

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



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COUNTRY LINES

IN THIS ISSUE

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



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ON THE COVER*

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative members John and Becky Schlatter have cruised Michigan's own Route 66 and written a book about it called, "Splittin' the Mitten: Get Your Kicks on Michigan's Route 66." Enjoy part of their ride on pages 10-11.

Photos Courtesy – John & Becky Schlatter

*Some co-op editions have a different cover



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countrylines.com



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Working to Bring High-Speed Internet to Rural Areas

Occasionally hear a co-op member talk about the day the lights first came on, and can only imagine how life-changing it must have been.

Electricity was not a given in the 1930s, particularly for those living in rural areas. Existing utilities refused to extend power lines to the countryside because it wasn't profitable. With the advent of and access to low-interest money from the Rural Electrification Administration, neighbors and communities demonstrated their collective gumption and resolve, and brought power and light to their spaces.

Someone had a vision for something different. That vision, born out of the realization that geography should not define access to services, resulted in a life-changing movement that is alive and well today in our national network of more than 900 cooperatives serving an estimated 42 million people in 47 states.

We have successfully powered rural America for over 70 years with reliable, at-cost electric service, and continue creating today a better service experience for our members. Is that adequate? Are we continuing to provide enough of a difference to justify our continued existence? And, what is the cooperative purpose in 2014?

An inequity exists today that is as debilitating as the lack of electricity was 75 years ago. It doesn't power lights and appliances, but it does power information and solutions for individuals, homes and businesses.

Today's inequity is broadband internet. Once considered a luxury, true high-speed internet has quickly become a necessity and a key driver for information, education, economic development, medicine and other critical components of life.

Midwest Energy has committed significant time and resources over the last two years, working closely with other vested partners, to actively engage key players and agencies at state and national levels in a conversation about this inequity. We've become a regular presence in Washington, and are known

on a first-name basis by key staff in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Through these relationships, we've heard that telecommunications has become very status-quo and the current FCC leadership isn't interested in status-quo operations.

There is money available to extend broadband to the rural space, and the FCC holds the purse strings. We helped bring the right message and model at the right time, and are now working diligently to affect policy change so that electric co-ops can access funds to bring broadband into the rural space.

We do not have a specific service to sell at this time, but we do have a vision for something different. As we advocate, we have launched a very small-scale fiber-to-the-premise project in two targeted areas of southwest Michigan. Our goal is to develop a working model and expertise in service delivery that we can ultimately extend to all members once those purse strings are opened up.

What is the cooperative purpose in 2014? I believe it's not so different than it was

We helped bring the right message and model at the right time, and are now working diligently to affect policy change so that electric co-ops can access funds to bring broadband into the rural space.

in the 1930s – to bring value to lives and communities in rural America. We did it with electricity, and I have growing confidence that we'll do it again with broadband internet.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

NOTICE OF CLOSING Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, April 18, in observance of the Good Friday holiday. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day. From our family to yours, have a happy and blessed holiday weekend.

Two Incumbents, One Challenger Elected to Co-op's Board

Midwest Energy members Jim Dickerson, Bloomington, and John Green, Dowagiac, were re-elected to new three-year terms on the cooperative's board of directors. Dickerson, district 2, ran unopposed and Green, district 5, beat challenger Robert W. Brown, Jr. of Niles.

Fred Turk challenged and beat fellow Decatur resident and incumbent Jerry Campbell to assume representation of district 1. Campbell has served as a director since 1994.

The directors assume their new terms on April 11, 2014.

Midwest Energy is governed by a nine-member board, and each director is elected to serve a three-year term. Directors are elected by and represent members living in his or her district, and must reside in the district they represent. These are important roles, as your directors make critical decisions on behalf of all the co-op's member-owners.

In 2015, Districts 3, 4 and 8 will be up

for election. District 3 is currently represented by **Ron Armstrong**, of Lawton, and includes Almena, Antwerp, Portage, Prairie Ronde, Oshtemo and Texas townships. **Clarence Barth**, of Three Rivers, is the current director in District 4, which includes Brady, Fabius, Flowerfield, Leonidas, Lockport, Mendon, Newberg, Park, Schoolcraft and Wakarusa townships.

District 8 is represented by **Ken Swope**, of Tecumseh, and includes Adrian, Cambridge, Franklin, Raisin, Ridgeway, Rollin, Rome, Tecumseh, and Woodstock townships, as well as northern portions of Blissfield, Deerfield, Dover, Hudson, Madison and

Palmyra townships.

Interested members should contact the cooperative at 800-492-5989 for information about the process. Official election information will be included in the November/December issue of *Country Lines*.

