs a Permanent Home

Dear Readers,

Do you remember the Michigan Heritage Quilt? It was created from 36 winning squares in a *Country Lines* contest held in 2002. Entrants were asked to use "Our Michigan Heritage" as the theme for their quilt square, and what resulted were personal memories, images and traditions from throughout our state sewn together into a beautiful quilt.

For several years the quilt traveled around to craft shows, museums, festivals and gatherings as a way of commemorating our state's rich heritage and to promote its sponsors, Michigan's electric cooperatives. It is now time to find it a permanent home.

The *Country Lines* staff wishes to see it displayed in a public place (i.e., museum, library, airport, municipal building, school, etc.) so that people can continue to see and admire it. Preference will be given to a facility served by an electric co-op. The quilt measures about 90 inches square.

Please email your suggestions and ideas to czuker@meca.coop (put "Quilt" in the subject line) or mail to: Country Lines Quilt, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

— Cindy Zuker, Design Editor

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 gknudtson@meca.coop, or mail to: Editor, *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MAILING ADDRESS

Contact your electric co-op—they maintain the mailing list. See page 2 for your co-op's contact information.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Lighting accounts for about 13 percent of the average household's electric bill—cut costs by choosing new lightbulbs that have increased output and longevity. Some cost more up front, but prices are dropping as technology advances. Options include color, brightness, and even dimming and multi-way functions. Combining lights with automatic sensors can cut costs further.

Source: Cooperative Research Network

Stealing Copper is a Crime and It's Very Dangerous!

Soaring metal prices have been blamed for an increase in thefts of copper and aluminum, primary components of electric distribution lines. Michigan electric co-ops have also been subject to this crime, which can lead to power outages, additional maintenance and expenses, diminished system reliability, and even serious injury or death.

Copper in wire is appealing to thieves who seek to sell the metal for scrap. Burglars will often climb power poles, scale fences and break into buildings to steal the precious metal. The soaring metal prices have prompted thieves to become bolder and more inventive.

"Stealing copper may seem like a quick way to make a buck, but it's illegal, costly and life threatening," says Mike Roush, vice president of operations at Midwest Energy Cooperative, which has been directly affected. "Working with metal and electricity is a dangerous combination, even for trained employees using proper equipment."

Thieves may not understand that they are risking their lives by taking copper from substations, where high transmission voltage is stepped down to a lower current for distribution lines. All the lines have a potentially deadly charge.

As a co-op member-owner, your local electric co-op urges you to help stop this crime by using the following guidelines to guard against electrical dangers and prevent copper theft.

▶ Never enter or touch equipment inside a substation; stay away from power lines and anything touching a power line.



Attempts to steal copper wire can cause serious injury or death.

▶ If you notice anything unusual with electric facilities, such as an open substation gate, open equipment or hanging wire, contact us immediately.

▶ If you see anyone around electric substations or electric facilities other than utility personnel or contractors, call the police.

▶ Install motion-sensor lights on the outside of your house and business to deter possible thieves.

▶ Store tools and wire cutters in a secure location, and never leave them out while you are away.

▶ If you work in construction, do not leave any wires unattended or leave loose wire at the job site, especially overnight.

▶ Help spread the word about the deadly consequences that can result from trying to steal copper or aluminum.

▶ If you have any information regarding stolen co-op property or equipment, please contact the police and your electric co-op immediately.

Kids and Finances Reap the benefits of college planning today.

While you may be unable to avoid the "Mom, can I borrow \$20 for gas?" questions that eat into your budget as your kids grow up, there's one thing you can do to help you (and them) get ready for tomorrow's financial demands: Prepare for college expenses now.

Two-thirds of 2011 college graduates had an average of \$26,600 in student loan debt, according to the Institute for College Access & Success. No matter how young or old your kids are, consider these five options to prepare for future expenses.

● **Start a regular savings account that's earmarked for college.** Both you and your kids can contribute to this account, and your relatives can give you or your kids money to deposit, as well. It's easy and convenient: You can set up an account anywhere—at your local bank, credit union, or through an online bank. Even setting aside small amounts regularly can add up to a lot of money over time. For example, Bankrate.com's Simple Savings calculator shows that \$100 monthly saved over 15 years could add up to \$20,972.66,

assuming a 2 percent yield on your savings, compounded monthly.

● **Start a Section 529 Plan.** This is an education savings plan operated by a state or educational institution designed to help families set aside money for college. The money is controlled by the account owner, not the child. Anyone can contribute to these plans on the child's behalf, and contributions may be tax exempt.

● **Open a Coverdell education savings account.** This is a custodial account that can be used to save for elementary and secondary school, and college-related expenses. Income maximums apply, so not everyone will qualify for this account type. The money deposited grows tax-deferred until it is used for educational expenses. Withdrawals from the account may be tax free if used for tuition, fees, books, and other expenses. Any money not used for education must eventually be distributed to your child.

● **Open a Uniform Gift to Minors Account or a Uniform Transfer to Minors Account** (UGMA or UTMA; the title differs by state).

Under this, a parent or grandparent typically will gift money to the account. The money is owned by the child but controlled by the custodian until the child reaches the age of majority, which is set by state law. At that point, your child assumes control of the account. You can't restrict how the money is used, and the account cannot be transferred to another beneficiary.

● **Buy U.S. savings bonds.** Certain savings bonds can be purchased to pay for college tuition and fees without having to pay federal income tax on some or all of the interest during the year the bonds are redeemed. Certain restrictions apply—visit TreasuryDirect.gov to learn more.

College costs will undoubtedly continue to rise. By starting a savings program today, you and your child can better handle those expenses. For more planning help—including how financial tools noted in this article should be titled, and the tax ramifications of certain options—ask a financial or tax professional.

— Doreen Friel

It's a Wrap!

Co-op lineworkers star in national safety video.

Portland linemen Ryan Smith, Rob Brennan and Chris Teachout (inset photo, L-R) volunteered to be cast members for Federated Insurance safety videos that will be used nationally.

Filming took place May 6–9 at various locations within the HomeWorks Tri-County service area to get footage for the safety videos.

The “Circle of Safety” video focuses on accidents that happen while vehicles are backing up, and knowing the area around a vehicle before moving.

The “Doing It Right” video shows lineworkers taking short cuts that go against OSHA regulations and most safety manuals; the lineworkers then demonstrate the correct method of the same tasks to show that “doing it right” does not take any more time.



Photos – Tanya Schneider

Area Students Win Touchstone Energy Scholarships

Four area students earned \$2,500 in Touchstone Energy® scholarships from HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

Winning a \$1,000 scholarship each were Tyler Brecht of Riverdale and Grant Feldpausch of St. Johns.

Brecht, the son of Mark and Terri Brecht, plans to study animal science at Michigan State University, with plans to become a large animal veterinarian. He is a graduate of Alma High School, where he was active in sports, FFA, 4-H, and National Honor Society.

Feldpausch, the son of Glen and Jill Feldpausch, also plans to study animal science. The St. Johns High School graduate will attend Cornell University and hopes to return to his family’s dairy farm. He has been active in sports, church, and National Honor Society.

Two adult education scholarships, \$250 each, were awarded to Patsy Alvera, and Lindsey Brasington, both of Lakeview.

Alvera, currently working as a playground aide at Lakeview Community Schools, attends Montcalm Community College, where she is enrolled in both accounting and early childhood development courses.

Brasington, a part-time teller at Isabella Bank in Six Lakes, is dual-enrolled at Montcalm Community College and Ferris State University, studying nursing and medical office administration.

The Touchstone Energy Scholarship program will begin accepting applications for the 2014-15 school year in January. High school seniors are eligible for one-time scholarships of up to \$1,000. Adults returning to school can receive a \$250 grant. Watch homeworks.org for more information.



Patsy Alvera



Lindsey Brasington



Tyler Brecht



Grant Feldpausch

Members Stock Food Pantries at District Meetings

Thanks to all who came out to participate!



HomeWorks employees help Phil Grimwood of Helping Hands of Eaton County load food donations from District 1 members at Charlotte.



Prize-winning runs in the Weaver family, of Elwell: Hallie won the youth prize of an iPod Touch, and mom Richelle won an iPad mini.



Al & Louie Adkins from the Carson City Food Pantry load up the generous food donations from District 5 members at Fulton.



District 3 members at Eagle filled several boxes with food for the Basic Needs Pantry of St. Johns.

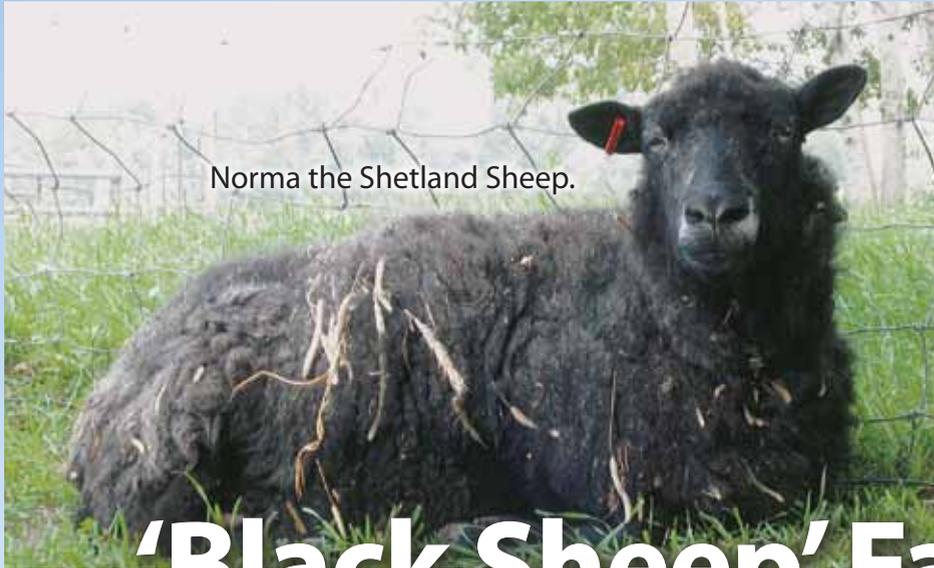
Photos by Jeffery Erridge, Brian Thompson, Tom Manting, and Chris Reed



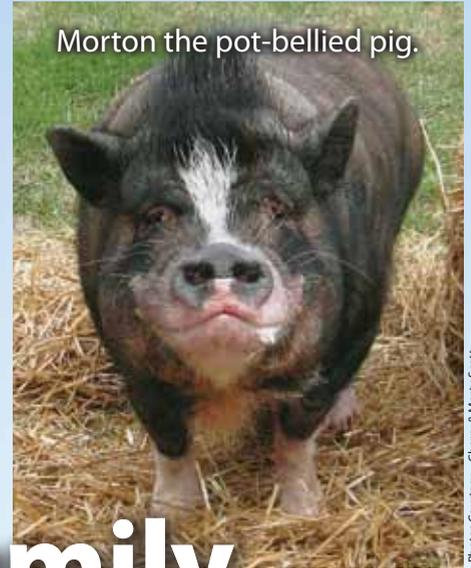
Members gather for a pre-meeting supper at District 7 in Remus.