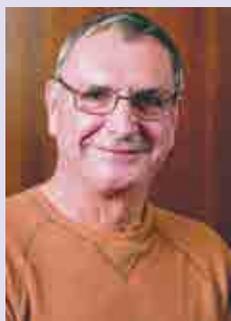


Jim Dickerson



John Green

Former Employee Wins District 1 Board Seat



Fred Turk

When Decatur native Fred Turk is seated as the new director for district 1 in April, he will bring a unique perspective to the table.

Turk spent 38 years as an employee of Midwest Energy Cooperative—first as a lineman and later in an operations management role. He subsequently worked for a local electrical contractor before retiring.

“I know the cooperative is a very different organization today than it was during my years of service, and I’m excited to begin what I know will be a major learning curve,” Turk says.

His goal in representing the membership is to raise awareness about the member-owner nature of the business and improve communication. “I think many members feel very out-of-touch with the cooperative, or don’t understand that they have a voice,” he says. “I want to help bridge that gap and make sure members’ thoughts and opinions

are heard and represented.”

The youngest of four children, Turk grew up on the family farm in east Decatur and graduated from Decatur High School in 1966. In 1967, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served two years, including 12 months of active duty in Vietnam.

Upon his return, he married his high school sweetheart, Grace Elgersma, and they made their home in Decatur. The couple has two adult sons and five grandchildren.

Turk is also very active as a volunteer with the Veterans Outreach Buddy to Buddy Program through the University of Michigan and is involved with the VFW Post 6248 in Decatur.

“I’m honored to bring my work experience, volunteer work history, and familiarity with Midwest Energy’s customer base and operations to this position, and look forward to representing my fellow members,” Turk says.

Best Deviled Eggs Ever (pictured)*Fresh eggs (amount you want to serve)**Marzetti's® coleslaw dressing**Salt and pepper**Paprika**Dash of Tabasco® sauce**2 T. or more minced capers*

Place eggs in a pot and just cover with cold water. Bring to boiling, then shut off heat and cover with lid. Set timer for 15 minutes. Remove and cool eggs, shell and cut in half. Remove yolks and mix in bowl with Marzetti's slaw dressing, salt, pepper, hot sauce, and minced capers to taste, until the mixture is spoonable. Spoon mixture into chilled egg halves, sprinkle with paprika and serve on lettuce leaf.

—Pamela Newcomb, Charlevoix

Raisin Sauce for Ham*2 T. horseradish, drained**1 T. cornstarch**½ t. dry mustard**10 oz. jar red currant jelly**⅓ c. golden raisins*

Since Easter dinner usually means HAM, here's a family recipe that we always make when we have ham...it's DELICIOUS! Heat all ingredients over medium heat. Stir constantly until mixture comes to a boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat and cover...serve!

—Marilyn Van Laan, Traverse City

Mrs. Appleyard's Patrician Potatoes*4 c. cooked mashed potatoes**3 c. cream style cottage cheese**¾ c. commercial sour cream**1 ½ T. finely grated onion**⅛ t. white pepper**1 t. salt (optional)**melted butter**½ c. chopped almonds (optional)*

Mash potatoes thoroughly. Add cottage cheese and sour cream. Blend. Add onion, white pepper and salt. Mix well. Spoon into a shallow, buttered 2-quart casserole. Brush surface with melted butter. Bake 350° for ½ hour. Sprinkle with almonds. 8 servings. This was my mom's recipe. We always have it with ham at Easter and Christmas.

—Diane Russell, Traverse City

P.B. Graham Eggs*½ c. shortening**2 c. powdered sugar**¾ c. creamy peanut butter**1 c. graham cracker crumbs**½ c. semi-sweet chocolate chips**½ c. graham cracker crumbs, crushed***These are perfect for spring brunch, too!***peanuts or chocolate sprinkles*

Combine shortening, powdered sugar and peanut butter in a large bowl. Beat at low speed of electric mixer until well blended. Stir in 1 c. crumbs and chocolate chips. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour. Form dough into 1-inch eggs. Roll in ½ c. crumbs, peanuts or sprinkles for a fancier cookie egg. Makes about 3 dozen eggs.

—Lorraine Green, South Boardman

Carrot Cake*4 egg whites**1 ¼ c. apple sauce**1 c. white sugar**1 c. brown sugar**2 t. vanilla extract**2 c. all-purpose flour**2 t. baking soda**2 t. baking powder**½ t salt**2 t. ground cinnamon**½ t. nutmeg**3 c. grated carrots***Frosting:***½ c. butter, softened, or Earth Balance®, made of all vegetable oils**8 oz. light cream cheese, softened**3 c. confectioner's sugar**1 t. vanilla extract*

Preheat oven to 350°. Grease and flour a 9x13-inch pan. In a large bowl, beat together eggs, oil, white sugar and vanilla. Mix in flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt, nutmeg,

and cinnamon. Stir in carrots. Pour into prepared pan. Bake in preheated oven 40–45 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and cool completely. To make frosting: In a medium bowl, combine butter, cream cheese, confectioners' sugar and vanilla. Beat until the mixture is smooth and creamy. Frost the cooled cake.

—Christin McKamey, Royal Oak

Photography - 831 Creative

Submit your recipe! Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Picnic" recipes by **May 10**.

Mail (handwritten or typed on one side, please) to: *Country Lines* Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com. Contributors whose recipes we print in 2014 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2015 electric bill (up to \$200)!



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

Improving the Efficiency of Older Doors

Energy losses from inefficient entry doors can account for a significant part of your monthly utility bills. When leaky doors create drafts, people tend to set the furnace thermostat higher, which wastes even more energy.

There are ways to improve the efficiency of old doors, but don't eliminate the possibility of installing new ones. The cost of some well-insulated steel and fiberglass doors, especially those for a back door without glass, are very reasonable. And, a pre-hung door in its own frame is not difficult to install yourself.

Before deciding, carefully inspect the old doors. If they are in very bad condition, it will be difficult to improve their efficiency by a meaningful amount. First, make sure the wood door is not rotting, and then place a long straight edge across it to see if it is badly warped.

With metal doors, the most common problem is rust, not warping. Check along the bottom by the weather stripping on either side. Rainwater tends to collect there, and it is not always painted well. Try to determine why the water is collecting. If you find small holes rusted through, they can be repaired with car body filler and then painted.

If the doors are reasonably sound, check for the location of air leaks. At night, have someone shine a flashlight from outdoors around the seals while you check for light coming indoors. This will highlight significant leaks. On a windy day, move a stick of lighted incense around the seals and watch the smoke trail to locate minor leaky areas. Check the astragal (a half-round overlap that acts as a seal) between double doors.

Often with wood doors, especially ones with compression weather stripping, the main problem is simply the latch plate is not holding the door tightly closed against the weather stripping.

One solution is to reposition the latch plate, which requires filling in the old screw holes and drilling new ones. Chisel away some of the wood in the latch plate recess. Or, install an adjustable latch plate that you can reposition for summer and winter as the door and frame expand and contract from temperature and humidity.

Steel doors should feature magnetic weather stripping, so this is not a major issue because the stripping is drawn against the door edge. Just make sure the door surface and the weather stripping are clean and smooth. Paint on the door edge can also come



A new brass bottom seal and threshold save energy and are more attractive.

This replacement door threshold is made of durable aluminum and can be adjusted up and down.



LEFT: A door's threshold can be raised or lowered with a screwdriver so the weather stripping seals tightly. RIGHT: Stepped teeth in this strike plate allow the door to fit tightly. Notice the small dab of expandable foam insulation inside.

loose and create gaps that leak air.

Also check the condition of door hinges, and replace them if needed. If the hinges and pins are worn, the door will not hang square in the opening and not seal properly. There are many different hinge sizes, so take an old one with to the store for an exact match. Don't just buy the cheapest ones, because there are many to choose from and quality varies.

It is almost certain the door seal on the bottom is worn, but if not, adjust the floor threshold higher. There are several height adjustment screws across the threshold, but they may be filled in with dirt, so poke around to find them. If the seal itself is bad, there are many generic replacement seals you can install.

Another option is an add-on retractable threshold seal, which is effective if carpeting is near the door. This seal is mounted on the inside surface of the lower door edge and is easy to adjust and install. When the door opens, a pin against the door frame is released and the seal automatically lifts to

clear the carpeting.

Companies offering door improvement products include Duck Brand, 800-321-0253, duckbrand.com; M-D Building Products, 800-654-8454, mdteam.com; Pemko Manufacturing, 800-283-9988, pemko.com, and Thermwell, 800-526-5265, frostking.com. Also visit dulley.com for more information.



Replaceable vinyl weather stripping seals well on the door's hinge side because it gets compressed, with little rubbing and wear.

Midwest in the Community

Neighbor helping neighbor – that’s how your Midwest Energy Cooperative family approaches daily work and efforts to give back to the community. We live, work and serve right here in your local community, and strive to actively live our Community value in meaningful and impacting ways. Here are just a few of our recent efforts to strengthen and support our communities.