Helen Johnson of Charlotte won the grand prize of an iPad mini at District 1.



Norma the Shetland Sheep.



Morton the pot-bellied pig.

Photos Courtesy - Cherry & Marty Scott

'Black Sheep' Family

Cherry Scott gazes out at her Lee-lanau County "Field of Dreams." Gazing, in itself, is something of a miracle because she was going blind before a new medical procedure helped stabilize her eyesight.

What she and her husband Marty see now is a farm they own called Black Sheep Crossing—a no-kill animal sanctuary they have had since 1998—15 years of giving a second-chance to animals.

"After we raised our family, we were looking for something else to do with our lives," explains Cherry, whose family owned a gas station in downtown Northport for years. "One day we found this farm, fell in love with it, and started this sanctuary. I never pictured myself as living on a farm. But what we found here—well, Marty and I call this place 'the end of our rainbow.' We have learned so much from these animals."

There are 74 animals of all kinds, shapes and sizes on the 100-acre sanctuary. They range from seven friendly donkeys to two Scottish Highland steers (Sir Patrick and Sir

A 100-acre animal sanctuary in Northport.

Edward), to pot belly pigs, dogs, birds and cats. And they all get an annual physical.

"We have names for all 74 of them," Cherry says with a smile. "They are our family, so they all need names."

In the 15 years since they started Black Sheep Crossing, Marty and Cherry have helped 159 animals. Where do they go once they get here?

"They spend the rest of their days here," she says. "We have a cemetery where we bury them at the end of life. Each animal has a little headstone. And we have a small memorial service when they pass. It's amazing how the animals seem to understand those moments. We've had services surrounded by donkeys and dogs. They are very respectful, like they know what's going on."

And, in many ways, Cherry and Marty are convinced they do understand.

"These animals have done more for us

than we've ever done for them," adds Marty. "We've learned so much about things like patience and compassion from them."

Cherry agrees.

"We give tours several times a week at 9 a.m., because that's the best time for these animals. We work on animal time, not people time," she says. "And we ask our visitors to be respectful because this is their home. And you wouldn't believe what people come away with when they visit here."

"They tell us it feels different here, there's an aura they say you don't experience very often."

Cherry and Marty say that "aura of goodness" emanates from the barnyard. But those who know the Scott family say it starts with them. And that's hard to argue when you watch them interact with the animals, calling out their names and even using nicknames for each animal.

"We're not taking any more animals, that's something we've agreed on," Cherry adds. "This is the family we'll see through."

The Scotts get the electricity to run their farm from Cherryland Electric Coopera-

Rosie (L-R) and 29-year-old Norman are horses living at the sanctuary, and in front is the only mule, Frances, who is also Rosie's mother.

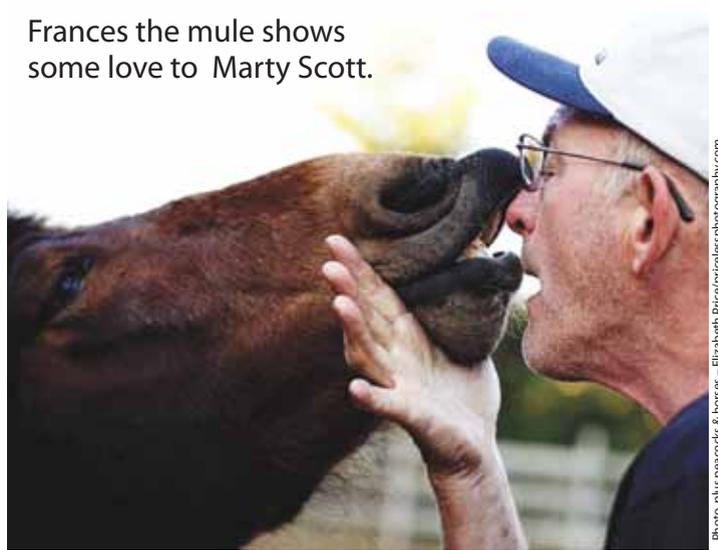


To learn more about this farm, visit blacksheepcrossing.org or call 231-386-7234.



Sir Patrick and Sir Edward, Scottish Highland Steers.

Frances the mule shows some love to Marty Scott.



Photo, plus peacocks & horses - Elizabeth Price/pricelessphotography.com

tive. They get some of the money to operate their nonprofit sanctuary from contributors around the state and country—stretching from Kalamazoo to Engadine and from people in 15 different states.

“Once people get here, they seem to like what they see and observe,” Cherry says. “Our tours take up to two hours, but we don’t do it for entertainment. This isn’t a petting zoo, this is a sanctuary. People like to see these animals in their environment.”

Marty admits that owning and maintaining a sanctuary like Black Sheep Crossing isn’t for everyone.

“I think we’re three-quarters crazy,” he says with a laugh.

But Cherry wouldn’t change a thing.

“What we’ve experienced in these 15 years has been amazing,” she says. “You see the bonding that takes place between animals... the trust, the caring, the love. And you learn from it.”



Koeze the peacock struts his stuff.

Skydiving Event is Farm Fundraiser

- *Are you 50 or older?*
- *Is skydiving on your “bucket list”?*
- *Would you like to help animals in need?*

If you answered “yes” to these questions, you can help the nonprofit Black Sheep Crossing fundraising opportunity on Saturday, Aug. 3, in Northport. If you would like to skydive and do your best to raise \$1,000, call Lynne or Bill Watson at 231-946-0495 to register.

Last year’s event raised \$23,000 for animals sheltering at this farm.



Standard donkeys (L-R), Axle, Virginia, Sigwalda, Mary-Pete and Silvia.

New Hope for Nuclear in Small Modular Reactors

This article is second in a series on how electricity is generated. The first, in January, was about clean-coal technology. Watch future issues for stories about renewables and other fuel sources.

There's new excitement about nuclear power in the energy business, due to the advent of small modular reactors (SMRs).

This evolution has been spurred by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), which has awarded a dollar-for-dollar match to the Generation mPower LLC consortium to deploy up to five 180-megawatt (MW) SMRs at the Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) abandoned Clinch River Breeder Reactor site in Oak Ridge, Tenn. The consortium of utilities and industry contractors includes TVA and 13 generation and transmission (G&T) cooperatives. Wolverine Power Cooperative, Michigan's only G&T electric cooperative, is a participant.

Generation mPower LLC says its SMRs, housed in an underground containment structure, will include significant safety features built into the design, such as the ability to shut down "passively" (with help from gravity) if a malfunction occurs. The advanced integral pressurized water reactors can also be air-cooled (big reactors require millions of gallons of water daily) and the plants

will be able to store high-level nuclear waste on-site for their 60-year expected life.

The SMR units, generally smaller than a rail car, cost much less than a full-size commercial nuclear power plant: \$750 million compared to \$5 billion to \$10 billion for a 1,110-MW to 1,700-MW facility constructed from the ground up. Industry leaders are particularly enamored with the technology's modularity—pre-fabricated units can be added as needed, avoiding the risk associated with locking up billions of dollars in a generating station during uncertain economic times.

"The mPower reactor will reduce risks connected with deploying nuclear power and become a flexible, cost-effective solution to meet U.S. energy needs while lowering greenhouse gas emissions," Babcock & Wilcox, a nuclear equipment developer and manufacturer, touts on babcock.com. "Each mPower reactor that is brought on-line will contribute to the reduction of about 57 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions over the life of the reactor."

Commercial operation of the consortium's SMRs could begin as early as 2020, and the reactors—at 83 ft. tall and 13 ft. in diameter—will be about one-third the size of traditional nuclear plants.

"With the ability to add more modules, you can adjust your energy output to closely match your demand needs," says Art Thayer, energy efficiency programs director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. "If proven successful by the Tennessee project, this power source could lead to



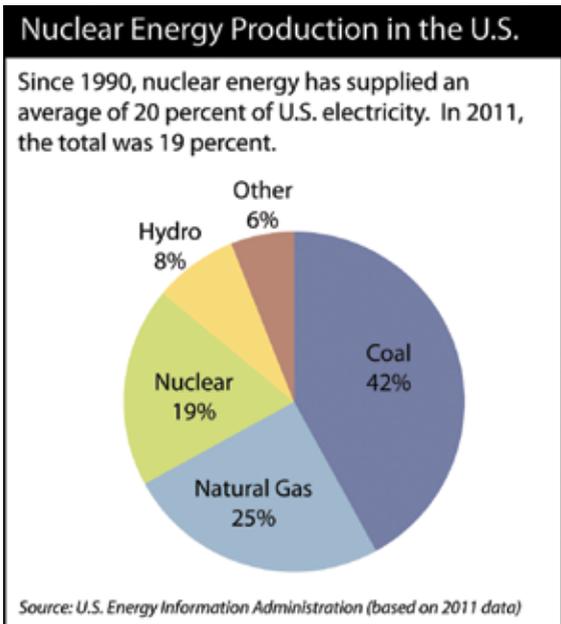
Conceptual drawing of an underground containment structure housing two Babcock & Wilcox mPower reactor modules.

improvements in energy production and efficiency, air quality, energy security, international competitiveness, quality of life, and a reduction of carbon emissions and other pollutants."

Nuclear power accounts for about 19 percent of the nation's electricity supply, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), and about 10 percent of the electricity produced by G&Ts. And currently, eight G&Ts have minority shares in 12 different nuclear units owned and operated by large investor-owned utilities. One co-op G&T maintains a majority interest: Raleigh-based North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation owns 61.5 percent (694 megawatts) of a nuclear station unit. Overall, co-op investment in nuclear energy totals 2,710 MW.