Reality Fair

Over 200 high school students from across southwest Michigan got a dose of reality on Feb. 21 as Midwest Energy Cooperative and Southwestern Michigan College (SMC) teamed up to provide a new interactive educational event.

“It’s Reality” is a personal financial management exercise for high school students. Students were given a projected starting salary based on their chosen career, then went through a “game of life,” traveling through 17 different stations where they had to make important financial decisions for basic needs and lifestyle choices. At the conclusion, students reviewed their income and expenses with a volunteer at the Financial Counseling Station. Randy Flory (top photo), an SMC instructor, was among the volunteers who helped students evaluate their choices.

Midwest employee Bobbi Lowe (far left in center photo) helped at the “wheel of reality,” a favorite station among participants. Students had to spin a wheel that included six positive and six negative outcomes, such as earning cash from an eBay sale or paying to replace a lost cell phone.

“Today’s students are provided with great academic information and resources, and our goal was to supplement that with an engaging interactive experience to bring those classroom lessons to life in a fun and meaningful way,” explains Lori Ruff, a Midwest employee and event organizer. “This is an exciting way that we can work in partnership with the greater community to support the next generation of business and community leaders.”



Walk for Warmth

Spirits were high and the sun was shining as more than 100 people gathered to “Walk for Warmth” on Feb. 22. Team Midwest served as one of the community sponsors of the event, which raises unrestricted funds for utility assistance through the Community Action Agency in Lenawee County. More than \$30,000 was raised to help people that do not qualify for other types of assistance.



Lights, Art, Action

Downtown Blissfield became an outdoor visual and performing arts gallery beginning at sunset on Feb. 22 at the “Lights, Art, Action” Festival. Team Midwest was among the sponsors of the inaugural event, designed to create some outdoor light and entertainment to combat the winter doldrums. Among the displays was the Children’s Art Studio Gallery Night Display, made by students enrolled in the “Creating is Bliss” children’s art program.

Co-op Offers Prepaid Electric Service



Managing energy consumption often means changing behaviors, and that is never easy! With Midwest Energy Cooperative's OWN IT Prepaid Metering Program, you can pay for your electric service in advance and avoid one large payment based on the energy you already used.

"It's tough to learn how to effectively change our behavior when we're paying for something that we used 30 days ago," says Candy Riem, vice president of marketing and member services. "There's no good way to connect an action with a cost when we can't measure the cost right away.

"When we shop, we evaluate purchases based on cost and benefit; the connection is immediate. National surveys on prepaid programs clearly show that users think more about how they use their electricity and reduce usage when they've already made the financial investment."

OWN IT Prepaid Metering puts the power in your hands and allows you to manage your budget by choosing when, how and what you pay each month for electricity. For many, it's easier to make four \$25 weekly payments than it is to make one \$100 monthly payment. That's the beauty of this program: – you simply fund your account and your consumption is billed and deducted daily, based on a breakdown of current rates and fees, plus a \$3 program fee. Your service is remotely disconnected if the account balance is depleted, and reconnected when a payment is received. No more deposits, late charges or collection/reconnection fees!

For more details or to sign up for the program, please contact us at 800-492-5989.

Frequently Asked Questions About Prepaid Metering

Q: *Who is OWN IT designed for?*

A: OWN IT Prepaid Metering is designed for the member who wants or needs more control over managing their electricity expenses. It puts the power in your hands by allowing you to choose when, how and what you pay each month for electricity. It

requires no deposits, late fees, trip charges or reconnect fees. You simply fund your account and your consumption is billed and deducted daily.

Q: *Does OWN IT Prepaid Metering cost me anything?*

A: There are no fees to convert an existing account to OWN IT. If you have an existing balance, it must either be paid in full prior to creating your prepaid account, or converted into a payment agreement and paid over time through your prepaid account. If you choose to pay over time, a percentage of each payment made will be applied to the agreement until it is paid in full.

Q: *What happens if I run out of funds in my OWN IT account?*

A: If you run out of gas in your car, it stops. Prepaid metering is similar. If your OWN IT account runs out of funds, the electricity will be disconnected. We will contact you when the balance is low, using your preferred contact methods provided when you sign up. If you get disconnected, simply make a payment and your service will be restored.

Q: *Can I save money?*

A: The OWN IT program does not provide a lower rate, but does encourage participants to learn to monitor their energy use. Surveys show that 90 percent of those enrolled in

National surveys on prepaid programs clearly show that users think more about how they use their electricity and reduce usage when they've already made the financial investment.

similar programs believe it helps them use energy more wisely. Understanding how you use energy is the first step to better managing your use. Real savings can start when you become better aware of your consumption.

Q: *How do I make payments?*

A: Buying electricity is quick and easy through the OWN IT program, even on holidays and weekends! Payments may be made using cash, check or debit/credit cards. A \$25 minimum purchase is required on initial set up. After that, you can buy electricity as needed, and in the amount you choose at one of our district service centers, by phone at 800-492-5989, or through the SmartHub online or mobile account access app.

Q: *How can I check the status of my account?*

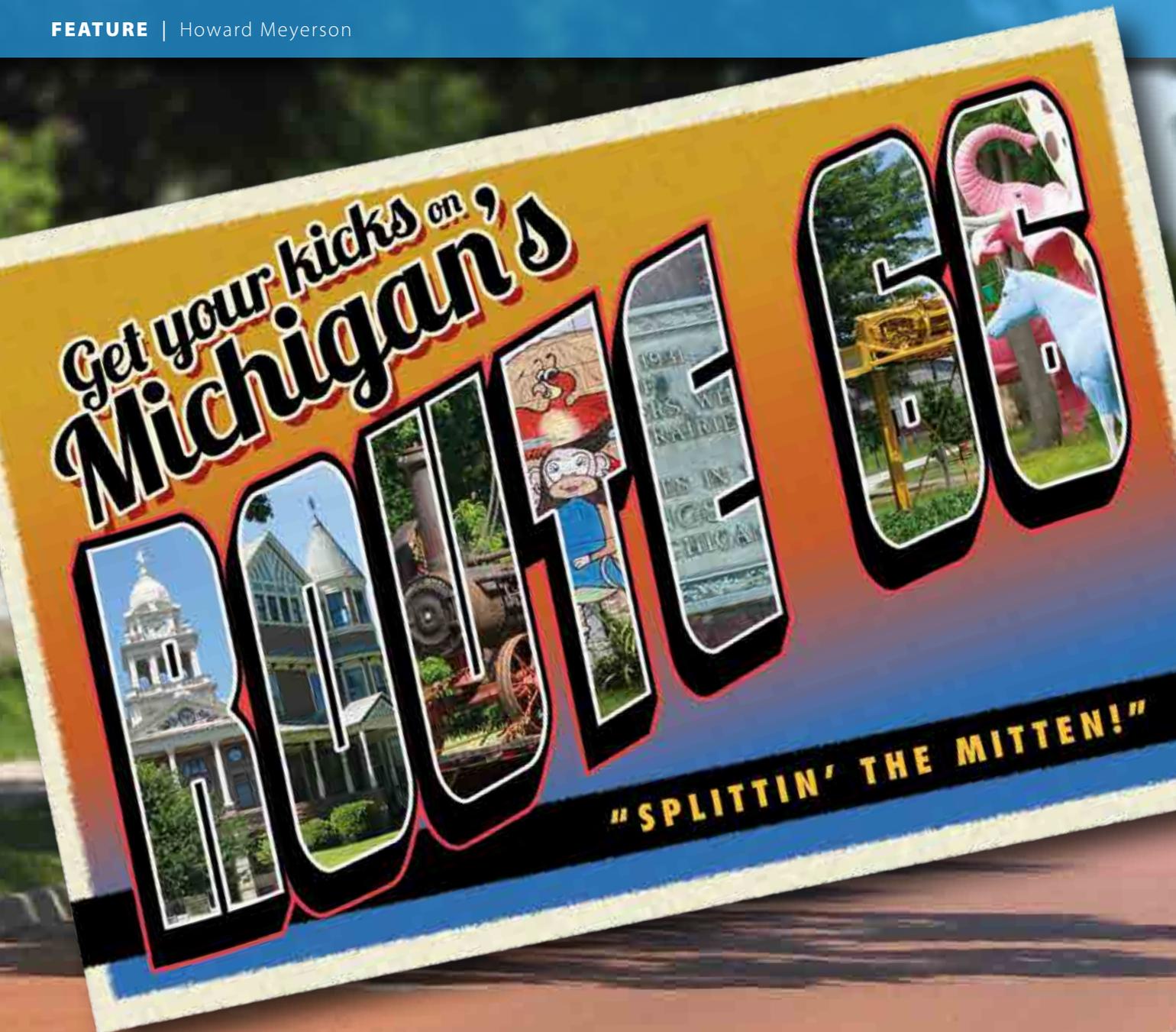
A: Your account balance can be checked anytime on SmartHub or through our automated phone system at 800-492-5989. You will be notified by phone and email when your account has three days of service remaining, based on historical use. You can also request notification based on a specified account balance.