In Michigan, while Wolverine does not have nuclear power in its generating fleet, it's an important part of the co-op's overall portfolio, supplying 23 percent of its members' needs in 2012. The nuclear power used by non-Wolverine co-ops averaged between 15 percent and 25 percent in 2012. Find percentages for each co-op's mix of all fuels used to generate power annually in *Country Lines* (March and September issues). At countrylines.com, click on "My Co-op"/co-op name/March issue.

Besides Wolverine Power Cooperative and Babcock and Wilcox, Bechtel Corp. (engineering/construction), and FirstEnergy Corp. (parent of 10 investor-owned utilities in Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia), are also part of the Generation mPower consortium.



Driveway Revolution

When it comes to all-electric vehicles, choices are growing and include well-known manufacturers such as Chevrolet, Nissan and Toyota, along with a growing number of specialty manufacturers or retrofit kits. Plug-in electric vehicle (PEV) sales are also growing, boosted by government incentives and consumer interest in environmentally-friendly products.

Despite media attention and apparent consumer interest, however, PEV sales remain a disappointment for manufacturers, with 17,500 units sold in 2011 and about 53,000 in 2012, with Chevy Volt leading the pack last year at 23,461.

Comparing Cars

Not all electric cars are made the same. The 2013 Nissan Leaf boasts a driving range of about 75 miles. Once its lithium-ion batteries are drained, however, you better be near a 110-volt power outlet for recharging or have the phone number for roadside assistance handy.

The 2013 Chevy Volt and Toyota Prius Plug-in both offer a gasoline safety net for their pack of batteries. The Volt will run on a charge for 38 miles, and the Prius has an 11-mile range. Once the batteries are drained, a gas-powered generator produces electricity to keep the car rolling. The 2013 Ford Focus Electric, which sold only 685 units last year, has a 76-mile range.

The Volt can recharge by plugging into a traditional 120-volt outlet. This differs from traditional gas/electric hybrids like the original Toyota Prius, for which batteries are recharged only by the gas engine and a regenerative braking system. (In hybrids, batteries essentially supplement the gas motor.)

All-electric vehicles carry higher price tags than comparable conventional gas-fueled versions—typically \$10,000 to \$15,000 more, even after including federal tax incentives ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500 (depending on battery capacity). Tax credits will phase out as manufacturers produce more vehicles (learn about electric vehicle tax breaks at tinyurl.com/bd93j5n or speak to a qualified tax advisor). Over time, batteries should

become cheaper to build, thereby lowering electric vehicle costs.

As a quick comparison, the Cooperative Research Network—the research and development arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association—examined the 2013 Chevy Volt, with a suggested retail price of \$39,145 (not including the federal tax credit) to the 2013 Ford Focus, which has a starting price of \$16,200.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the average American drives 13,476 miles per year. Chevrolet estimates the average Volt driver will spend \$1.50 daily for electricity (based on 12 cents per kilowatt-hour) and a small amount of gas. Meanwhile, the average Ford Focus owner will spend almost \$5.16 daily for gas.



The 2013 Nissan Leaf has a driving range of 75 miles.

Photo - © Nissan

At \$4 per gallon for gas, the average Volt driver would save \$1,335 annually but would need to rack up that amount for almost 10 years to equal the difference in sticker price. Of course, actual savings depends on the number of miles driven and car options. It should be noted that using electric accessories such as air conditioning, heat, and a defroster affect mileage and drain electric car batteries faster.

Charge!

Electric cars can be recharged using a traditional 120-volt outlet with a dedicated 15-amp circuit found in most homes. Called Level 1 charging, this takes up to 10 hours to charge a Volt and over 20 hours for a Leaf. The Prius, with its smaller battery, can be charged in three hours.

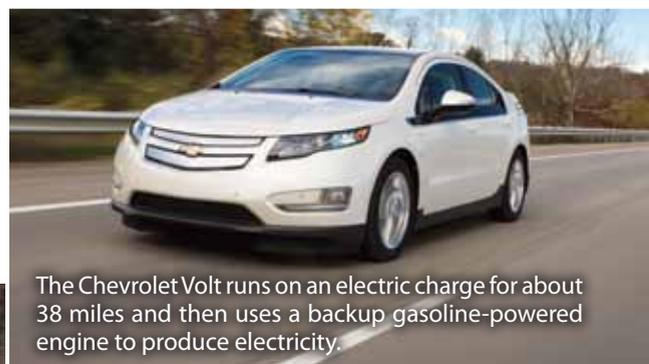
Consumers may decide to buy a Level 2 charging station to speed things along. These devices recharge through a dedicated 240-volt circuit, similar to that used for electric clothes

dryers. According to “Edmunds Car Buying Guide” (edmunds.com), Level 2 charging for the all-electric and the Volt can be done in as little as four hours.

The Volt’s Level 1 charging at 1.4 kilowatts roughly equals running a toaster running for eight hours straight; its Level 2 charging, estimated at 3.5 kilowatts, is similar to a heating and air-conditioning system running continuously for three to four hours.

Chevy estimates that installing a charging station usually runs \$1,200 to \$1,500. But the tab can go much higher, especially if a household’s electric system needs upgrading to handle the increased load.

All this extra load on the electrical system



The Chevrolet Volt runs on an electric charge for about 38 miles and then uses a backup gasoline-powered engine to produce electricity.

Photo - © General Motors

from PEVs will still reduce the overall emissions of various air pollutants—even when accounting for emissions from power plants needed to produce the energy for recharging, according to studies by the Electric Power Research Institute (Palo Alto, Calif.), a nonprofit research consortium of electric co-ops and other electric utilities. In fact, plugging cars in at night when power costs and demand are at their lowest can actually help an electric system run more efficiently. However, the electrical characteristics of even a smaller number of PEVs could test utilities by lowering the life expectancy of distribution transformers and cables because of increased heating.

Is an EV right for you?

Whether a plug-in electric vehicle fits your lifestyle depends on how many miles you drive daily, whether you can afford the cost difference between an electric and gas-burning car, and how many amenities you want your vehicle to have.

Only time will tell if the peace and quiet ignition of an electric car will replace the traditional engine’s roar.

Sources: Cooperative Research Network, Green Car Reports, Ford



Marathon Paddler:

Al Widing and Hailey McMahon as they near the finish of the 2012 Spike Challenge race.

Photo - Mark Sloan

'Amazing Al' is Ready to Go the Distance

There is little to compare with the spectacle at the start of the annual AuSable River Canoe Marathon. Thousands of cheering fans line the river's banks in downtown Grayling. Their collective din reaches a crescendo when the start gun goes off as racers run to the river's edge carrying their canoes, primed for the 120-mile paddling adventure that finishes well after sunrise in Oscoda.

Al Widing has been among the toned, young athletes for 40 years, so he's the oldest paddler in pack. And when the 2013 AuSable River Canoe marathon begins July 27, the 88-year old Mio resident plans to be there again.

"I am looking forward to it. I'd just love to finish," says Widing in typical, understated fashion, conveying little sense of having become a legend in competitive paddling circles.

Widing's first AuSable marathon was in 1955, and he holds the record for being the oldest paddler to finish. His fastest race was in 1999 when at 74, along with Robert Bradford, of Lapeer, he set the senior division record finishing in 15 hours, 21 minutes and 22 seconds.

Widing and Oscoda paddler, Bob Gillings, also won back-to-back first-place finishes in the 1964 and 1965 Texas Water Safari, a punishing 260-mile marathon billed as "The World's Toughest Canoe Race."

"He's definitely a humble guy," says Ryan

Matthews, of Oscoda, the marathon statistician. "We call him 'Amazing Al', but he hasn't embraced the nickname. He always said he is just an average guy who likes to paddle. But, there is no denying that what he does at this age is amazing."

Widing likes the challenge. The race requires extreme endurance, the ability to sit for hours paddling at a rapid pace, trying to edge out over 70 teams of top professional paddlers from around North America.

The course winds downstream for 120 miles. The race goes on no matter what weather. Paddlers in the money keep a grueling pace of 60 to 75 paddle strokes per minute. They have to navigate in the dark and negotiate the river's natural obstructions along with portaging around dams.

"The toughest part of the race is when I have quit because (my paddling partner) is hurt," Widing says while sitting in the comfort of his den in the home he built along the AuSable River. Widing lives there with his wife, Dorothy, his 12th grade sweetheart and mother of their six children.

Strangely, Widing doesn't consider himself tough. He smiles and says: "Tough' is meat you can't chew. I do it because I like the challenge."

But Hailey McMahon knows another Al Widing. She is the 21-year-old nursing student from Grayling who teamed up with

him for the 2012 AuSable Canoe Marathon.

"Anyone who paddles with Al will tell you he is hard to train with. He pounds out every mile on six-hour training paddles," McMahon explains. "He is an amazing guy and super nice. He has a hard exterior, but if you can get him to laugh, he melts."

A lifelong vegetarian who grew up on a Holly farm and later became a carpenter, Widing remembers his first canoe. It was a beat-up wooden vessel that cost \$25. He and his brother Roy entered the 1955 AuSable Marathon with it, a pair of homemade paddles, and a pocketful of hopes. But their aspirations were dampened just 14 miles downstream.

"We didn't finish," Widing says softly. "We had put a good hole in the bottom. There was water all around our feet."

"It's always fun and funny racing with Al," says Lynne Witte, of Mt. Clemens. Witte is president of the Michigan Canoe Racing Association (MCRA), an organization founded in 1956 and built by Widing and others. "He's headstrong but not hard to get along with. I've paddled in the bow with him.

"Michigan has always been a huge canoe-racing state, and Al brought more than I could ever say to MCRA and the sport of professional paddling. None of us made any real money in canoe racing, but he's won the Texas Safari and that was a big deal."

See ausablecanoeamarathon.org or call 989-348-4425 for details about the canoe marathon.

Asparagus Wine Is 'One of a Kind'

As a girl, Kellie Chase had her fill of picking asparagus on the family's West Michigan farm. Making wine from the vegetable—making any kind of wine—was as far-removed from her thinking as the big city excitement she longed for. “I was one of those kids who thought I'd move to the city, never to return.” But after sampling life elsewhere she longed for the country and came home. “I just really missed the laid-back atmosphere,” she explains.

In 1991 Kellie married Todd Fox, whose great-grandparents had launched the family farm business in 1947, and she learned to appreciate her own roots, which span five generations of farmers. “I've embraced it. I love family history and learning how my parents and grandparents evolved in farming.” In 2005, she started a market selling fruit and produce from the farm, based in Shelby, near Silver Lake Sand Dunes and Lake Michigan.