OWN IT participants are strongly encouraged to register for online account access. This opens up the world of information available through our "Billing & Usage Analysis" tool, which offers a variety of tools to monitor and manage energy use, including monthly, daily and even hourly energy usage reports.

Prior to enrollment, you will be invited to meet with a Midwest Energy Cooperative customer care representative who will review the OWN IT Prepaid Metering terms, conditions and agreement.

Q: *How is my daily bill calculated?*

A: Your meter is read every day at midnight. The reading tells us how much electricity you used in the previous 24 hours and your bill is calculated accordingly. The bill includes electricity used for that day, as well as a day's worth of the cooperative's service charge, the OWN IT program fee, and any other credits or charges on your account.

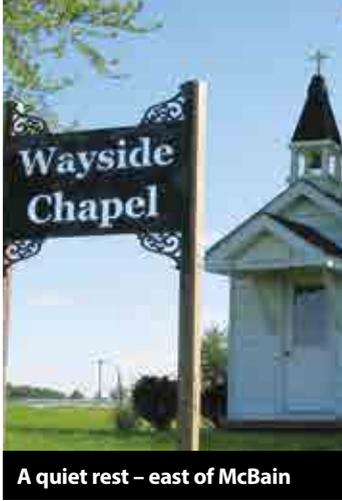


Jazz pianist Nat King Cole immortalized driving the open road with his 1946 hit song, “Route 66,” a swinging rendition about traveling the fabled route from Chicago, Ill., to Los Angeles, Calif. But authors John and Becky Schlatter, think the Michigan highway that bears the same name is just as appealing and has its own quaint charms. To prove it, they take readers for a 237-mile ride from Sturgis to Charlevoix in a new book called “Splittin’ the Mitten: Get Your Kicks on Michigan’s Route 66.”

“To say it’s just as scenic as the route from Chicago to L.A., might be a bit of hyperbole, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder,” notes John Schlatter, a retired corporate communications professional and HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op member. “But when you drive [Michigan’s] Route 66 and see a field of sunflowers in late summer, or cows grazing in a field and modern wind turbines in the distance,



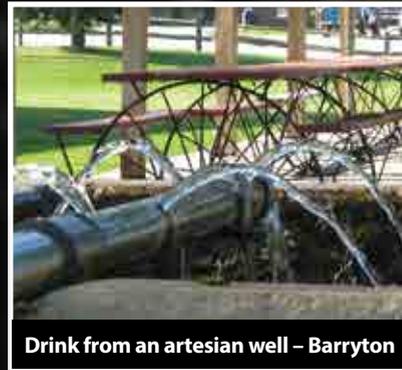
John and Becky Schlatter are the authors of a new book that travels some sites along Michigan's Route 66



A quiet rest – east of McBain



Robinson Scenic Gardens – Kalkaska/Mancelona



Drink from an artesian well – Barryton



Hot Spot Tanning & Hair Salon – Remus



Visiting 'Back to the Bricks' car show – Flint



Photos courtesy of John and Becky Schlatter

or a pretty old church, those are all very scenic in their own way.”

The Schlatters’ book, with 250 photographs, is an account of their trip through our rural heartland. It’s a route full of history, small towns and farm life—the backbone of our mitten state. Theirs is a story of pastures and cows, grange halls where farmers meet, ice cream parlors where families gather, and the overlay of modern times and change.

“We thought this might be a fun project,” shares Becky Schlatter, who refers to herself as a “Michigan girl” and Flint native. “I get excited by stuff like this.”

The Schlatters spent five days touring M-66. Gathering material for their book required driving it twice and three shorter trips to shoot photos. One of Becky’s favorite stops is Mancelona, where a downtown mural depicts the life of author Ernest Hemmingway. Other favorite stops are Ionia’s brick-lined Main Street and Charlevoix’s “two waterfronts” and unique old homes.

“The worst part of the trip was not being able to stop and talk to people at length,” says John, a Mississippi native who retired

from Bechtel Corp in 2012 after years of moving around the country. “If we had, it would have taken three years to get it done.”

John admits he didn’t know much about Michigan until 2007. That’s when the couple bought their Chippewa Lake cabin in Mecosta County. It’s not far from M-66, a route they use to come and go.

“As a kid growing up in the south, all I knew about Michigan was Bo Schembechler, Detroit car factories, and Motown,” John exclaims. “When I got here I was amazed by how rural the state is, which is why we like Route 66.