A trip to Traverse City wineries inspired Kellie and Todd to try winemaking, and she

attended Michigan grape and wine conferences and workshops. “I started buying books and learning as I went,” taking online classes that required working several days at an Iowa winery. In 2008, she began making fruit wines and two years later planted her first grapes.

Although most of the 1,700-acre farm is dedicated to fruit, Oceana County is prime asparagus territory—it's the home of the National Asparagus Festival—and the veggie is among the Fox crops. Kellie says Todd challenged her to turn the green spears into something drinkable and, skeptically, she added water, sugar and yeast to mashed asparagus. The result was a sweet wine that is not the color of the main ingredient. “This is kind of neat,” she recalls thinking of her experiment. She labeled it “Odd Fox” and quickly sold out of the first wine of its kind. “People love the novelty of it,” she says. The next year she quadrupled the batch, and it was gone in two weeks.



Kellie Fox makes wine from traditional sources like fruit and grapes, but she's also the creator of a popular wine made from asparagus (right).

Now in her third year of marketing Odd Fox, she is bottling 400 to 500 of the 375 ml bottles, which she sells for \$16 at The Fox Barn Agricultural Marketplace and Winery. She recommends serving the wine with appetizers like cheese and crackers, but has one customer who buys eight or 10 bottles each year for a dinner party featuring asparagus in every course, from hors d'oeuvres through dessert.

Kellie, with some help, now also makes wine from sweet and tart cherries, apples, peaches, plums, pears, blueberries, raspberries, grapes and asparagus. Most samples are complimentary at the tasting bar (due to limited quantities, a \$2 fee applies to Odd Fox and the raspberry wine), and

there's a short menu of appetizers to enjoy with a glass on a patio behind the barn.

The handsome, century-old, 2,000-square foot Fox Barn is a seasonal home for the farm's fresh fruit, Michigan-made foodstuffs including jams, maple syrup, salsa and honey, and culinary-related products. Kellie sees it as an agricultural tourism destination with many more possibilities, and it appears the next generation shares her enthusiasm: son Noah is a freshman at Michigan State University studying agricultural business management, and daughter Emelie is a high school senior that's interested in the farm market, winery, and working with customers. Kellie is thrilled that their Barn “provides a great opportunity for people to interact, and for people who are so far removed from the farm...to see how (farming) is done.”

The Fox Barn, with its classic 1946 Diamond T pick-up truck parked out front, is open Saturdays and Sundays in May and October, and seven days from June through September. It's a short drive from Hart, which hosts the 39th National Asparagus Festival (see below).

Festival Salutes One of Michigan's Top Crops

Join the “Age of Asparagus” during the National Asparagus Festival June 7-9, 2013, in Hart, near the Silver Lake Sand Dunes and Lake Michigan. The 39th annual event celebrates the green spear that grows profusely throughout the sandy, well-drained soil of Oceana County; the area between South Haven and Benton Harbor also contributes to Michigan's asparagus crop of about 25 million pounds annually. Our state is the third largest asparagus producer in the U.S. (California and Washington grow more).

Most Asparagus Festival events are free and happen on Saturday, including a Spear-it 5K Walk/Run, Royale Parade and a food show featuring tastes of asparagus dishes (admission fee). Don't miss Saturday's tours to a local asparagus farm where growers talk about the crop, planting and harvesting, and the industry. There's also entertainment and an Arts & Crafts Fair on Friday and Saturday.

Visit nationalasparagusfestival.org, email nationalasparagusfestival@yahoo.com or call 231-259-0170 for more info.

For asparagus recipes, facts and tips, check out the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board website: asparagus.org.

The Fox Barn Agricultural Marketplace and Winery

500 S. 18th Ave. (B-15)
Shelby, MI 49455
foxbarnwinery.com
231-861-8050
(Email through website)



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Decisions, Decisions

Michigan's expanding public school choices.

Researchers estimate the average adult makes about 35,000 decisions a day. If that's true, I'd guess that parenting decisions add a couple thousand a day extra to the mix.

Perhaps no parenting decision is more important than choosing the right schools. Today's parents can enroll their children in one of Michigan's 550 public school districts. They can also choose from among about 1,000 private and parochial schools that operate here.

Beyond these traditional choices, however, families now have the option to attend a free public school in the next town, the next county, or even via cyberspace.

Public Schools of Choice

Sections 105 and 105c of Public Act 300 of 1996 permit school districts to enroll students who live in neighboring districts without needing permission from their home district. There are some limits, however. The chosen district must participate in schools of choice, and must have openings in the grades your children will attend. Districts are required to notify the public about their schools of choice status no later than mid-August. Most, however, make that announcement earlier in the year to allow the district (and families) to better plan.

Timelines and rules related to Schools of Choice are available from the Michigan Department of Education, at michigan.gov/mde (type "schools of choice" into the search bar) or call 517-373-3324.

Public School Academies (Charter Schools)

A Public School Academy (also known as a charter school) is a state-supported public school operating under a charter contract issued by a public authorizing body. Charter schools may include grades K–12 or any combination of those grades. They may not charge tuition nor screen out students based on race, religion, gender, or test scores. If more students apply than the school can

accept, the school must hold a lottery to decide which students to accept.

Like teachers in traditional public schools, charter teachers must be certified and "highly qualified." Charter school students participate in state standardized tests such as the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP). Charter schools cannot be religiously affiliated.

Michigan recently raised the cap on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in Michigan, so expect to see new charters opening in the coming years. Look for a "Charter School FAQ" at michigan.gov/mde or visit charterschools.org/for-parents (517-374-9167).

Cyber Schools

Michigan students have increasing options when it comes to online learning. Two large programs offer "blended" learning options in which students enroll in one or more online courses while still working with teachers in their home districts. Michigan Virtual University (MVU) operates the oldest and

Is an online school a good option for your child?

Jay Bennett, instructor and course coordinator for Michigan Virtual University, suggests that before enrolling in a cyber school of any kind, parents ask:

- Is my child motivated?
- Is he or she a self-directed learner?
- Will he have the discipline to complete work and log-in to the courses on a regular basis?

The answers to these questions could predict success in an online program. He says MVU's highest performing students are generally those that are highly motivated and have the best supports in place.

"Online learning needs to be a collaborative effort and must include support from parents, the school providing credit and the school providing the course/instructor," Bennett says.

largest of these programs, with students enrolled in more than 15,000 courses. GenNET, a consortium operated by the Genesee Intermediate School District, has over 500 participating districts.

Public Act 205 of 2009 allowed the formation of full-time online schools for the first time in fall 2010. Consequently, two statewide virtual charter schools—K12 Inc. and Connections Academy—accepted more than 4,000 students from across Michigan in 2011-12. Some local districts and ISDs also offer online programs. For example, in rural Eaton County, southwest of Lansing, the ISD operates the Relevant Academy, a dropout recovery program for students ages 16-19. Parents can check to see what's available in their area.

Homeschooling

Michigan parents have the right to homeschool their children, and the numbers of families exercising that right increase every year. Plus, a growing number of homeschool networks support parents in their efforts. The actual number of Michigan homeschooling families is unknown, since homeschools are not required to register with the state unless the student has special needs and is requesting special education services from the local public school or intermediate school district.

You can learn more at michigan.gov/documents/home_schools_122555_7.pdf.

Still more choice to come?

Parents face a dizzying array of choices, to be sure—one that will not shrink any time soon. Gov. Snyder, in his 2011 "Special Message on Education Reform" proposed a new "Any Time, Any Place, Any Way, Any Pace" public school learning model he believes would help expand dual enrollment, blended learning, online education and early college attendance.

"Education opportunities should be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year," Snyder said in the address.

Still, the vast majority of Michigan's 1.5 million school children attend their local neighborhood schools, which also offer families more choices within each district. Educators are learning that one size does not fit all when it comes to teaching and learning.

Linda Wacyk is a regular Country Lines freelance writer, educator, grandmother and content empty-nester.





Photo Courtesy - Barn Theatre Publicity/Augusta, MI

The Barn Theatre of Augusta sits proudly in between Kalamazoo and Battle Creek.



Photo - Susan K. Park

Delilah de Wylde plays famous country western singer Patsy Cline in a summer theatre production at the Red Barn Playhouse in Saugatuck.

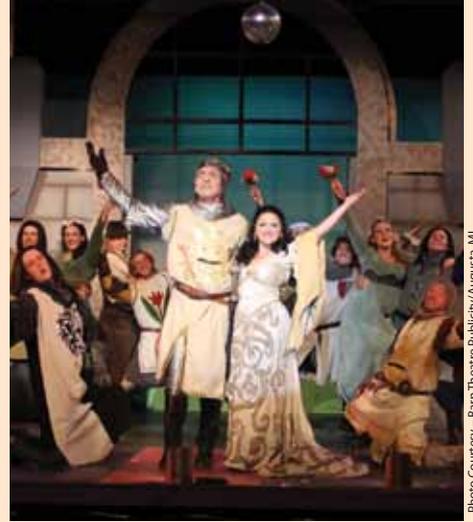


Photo Courtesy - Barn Theatre Publicity/Augusta, MI

A shot from The Barn Theatre (Augusta) production of the musical comedy "SPAMALOT" in 2012. It's a parody of the King Arthur legend.

Summer Stock Theatre: Barn Again in Michigan

With today's many entertainment options, it's surprising that the "let's put on a show!" spirit of 1930s-era movies lives on in barn theatres across the country. The summer stock theatre tradition actually dates to 1919 when shows—mostly lighter musicals, comedies and mysteries—were performed by touring troupes or resident companies that launched careers on stages outdoors, under tents and in barns.

Michigan is home to three barn theatres, including one of the country's few remaining Actors Equity (union) summer stock houses. As the Barn Theatre of Augusta launches its 67th season, producer/director Brendan Ragotzy relates how his parents founded the original Village Players in neighboring Richland in 1946, but three years later were forced to move.

Director Jack Ragotzy and actress Betty Ebert Ragotzy searched in vain for a new theatre home until, just two weeks before their 1949 season opened, they found a never-used dairy barn. "It was a grey day when they turned onto the farm's dirt driveway," tells Brendan. "When they saw the barn, the clouds opened up, the sun beamed down...Kismet!" The handsome structure, its soaring ceiling made of curved beams with no cross-bracing, had a single lightbulb and no running water. Yet, within two weeks the show went on and, with the exception of 2010 when it was dark due to the economy, this Barn Theatre has operated continuously. "It's a gorgeous gal," Brendan says of the 484-seat barn, which

is a Michigan Historic Site.

Its professional company draws on the talent of apprentices from the Barn Theatre School, which each season accepts about 24 students who have completed at least one year of college. "Barnies" learn and work behind the scenes and on-stage with the pros in an intense summer of honing their craft. Alumni include Johnathan Larson, who went on to create "Rent", and actors Jennifer Garner, Lauren Graham, Tom Wopat and Robert Newman. Following each of the six main-stage shows, apprentices and seasoned talent perform in a cabaret setting.

Despite increasing economic competition, Brendan, who worked on his first show at age 10, remains optimistic in carrying on his late parents' vision with his wife Penelope Alex, an actress who is also the School's dean. Whether or not their four kids follow the spotlight, "Lady Luck has been very fortunate for the Barn," says Brendan. "We've had great local support; that's been the key to our survival."

At The Red Barn Playhouse in Saugatuck, the Lakeshore Arts Alliance (LAA) is also working to keep the house lights on. Housed in a 1914 horse barn, it was converted to a theatre in 1948 and over the years, says LAA Board Chairman John Huyge, "It has been opened and closed a half-dozen times." Now leased by the LAA as a home for arts education and performance, volunteers have remodeled the 250-seat theatre into a year-round venue that includes films and concerts.

The LAA, whose executive director is John's

Check their 2013 schedules:

The Barn Theatre

barntheatre.com
13351 West M-96, Augusta
269-731-4545

Red Barn Playhouse

redbarnsaugatuck.com
3657 63rd St. at Blue Star Highway,
Saugatuck, 269-857-5300
lakeshorearts@comcast.net

The Barn Theatre

barntheatre.net
242 S. Ridge St., Port Sanilac
810-622-9114

wife Pat Huyge, is working to buy The Red Barn property and open an academy for the performing arts similar to the intern program of its heyday. "This barn was an important part of the entertainment in the community," says John. "It reflects back to a time in history when things were less complicated."

Keeping things simple in a 150-year old venue, the community theatre group at The Barn Theatre in Port Sanilac has entertained summer audiences "on a shoestring budget" since 1980. Andy Fabian, village council president and owner/chef at The Van Camp House restaurant says, "People come from miles around to have dinner and go to a show. It's really a great little happening." The Thumb area venue is in a casual, rustic setting for about six performances between June and September, and he assures, "It's the most genuinely cool place to be."

Kath Usitalo writes about destinations and the Great Lakes State. Her blog is greatlakesgazette.wordpress.com.

French Raspberry/
Blueberry Josephines



It's the berries!

Fresh picked or purchased at the market, berries can be used in so many different ways. Enjoy these tasty berry recipes and fulfill your craving for summer.

French Raspberry/Blueberry Josephines

- 1/2 c. butter, softened
- 1 8-oz. package cream cheese
- 1 1/2 c. flour
- 1/2 t. baking powder
- 1 c. fresh blueberries
- 1 c. fresh red raspberries
- granulated sugar
- 1/2 c. powdered sugar
- 1/2 t. vanilla
- 1/4 t. mace or nutmeg
- 2 t. grated orange rind
- 2 c. heavy cream for whipping

Cream butter until soft and fluffy. Add cheese and mix until smooth and well-blended. Stir in flour and baking powder. Shape into a ball; wrap in plastic wrap and chill for one hour. Roll out to 1/4-inch thickness, cut into 12 3 1/2-inch rounds. Place on a lightly greased cookie sheet and prick well with a fork. Bake at 400° for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned; cool. Gently combine berries sprinkled lightly with granulated sugar; set aside. Combine remaining ingredients; beat until stiff. Arrange pastry rounds on platter

or individual plates; top each with a generous spoon of whipped cream and some of the berries. Top with a second pastry round, more whipped cream and berries. Serve!

Janice L. Thompson, Martin

Red Berry Mousse

- 1 envelope unflavored gelatin
- 2 T. cold water
- juice of 1 lemon
- grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 pint raspberries
- 1 pint strawberries, quartered
- 2 T. creme de cassis liqueur
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 c. whipping cream

Combine gelatin and water in a small sauce pan and set aside to soak for 5 minutes. Stir the lemon juice into the softened gelatin. Add the zest, raspberries, strawberries, and creme di cassis. Bring gently to a boil, stirring frequently, and then set to cool to room temperature. Combine egg yolks and sugar in small bowl and beat until pale yellow. Transfer to double boiler and cook over sim-



Visit recipe editor Christin McKamey's new website, veggiechick.com, for healthy, vegetarian recipes and info!

mering water, whisking until hot and slightly thickened, 10 to 15 minutes; set aside to cool. Fold the berry mixture into the cooled custard. Whip cream with mixer until it forms soft peaks, and gently fold into the mixture. Scoop the mousse into a glass bowl or wine goblets and refrigerate until set. Garnish with raspberries or sprigs of mint. Enjoy!

Betty Hahn, Cornell

Sweet Berry Pizza

- 1 pizza dough
- 1 egg
- 1 c. farmer's cheese
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 T. vanilla
- 1 c. fresh, tart fruit (red currents, cut-up apples, prune-plums, strawberries)

Combine egg, sugar, and vanilla; whip until smooth. Mix in farmer's cheese; stir in fruit. Make sure mixture is spreadable but not runny, then spread over pizza dough. Bake at 425° for 10-12 minutes. Makes one medium pizza. Enjoy as a meal or as a dessert.

Lea Wojciechowski and her mother Anna, Troy

Fresh Berry Grilled Chicken

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves

Marinade:

2/3 c. apple juice

1/3 c. pomegranate juice

1/8 c. apple cider vinegar

1/2 t. coarse salt

1/8 t. ground white pepper

1/8 t. ground ginger

Fresh Berry Sauce:

1 c. apple juice

1/4 c. blackberry jam

generous pinch of allspice

3/4 c. red raspberries, halved if large

3/4 c. dark sweet cherries, pitted, halved

1/2 c. blueberries

Place chicken breasts in a zip-lock freezer bag. Whisk together marinade ingredients and pour over chicken. Press air out of bag and seal. Turn to coat evenly; refrigerate for 1 to 2 hours. Remove chicken from marinade; discard marinade.

Prepare grill for direct cooking over medium heat. Place chicken on grill and cook, covered with grill lid, for 8 to 10 minutes or until juices run clear, turning once.

In a saucepan, heat apple juice, jam and allspice over low heat, stirring until jam melts and mixture is fairly hot. Stir in the fruit; cook 1 minute. Remove from heat. Serve sauce over chicken breasts. Serves 4.

Marilyn Partington Frame, Traverse City

Blueberry Bread Pudding with Caramel Sauce

8 slices white bread, cubed

1 c. fresh or frozen blueberries

2 c. skim milk

1 c. Egg Beaters®, real egg substitute

2/3 c. sugar

1 t. vanilla

1/4 t. ground cinnamon

Caramel Sauce:

1/4 c. skim milk

14 vanilla caramels

Place bread crumbs on bottom of lightly greased 8-inch square baking pan. Sprinkle with blueberries and set aside. In large bowl, combine milk, Egg Beaters, sugar, vanilla, and cinnamon; pour over bread mixture. Set pan in larger pan filled with 1-inch deep hot water. Bake at 350° for 1 hour or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. In small saucepan over low heat, heat milk and caramels until caramels are melted, stirring frequently. Serve bread pudding with caramel sauce. Makes 9 servings.

Lorraine Green, South Boardman

Photography by: 831 Creative

Berry Delicious Lemonade

3 c. chopped strawberries

1 c. lemon juice

1 package lemonade drink mix

2 c. sugar

8 c. cold water

Combine all ingredients except water in blender until smooth. Pour into pitcher; add water. Serve with ice cubes. Makes 1 gallon.

Maria Yoder, Scottville

Three-Berry Lemon Trifle

1 14-oz. can fat free sweetened condensed milk

1 8-oz. carton fat free reduced sugar lemon yogurt

1/3 c. lemon juice

2 T. grated lemon peel

1 8-oz. reduced fat whipped cream topping, thawed, divided

1 16-oz. prepared angel food cake, cut in 1-inch cubes

1 c. sliced fresh strawberries

1 c. fresh blueberries

1 c. fresh raspberries

2 T. slivered almonds, toasted

In a large bowl, combine condensed milk, yogurt, lemon juice and peel. Fold in 2 cups whipped topping. In a 3-quart trifle bowl or deep glass salad bowl, layer 1/3 of the cake, 1/3 of the lemon mixture and all

of the strawberries. Repeat cake and lemon mixture layers; top with all the blueberries. Repeat with remaining cake pieces and lemon mixture; top with all the raspberries. Spread remaining whipped topping over raspberries; sprinkle with almonds. Cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours.

Paula Brousseau, Bellaire

Raspberry Graham Dessert

18 graham crackers, rolled into crumbs

1 quart raspberries

1/2 c. butter, softened

3 T. granulated sugar

2 eggs

1 c. heavy cream, whipped

1 t. vanilla

1/2 c. chopped walnuts

1 1/2 c. powdered sugar

Press half of crumbs in bottom of 8-inch square pan. Cream butter, powdered sugar and vanilla with mixer; add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Continue beating at high speed until light and fluffy. Coat raspberries with granulated sugar. Fold berries and nuts into whipped cream. Spread creamed mixture evenly over crumbs, and top with berry mixture; top with remaining crumbs. Chill overnight. This is my absolutely all-time favorite dessert. Makes 8 servings.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix



Red Berry Mousse

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 send in recipes! Please send in **"Diabetic Favorites"** by **July 10** and **"Holiday Desserts"** by **Aug. 10**.

Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

Smart Solutions

Receive a free online energy audit for your home.

You can do everything online these days—check bank statements, watch TV shows, and catch up with old classmates on Facebook. It turns out that you can also map your home's energy use at the tip of your fingers.

Use HomeWorks Tri-County's Home Energy Optimizer, a free online home energy assessment tool, to learn about your energy use and how to save more energy and money. You'll be asked important questions about your home—everything from square footage to your typical thermostat settings. Enter as much or as little information as you like. The more detail you provide, the more customized your results will be. Either way, you'll be saving energy in no time. Completing the online interactive survey takes just 15-30 minutes.

Click "Calculate" and the Energy Optimizer will automatically estimate your energy

use and projected heating, cooling, hot water, appliance, and lighting costs. It also calculates your energy savings cost potential in each category to help you see where you can get the highest payback for efficiency improvements. The "Upgrade" tab provides a list of "Recommended Upgrades" with simple ways to lower your energy use.