“I can’t say that there was an ‘aha!’ moment when I knew to write the book, but I am old enough to remember the ‘Route 66’ television show from the 1960s,” he adds. “We saw signs at Barryton saying, ‘Thanks for Visiting’ and ‘Route 66 Keep on Cruising,’ and realized we’re not the only ones who think Route 66 is pretty cool.”



Find “Splittin’ The Mitten: Get Your Kicks on Route 66” on Amazon.com (paperback listed at \$12.47; e-book is \$2.99); at the Old Pioneer Store and Emporium (231-796-2502 or oldpioneerstore.com) in Big Rapids; or order through Charlevoix’s Round Lake Bookstore (231-547-2699).

Save by Upgrading With ENERGY STAR Products

Wish you could replace that old, malfunctioning, energy-wasting refrigerator or dishwasher, but don't know where to start – or if you can afford it? If so, a smart way to search is by looking for appliances with the ENERGY STAR® label. ENERGY STAR products are more energy-efficient than other models, and Midwest Energy's Energy Optimization program offers many rebates to help offset the initial purchase price.

What is ENERGY STAR?

Established over 20 years ago by the U.S. Department of Energy, it is now an international standard for energy-efficient consumer products. The ENERGY STAR label can be found on hundreds of items, including lightbulbs, electronics, major appliances, and even certified homes and buildings – as long as the product or dwelling meets stringent energy efficiency requirements. Over 4.5 billion ENERGY STAR products have been sold in the past 20 years.

To qualify for the ENERGY STAR rating, a product must contribute significant energy savings, deliver features and performance that customers demand, and back up energy savings claims with testing. In short, it is a trusted brand for quality products that use significantly less energy than minimum federal standards require. These products offer the same features you're used to, but can use up to 75 percent less energy than standard models.

Rebates

While ENERGY STAR products often cost a bit more, the initial investment is almost always recouped in the long-term savings. Additionally, rebates available through the Energy Optimization program (see chart) can help offset up-front costs!

Did You Know?

You can buy new ENERGY STAR appliances at whatever store you wish. After your purchase, visit michigan-energy.org to fill out the rebate form, and mail, fax or email it back to the Energy Optimization

ENERGY STAR Product/Appliance	Rebate Amount
Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs	Varies by retailer via in-store mark-down
LED light bulbs	Varies by retailer via in-store mark-down
Ceiling fan	\$15
CFL fixture	\$15
LED downlight kit	\$20
Room air conditioner	\$25
Dehumidifier	\$25
Dishwasher	\$25
Clothes washer	\$25
Clothes dryer	\$25
Refrigerator	\$25
Chest freezer	\$25
TV (21"-50")	\$25
TV (51"+)	\$50

program to receive your check. Please visit michigan-energy.org for information, or call 877-296-4319 with any questions.

Tune In

BIG SCREENS = BIG SAVINGS

Is squinting at a small, fuzzy screen bringing you down? Invest in a new flat screen TV to save your eyes and your wallet! Energy Optimization rebates (up to \$50!) are now available for ENERGY STAR® TVs 21" and larger. And that's not all— your efficient TV will save you energy for years to come.

ENERGY TIP: Use the sleep timer feature to automatically turn off the TV after you fall asleep.

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.

School Grants Available

Midwest Energy Cooperative is now accepting applications for the 2015 Strengthening Schools grant program. In January, grants totaling just over \$30,000 were provided to 22 public schools across the co-op's service territory.

The program makes grants of up to \$2,500 available to public schools for academic/classroom needs and special projects, technology, or specific support for academic clubs and organizations. Any teacher, administrator or school official in a public elementary, middle or high school serving children in the Midwest Energy Cooperative service territory may apply.

"Public schools and teachers are faced with increasingly stringent requirements as they tackle the diverse needs and challenges of today's students and families. The expectations are increasing while public support is decreasing," says Patty Nowlin, Midwest's community

relations director. "We are all impacted by the collective successes and failures of our public school systems, and Midwest Energy Cooperative wants to engage our membership in helping to impact positive change on behalf of the greater community."

Each school district will be limited to one award per school and two awards per district in the annual award cycle. Applications are due Oct. 15, and funds will be awarded in January 2015. Projects using awarded funds will need to be completed and final reports submitted by April 30, 2015. Applications are evaluated and funding

decisions made by a committee of Midwest Energy Cooperative members without knowledge of the school or district requesting funds.

For more information or an application, please visit TeamMidwest.com or contact the public relations office at 800-492-5989 or by email at pr@teammidwest.com.



Midwest Energy Community Development Specialist Patty Clark presents a 2014 Strengthening Schools award to Chris Mansfield, developmental kindergarten teacher at Morenci Elementary.

Adult Scholarships

Countless adults find themselves unemployed and underemployed as a result of corporate downsizing and economic conditions, and have pursued new career opportunities as a way to support their lives and families. For many, that has required further training and education.

Midwest Energy Cooperative offers a \$1,000 scholarship to support an adult returning to school. Adults age 21 years and older who receive monthly electric service from Midwest Energy Cooperative, and whose primary residence is in Midwest's service area, may apply for the award. The scholarship may be used for tuition, fees and/or book expenses and will be paid directly to the college or university.

Applicants must be enrolled for a minimum of 6 credit hours at a community college, a four-year university or an accredited trade school. Two letters of recommendation from non-family members are required. Applications and all pertinent information must be postmarked by May 16, 2014, for the fall semester.

The application is available to download and print or submit online at TeamMidwest.com.

Protect Your Equipment Against Power Surges

Power surges cause millions of dollars in damage each year to TVs, computers, stereos, or anything plugged into an outlet. Here are some keys to choosing the best surge protection.

"A surge is a boost in the electrical charge over a power line," explains Joe McElroy, safety director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. "This can be caused by lightning, but it's more commonly caused by motor-driven electrical devices, such as air conditioners and refrigerators, that require a lot of energy for starting and stopping compressors. Surges can also be caused by faulty wiring."

Frequent, small power surges shorten the life of appliances and electronics, and come in all shapes and sizes. "The most extreme is a lightning strike, because it can destroy equipment and sometimes set your house on fire, but less severe ones are rooted in many different causes," adds Alan Shedd, residen-

tial/commercial energy programs director for Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, the national brand for America's electric co-ops. Surge severity depends on the voltage, current, and how long the event lasts. Most surges are very short, but can happen through any wire connected to your equipment.

A surge protection device mounted at the main electrical panel, or at your meter base, protects equipment from surges coming through entry ports such as outside electric, telephone, and cable TV or satellite dish lines.

Point-of-use devices do not suppress or arrest a surge, but divert it to the ground. They're made to protect sensitive electronics, like a computer, and resemble a regular plug strip. But don't assume your plug strip offers surge protection unless it specifically says so. "My computer is plugged into an uninterruptible power supply with surge protection," Shedd notes. Installing special surge protection electrical outlets can also help, especially



near places like kitchen countertops.

The best protection is two-tiered. A service entrance device reduces surges to a level that protects large appliances (stove or clothes dryer), while point-of-use protectors defend sensitive electronics.

Be cautious when shopping for protection devices, as some claim to save energy, but this is generally false, Shedd says. "Surge protection is a valuable tool for protecting your home or business, but not for saving energy."

Got Toast? Trenary Toast is a Beloved Treat



“My grandmother always had Trenary Toast in her house - my brothers and sisters and I grew up on it,” said the woman on the phone, as she ordered bags of the toast for her brother and sister-in-law’s 70th wedding anniversary. As she hangs up the phone, Maureen Webber, owner of the Trenary Home Bakery, laughs and says, “I hear these stories from people all the time.” And, even though Webber bought the shop back in 2011, the U.P. native still loves being what she calls the “new face” behind Trenary Toast, Inc.

The bakery, located just moments off U.S.-41 on M-67 in Trenary, specializes in “from scratch” traditional Finnish breads from original family recipes passed down over the last century. Old Country Rye, a dense Scandinavian bread, is especially popular.

Their best seller, however, is the iconic Trenary Toast, which is distributed regionally and has been shipped to every state. Trenary Toast starts out as a sweet bread which is baked, sliced, coated, then baked again.

“That’s what gives it that famous ‘crunch’ and dunk-a-bility,” Maureen explains. “Trenary Toast is unique because we’re the only toast that has the cinnamon sugar on the top—we hand-coat it.”

Next door to the bakery is the Trenary Toast Café, which serves breakfast sandwiches, subs, pizza bread, coffee, and, in the summer, hand-dipped Jilbert’s ice cream. Their giant cinnamon rolls and cinnamon bread are available exclusively in the Café. Webber also stocks local gift items, such as maple syrup, “Yooper” shirts, sweatshirts, and Saykly’s candy, which is homemade in Escanaba, Mich.

“Last summer, a lady came from Washington State to see where Trenary Toast was made because it was on her bucket list,” Maureen smiles. “How great is that?”

— Linda Sirois



Have A Story Idea? *Michigan Country Lines* is always looking for unique stories about Michigan people, places and things. If you have a story idea for us to consider, please email gknudtson@meca.coop with a short paragraph describing the story and why you think Michiganders would like to read about it. Include your name, address, and note which electric co-op you belong to.

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