Benefits

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- ▲ Convenient—ability to save and edit responses or finish later
- ▲ Customized for your city and climate
- ▲ Do-it-yourself, affordable, energy-saving actions
- ▲ Completion entitles you to a free energy saving kit

You have nothing to lose by giving the Energy

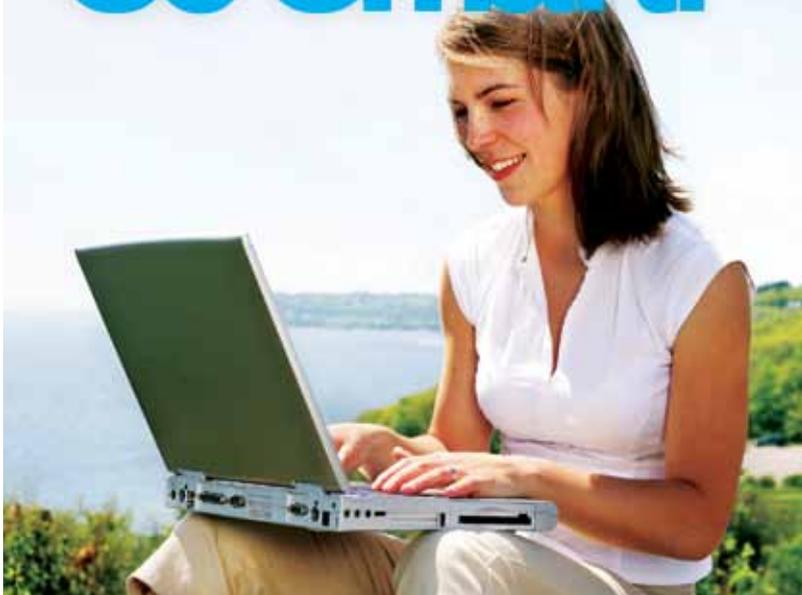
Optimizer tool a try. After all, it's *free*, and it will help you understand where you're spending the most on energy. You'll walk away with free products and solid ideas on how to improve your home, enhance your comfort, and fight off mold and drafts.

Next Steps

Here's how to get started today:

- ▲ Click on "Home Audit" at michigan-energy.org/HomeWorks
- ▲ Write down your session number.
- ▲ Answer questions as best you can. (It's okay to skip questions if you have to.)
- ▲ Finish the audit to receive your *free* energy-saving kit. Each kit is a \$25 value and includes 5 CFLs, 2 faucet water savers and 1 new shower head.
- ▲ Install all kit items. Keep other Energy Optimization programs and rebates in mind for future purchases.

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Computer on? Clicker finger ready? Find out where your home is wasting energy at michigan-energy.org/homeworkshomeaudit. In as little as 15 minutes, your free Energy Optimizer online energy assessment gives you personalized, do-it-yourself tips to fix your home's energy problems.

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ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319



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.



Two Great Options!

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HOME WORKS Tri-County Electric Cooperative

*Participating in our Hot Water Deal allows HomeWorks to temporarily interrupt the flow of electricity to your water heater for a short time during peak electric use periods. Even with the interruption, your water heater will keep water hot for hours, leaving you plenty of hot water for showers, laundry, and your family's other needs.



Tom Manting, top, and Nick Rusnell examine one of the geothermal units at HomeWorks Tri-County Electric's Portland office, setting them up for load management controls.

Load Management is Good For Your Co-op

At HomeWorks, our member-owners have taken part in two successful load management programs over the years: the Hot Water Deal, and Dual Fuel heating and cooling.

These were originally offered by Wolverine Power Cooperative, our power supplier, to help reduce overall power costs. Since Jan. 1, 2012, HomeWorks has taken over these programs.

Load Management shifts the use of electricity from periods of high demand to periods of lower demand, when the cost of electricity usually is lower.

Savings from reducing the cooperative's

power bill are passed on to all of our member-owners, and you also help reduce the need for new power plants to meet growing peak demand.

Think of the electric system as a highway that has certain rush hours, such as hot summer afternoons, when power supplies are stretched to their capacity and beyond, and causing price spikes in power costs.

Load management encourages users to change their usage pattern to a different time, reducing the strain on an overloaded system.

For more information and to see if you qualify for Load Management savings, call 1-800-562-8232 or visit homeworks.org.

New Thermostat Programs Itself

A programmable thermostat is one of the easiest energy savers you can buy. Unfortunately, most people don't follow through and program it to automatically adjust the temperature when their home is empty or full.

But this problem may have been solved by a cool, although relatively expensive, new energy gadget called the Nest Learning Thermostat™. This "smart" thermostat learns from your behaviors, preferences and surroundings to create a custom heating and cooling schedule, keeping you comfortable when you're home and conserving energy when you're away.

"It was unacceptable to me that the device controlling 10 percent of all energy consumed in the U.S. hadn't kept up with advancements in technology and design," says Tony Fadell, cofounder/CEO of Nest Labs. So, his team set out to reinvent the thermostat using the advanced technologies, high-quality manu-



Photo - Nest Labs

facturing and thoughtful design the iPhone generation expects, he adds. "We hope it will not only save money and energy, but teach and inspire people to think more about how they can reduce home-energy consumption."

The U.S. Department of Energy and Lawrence Berkeley National Lab report that the annual energy bill for a typical single-family home is about \$2,200, with heating and cooling accounting for about one-half. The programmable thermostat, developed in the '70s, promised to help people conserve energy, but 89 percent of owners rarely or

The new Nest Learning Thermostat was created by Tony Fadell, Nest co-founder/CEO. The self-programming thermostat is part of a wave of home automation that is creating new smart appliances and monitoring technology that will help homeowners reduce energy costs and improve comfort and convenience.

never set a program.

The Nest thermostat (nest.com) addresses this programming problem through a combination of sensors, algorithms, machine learning and cloud computing. It programs itself based on the temperatures you set, then learns your personal schedule in a week and starts automatically turning down heating or cooling when you're away. You can even connect it to your home's Wi-Fi to control it from your laptop, smartphone or tablet. Change the temperature, adjust your schedule, and check your energy use.

Note: For today's models, there is caution against using this thermostat with geothermal heating/cooling systems, which are not programmed correctly for this type of use and actually increase energy consumption as it switches to the auxiliary electric strip heat way too soon.

Slaying Silent Energy Killers

Brian Sloboda, a vampire slayer, hunts for energy killers that feed on electricity when nobody's looking.

"We need to kill what I call the 'energy vampires,'" the senior program manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) says. "Look around your house for any plug with what we call a 'wall wart'—those larger black boxes that are actually transformers. Those are energy killers."

Found on the cords of devices such as cell phone chargers and video game systems, these big plugs eat energy all day and night.

"They consume electricity whenever they

are plugged in, whether turned on or off," says Sloboda. "It's a tiny amount of electricity, but the power's drained for nothing."

In some cases, he adds, the consumption is more than just a little.

"Some video game systems from before 2010, even when they're turned off, use practically as much energy as when they're turned on," Sloboda explains, noting the same is true for some cable boxes and digital video recorder units.

To combat energy vampires, he has two recommendations: look for electronic devices with the Energy Star® logo (equipment that's



certified as energy-efficient); and use smart power strips.

"These power strips can sense a change of voltage running through them that will stop the flow of energy to that item or to other related items," he says. For example, a smart power strip can sense when a computer is turned off or in sleep mode and will automatically stop the flow of power to monitors, printers and speakers.

Adding a Breath of Fresh Air

Energy conservation and air quality go hand-in-hand, but it's often an inverse relationship.

"As we tighten the building envelope, problems that have been around before now become prevalent—air quality issues, humidity, carbon monoxide, mildew and mold," explains Art Thayer, energy efficiency programs director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. "In today's no-leak construction, there's no place for these

culprits to escape, so we have to make sure we get proper air exchanges in addition to controlling energy leaks."

Specialized units called energy recovery ventilators are now available and can handle the task perfectly. "It can be done with passive air management—basically opening a window—but usually some mechanical intervention is needed to take care of moisture and air quality issues," Thayer adds.

Air quality is a major concern, especially

when there have been previous leaks. Controlling moisture at the source in basement and crawl spaces makes a big difference in mold and mildew issues. Proper bathroom ventilation can help improve air quality and health. While it may not be a top consideration during a bathroom or kitchen remodel, it is a critical improvement you'll want installed correctly.

"Electric co-ops work to help educate homeowners about the advantages of properly insulating and addressing air infiltration, ventilation, and heat loss issues," Thayer says, "to help ensure health and safety."

Lower Humidity, Lower Electric Bill

Q: *Our old central air conditioner still works, but our house often seems too humid indoors. We set the thermostat lower, but it does not help a lot. How can we reduce the humidity and improve comfort?*

A: Damp, cool, indoor air creates a muggy atmosphere that often feels much worse than warmer humid air from open windows. This is particularly true for allergy sufferers because many allergens thrive in damp conditions.

Excessive humidity also increases air-conditioning costs because each degree that you lower the thermostat to compensate for the discomfort increases your electric bill. But there are things you can do to improve the situation.

First, try to reduce the humidity you're already producing. The kitchen and bathrooms are the greatest contributors to high humidity. Make sure your stove's exhaust hood is ducted outside, not into the attic (recirculating stove hoods are ineffective at controlling odor and moisture), and run the fan when cooking, especially while boiling water. In the summer you can also consider using small countertop cooking appliances outdoors on a patio or deck.

As in the kitchen, run the bathroom vent fan whenever showering or bathing and let it run a little while after you are done because there is much residual moisture in the air. Some of the new, quiet bathroom vent fans have humidity level sensors that run long enough to exhaust the moisture, but not too long to waste electricity and conditioned indoor air. You can also try installing a simple countdown timer as the wall switch—set it for 30 minutes, and the fan turns itself off.

If you can get the humidity level low enough, it is often possible to get by with a much higher thermostat setting and using ceiling fans.

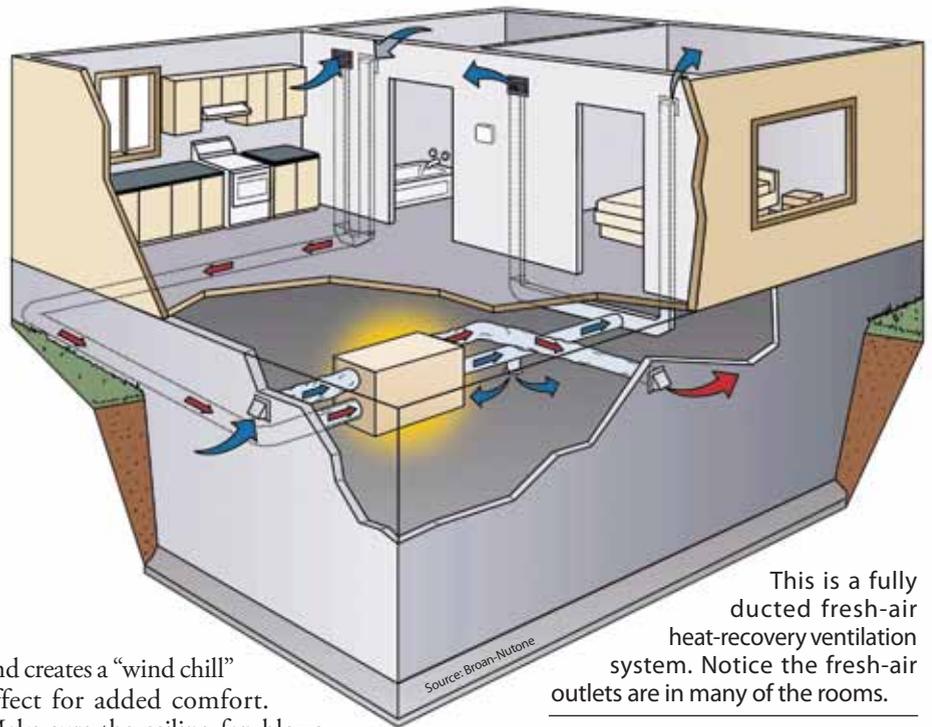
The air from a fan increases evaporation

and creates a "wind chill" effect for added comfort. Make sure the ceiling fan blows the air downward during summer and upward on low speed during winter.

Proper sizing of a central air-conditioning system is also critical for low humidity and comfortably cool indoor air. An HVAC contractor generally sizes the cooling system properly for a new house, but over the years, you may have made home energy efficiency improvements such as more insulation and new windows or doors. With such improvements, the home's cooling requirements may have dropped from, for example, 3.5 tons (12,000 Btuh/ton) to 3.0 tons. A unit that's too large for the space will operate inefficiently and may even cause mold problems because of the excess humidity. A licensed professional should size your central air-conditioning system using a mathematical code or automatic computer program.

If you plan to install a new high-efficiency air conditioner or heat pump and humidity is an issue, consider a two-stage or variable-output model with a variable-speed blower motor. With the matching smart thermostat, these models are designed for efficiency and humidity control. You can set both the desired temperature and humidity settings, and the air conditioner will run as normal to cool the air to the desired temperature. Once that temperature is met, the blower speed slows down to provide more dehumidification and less cooling.

Installing a whole-house ERV (energy recovering ventilation) system is an efficient way to exhaust stale, humid indoor air and



This is a fully ducted fresh-air heat-recovery ventilation system. Notice the fresh-air outlets are in many of the rooms.

bring in fresh outdoor air. Both heat and humidity are exchanged in this system to minimize energy loss, and are often controlled by a humidity sensor.

If you don't want to upgrade to a new unit, a contractor may be able to change some settings to slow the blower motor on your current one. This will dehumidify more, but will likely reduce its efficiency somewhat. If the lower humidity level allows you to set the thermostat higher and still be comfortable, you should save electricity overall.

There may be certain rooms where you find the humidity to be more uncomfortable than others due to the activity level. A portable air conditioner, which can be moved from room to room and vents outdoors through a window, can provide spot cooling and dehumidification.

Further, don't forget to fix leaky gutters and downspouts. If rainwater leaks out and saturates the ground around your house, some of that moisture will eventually migrate indoors.

Send inquiries to James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.

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



How to Plant the Right Trees, Shrubs

Whether you're planting trees to provide a wind break, reduce carbon in the environment or beautify your landscape, it's important to plant them away from power lines.

Besides causing power outages, trees that grow too close to electric lines can create shock and fire hazards. Trees (and wood in general) conduct electricity, and power outages or short interruptions can occur when branches contact with overhead lines, and electrical sparking from a wire to a nearby branch can cause fires. This is why children should be taught never to climb trees near power lines, and adults should never trim trees that are close to power lines (leave it to professionals). Accidental contact of electric wires with a tree limb while playing or trimming around a tree can be fatal.

"Trees provide many aesthetic, environmental and economic benefits, including energy-efficient shade and cooling during hot summer months, or natural windbreaks against winter winds," says Molly Hall, executive director of Safe Electricity (safeelectricity.org). For example, trees reduce pollution by absorbing and removing carbon dioxide from the air and storing it in the wood and ground. "But everyone needs to be aware of the dangers and risks created when trees grow into power lines, and the importance

of calling the utility or utility locator service before beginning any landscaping project," Hall continues. "Landowners also need to understand utility line clearance practices and why they are important to safe and reliable electric service."

Research which trees and bushes offer shade, color and screening, but won't grow to interfere with your electric service. Local tree nurseries can help in designing a beautiful, shade-filled yard with trees appropriate for each section. You can also find planting help

at arborfoundation.org or call the National Arbor Day Foundation at 1-888-448-7337.

If you have existing trees that appear to be growing into the power lines, call your electric co-op, and *never try to prune them yourself*. Utilities have or can recommend professionals trained to safely prune and trim trees for electric line clearance.

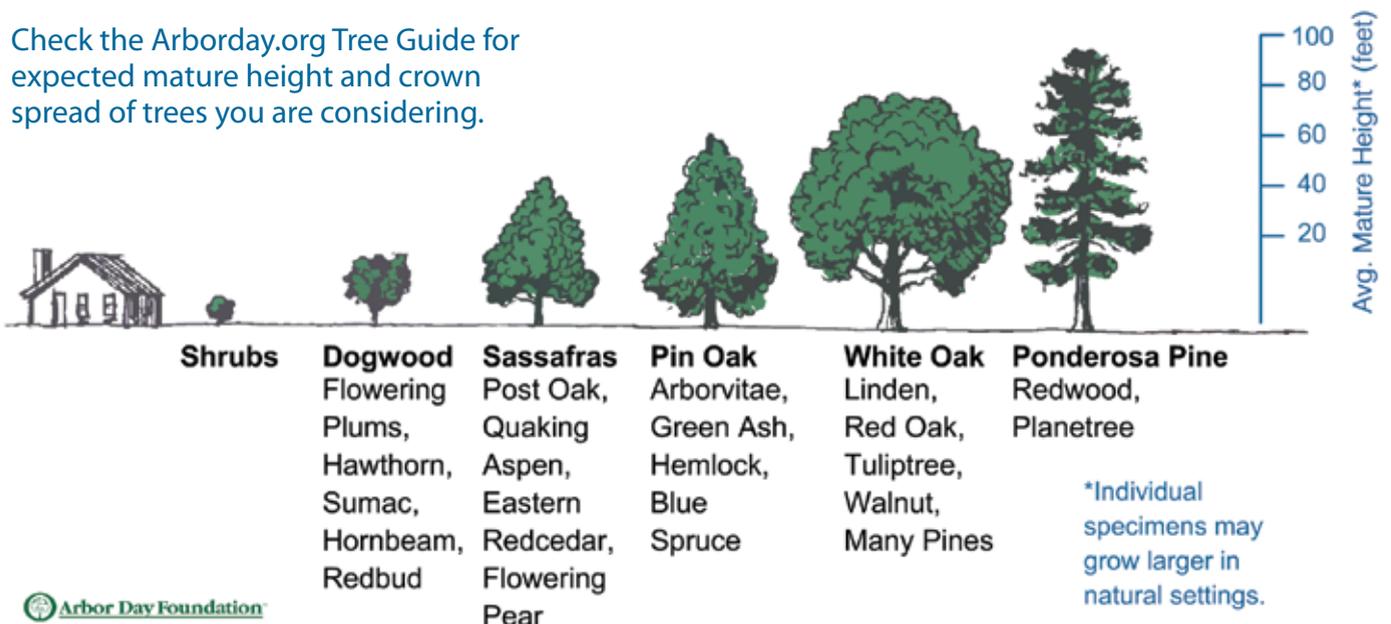
There are many beautiful varieties of low-growing trees and shrubs, Hall says, "Consider planting the types of trees that co-exist well with power lines and the environment."

Please don't plant close to power lines!

For your safety, follow these planting tips:

- 1) Before digging, dial 811** to ask the utility locator service to mark the location of underground utilities so that accidental contact, damage and injuries can be avoided.
- 2) Never plant a tree that could grow to 25 feet or more near a power line.** Tall-growing trees should be planted a minimum of 20 feet away from power lines, and 50 feet away to avoid future pruning. A mature height of less than 15 feet is recommended for trees planted near power lines.
- 3) Do not plant near underground utility services.** Tree roots can grow to interfere with underground pipes, cables and wires. Future repairs to these facilities could also damage the health and beauty of nearby plants and trees.
- 4) Keep areas around electric meters, transformers or other electrical equipment free of any vegetation** that could limit utility service access.

Check the Arborday.org Tree Guide for expected mature height and crown spread of trees you are considering.



Touchstone Energy Helps Local Schools



▲ HomeWorks dispatcher Kelly Vroman (L), with Portland High School principal Christine Rockey. The school received \$2,400 to help move classroom projectors from temporary stands to ceiling mounts.



▲ HomeWorks Customer Service Representative Michelle Huhn (L), with Saranac Junior High teacher Linette Reed. The Saranac school received \$800 to subscribe to an online social studies curriculum.

People Fund Helps with Housing, Food

Meeting April 17, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made four grants totaling \$3,100, including:

- \$500 to YES Center, Grand Ledge, for after-school healthy snacks;
- \$1,000 to St. Michael Conference St. Vincent de Paul, Grand Ledge, for the Housing and Utility Program;
- \$1,000 to Montabella Ministerial Association Food Pantry, Edmore, for food and personal items; and
- \$600 to a Isabella County family to help with housing expenses.

How To Apply For a People Fund Grant

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

Note: Applications must be received by June 24 for the July 3 meeting, and by August 5 for the August 14 meeting.

Save on More Services with Your Co-op Connections Card

Use your Co-op Connections Card to save money on national deals, prescriptions and health care, and at these local businesses:

■ **Lakeview Car Center**, P.O. Box 357, Lakeview. *\$5 off lube, oil & filter or free lube, oil & filter with collision repair. Up to 6 quarts of oil; excludes synthetic oil.*

■ **Gary's Heating Service**, 9758 E. Grand River Ave., Portland. *10% discount on service. 5% discount on installation. Must present card to receive discount.*

■ **McKenna's Village Restaurant**, 321 N Lincoln Ave., Lakeview. *5% off one full-priced dinner. One per customer; not valid with other offers; does not include kids' meals.*

■ **Lynne Paradiso**, 110 E. Bridge St., Portland. *\$5 off any service of \$20 or more (hair design, coloring, highlights, waxing, Malibu treatments, styling lessons, FREE consultations). Call 517-647-6153 for hours.*

■ **Stanton Auto Glass**, 302 S. State St., Stanton. *\$10 off any order or free wiper blades.*

■ **Mission Lumber - Lakeview**, 9784 M-46, Lakeview. *Members receive a flat fee delivery charge of \$10 for delivery within*

Isabella, Mecosta, Montcalm and Newaygo counties.

■ **Sara's Sweets Bakery**, 2211 East Beltline Suite F2, Grand Rapids. *20% off a cake purchase (excludes weddings, not accruable with any other discount), must give one week notice, 616-988-6760.*

■ **The Piano Shop**, 5625 Five Mile Rd., Ada. *Free estimate and 20% off repair, tuning, home theater installation.*

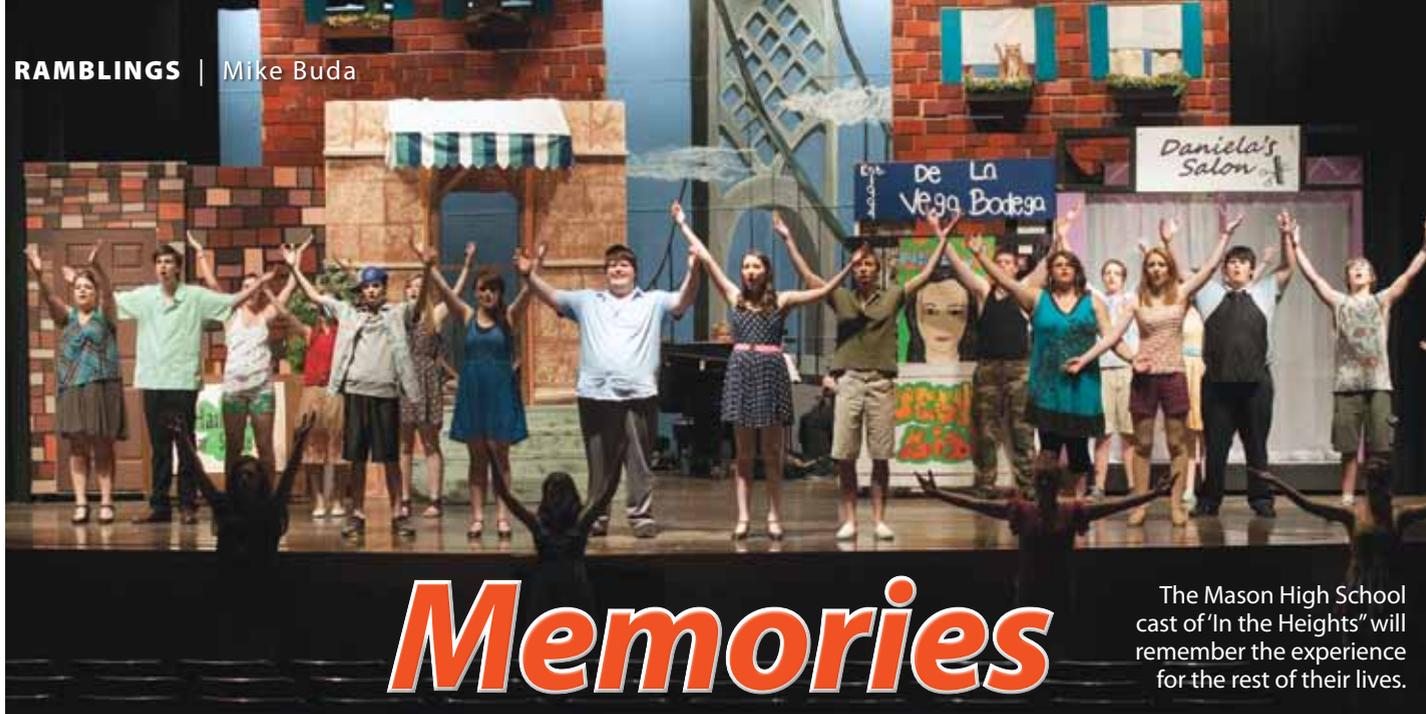
■ **A & B Pawn**, 215 E. State St., Belding. *10% off entire purchase.*

■ **Patriot Mini Storage**, 10561 N. Loomis Rd., or 643 W. 5th St., Clare. *Rent a unit for 3 months, get the 4th month free.*

■ **Meadow Lanes Bowling**, 430 W. 5th St., Gladwin. *Friday nights 5-9 p.m., get three games and shoes for \$8 per person.*

For more information about local, national and pharmacy discounts, visit homeworks.org and click on the Co-op Connections card.





Memories

The Mason High School cast of 'In the Heights' will remember the experience for the rest of their lives.

Photo - Jen Bauer

Barbara dragged me to a high school musical a few weeks ago. I'm glad she did.

She wanted to go because the play involved students she taught in middle school and are among the last she taught before retiring. I didn't know anyone in the production or anything about the musical, "In the Heights," which is about cultural and economic changes in a New York City Puerto Rican neighborhood. It's not "West Side Story," but it's not unlike it, either. It won a handful of Tony Awards in 2008. The music is more rap and rock than Bernstein and Sondheim.

The Mason High School production of "In the Heights" was dazzling, not because of the acting, singing or stage production—these are amateurs, after all, though some could have a future on-stage—but because of the heart and energy of the actors, musicians, artists and stagehands. Their commitment to excellence, with only a couple of months to prepare, was evident.

No doubt, their directors, Helen Hansens and Sharon Garner, had much to do with their success. (Who doesn't need good teachers?) The school also seems to be solidly committed to theater, with a class even offered in Set Design and Construction.

The dedication and teamwork we saw that night occurs in hundreds of high schools all over Michigan in spring. The students who participate learn things at least as valuable as those learned by the athletes we tend to over-glorify: the value of hard work and teamwork, the camaraderie

forged by common purpose, the creativity in each of us.

The standing ovation the students received at the final curtain was sincerely delivered and well-deserved. It was a moment they will forever remember and cherish.

At about this same time, sports news was focused on the handful of athletes who were about to decide where they would go to college or who would draft them for the pros and multi-million-dollar contracts. This loud, greedy, degrading process seems to go on forever. We like our athletes. We cheer their successes. We tolerate their excesses. We love that they win—for us. (Is it any surprise that the highest paid public official in 29 states is the football or basketball coach of a state-supported university?)

Not many of us, athletes or not, end up in the future we envision—if we even bothered to envision it at all. We can make plans, but as we pursue them—in sports, the arts, or wherever—we are more likely to adapt to our life's changing conditions, because isn't that what life is, a series of adaptations? Aren't those adaptations what memories are made of?

It's too bad we channel kids into one or the other before they know what it's all about. Athletes would be better off understanding art, and artists would be healthier with sport in their background. Some schools make students choose one or the other. In Mason, an effort is made to bend schedules to fit the student.

No matter what else happens in their lives, the students in that musical will never forget it. For those who make a career in theater (and some will), it will be

remembered as a stepping stone. For the others, it will become fonder as the years pass. (Much as the lone, officially-recorded basket in my high school basketball career, in a game in the tiny Trout Creek gym, has achieved mythic status in my own mind.)

During a recent trip to Columbus, Ohio, to visit Barbara's Aunt Jeanette, we shared a home-cooked meal in her apartment, along with a tasty bottle of wine. Jeanette and I split the bottle. With the wine flowing, so did the memories, of Jeanette growing up in Ironwood, going through medical technology training in Minneapolis, moving to Columbus for a job before Pearl Harbor, the war years, the jobs after, the apartments she lived in.

Jeanette has an incredible memory and it was a joy to hear her stories, about her father, the former Ironwood Fire Chief, who in his youth raced Olympic gold medalist and world 100-meter record-holder Archie Hahn to a standstill, about the people they fed in their home during the Great Depression, and about her life in Columbus.

I have a lot of memories, too. I just can't remember them. I have the worst memory of anyone I know. Where did it go? Do women have better memories than men? Would I have benefitted from memorizing lines for plays? Will more wine help?

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





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- ◆ Listen to your Current Balance
- ◆ Key in Amount to Pay
- ◆ Key in Payment Information
- ◆ Wait for Payment Confirmation
(Make a note of your confirmation number)

▶ Average time to pay: 2 minutes, 45 seconds



By Internet:

- ◆ Go to homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html
- ◆ Key in Amount to Pay
- ◆ Select "Pay Now"
- ◆ Select your Payment Option
- ◆ Select "Make Payment"
- ◆ Key in Payment Information
- ◆ Select "Continue"
- ◆ Wait for Payment Confirmation
(Make a note of your confirmation number)

▶ Average time to pay: 1 minute, 50 seconds

Pay Bill Now
No registration required.

Also at HomeWorks.org: Click on the **SmartHub** logo to log-in and view your energy use and account history.

AutoPay Sign-up



To sign up for recurring monthly payments from your financial institution, complete this form and return it to HomeWorks Tri-County, 7973 E. Grand River Ave., Portland, MI 48875. HomeWorks reserves the right to revoke an AutoPay subscription if bank approval is denied. Please continue to pay your bill until notified on your statement that AutoPay is active.

Yes! I authorize HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative and/or HomeWorks Tri-County Propane to charge my checking or savings account for any accrued balance on the account(s) listed:

Electric Account(s) # _____ Propane Account(s) # _____

Checking Account *(attach a voided check)* Savings Account *(attach a voided deposit slip)*

Name on account: *(please print)* _____ Phone: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____ Email: _____

(Signature is required to activate autopayments. Phone and email is needed if we have questions regarding your AutoPay subscription)

Save time and postage with any of these easy payment options. You can go one step further—choose to stop receiving a paper bill and download your statement as a pdf document from SmartHub at homeworks.org. Save your co-op money while reducing waste—it's easy!

Checking this box authorizes us to stop mailing you a paper bill.