

Midwest Energy Cooperative

October 2014

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

MIXING IT UP AT
*Short's
Brewing*

Plus!

4 Electric Service
Affordability,
Reliability At Stake

5 Online And Mobile
Power Tools

8 Living Our Community
Value Pledge



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IN THIS ISSUE



6 HOME COOKING
Our Readers' Best Original Recipes
Christin McKamey & Our Readers



7 OUR ENERGY
When Do Appliance Upgrades Make Sense?
James Dulle



10 FEATURE
Mixing It Up At Short's Brewing Company
Howard Meyerson



13 SAFETY
Teaching Kids Electrical Safety



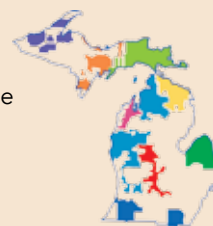
14 READERS' PAGE
Co-op Careers: There May Be A Job For You

ON THE COVER*

Joe Short is the founder of Short's Brewing Company, in Bellaire, MI, and likens brewing to being a chef. The beers he mixes up are creative in both their ingredients—from spruce tips to marshmallows—and names, like "Dr. Zeus" and "Stache Bender," whose artsy label depicts his mustachio.

Photo Courtesy—Michael Murphy IV Photography

**Some co-op editions have a different cover.*



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



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Robert Hance

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Affordability, Reliability at Stake With Proposed 'Clean Power Plan'



Robert Hance
President/CEO

I regularly scan headlines from different sources to keep my finger on the pulse of information impacting our industry and members. One particular headline recently intrigued me enough to click into the article: “Top 10 Most Expensive States for Electricity.”

The bad news is that Michigan made the Top 10 at an average cost of 15.72 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). The good news is we’re not Hawaii at an average cost of 37 cents/kWh. That translates to monthly bills of \$334 and annual costs over \$4,000

for the average residential user.

The difference is fuel source. The Islands rely on expensive oil imports to fuel electricity generation. For the majority of us living in the lower 48, coal has reliably and affordably fueled our generation for decades.

But don’t get too excited.

On June 2, the EPA released a proposed rule called the “Clean Power Plan.” It’s under the Clean Air Act, which will require carbon dioxide emissions reductions from existing power plants in 49 states. We’ve worked closely with our generation partner and national association to digest this monster proposal, all 1,600-plus pages, and its impact on the 900+ electric co-ops and their member-owners.

This isn’t the final version, and for that we’re thankful. In its current form, it will result in higher electricity costs, power plant closures and resulting job losses, challenges to the electric grid’s reliability, and stranded assets for co-ops that, in many cases, will have to be paid for by co-op member-owners.

Whatever the final form, this will become our nation’s electricity policy. Public hearings were held in July, and the end of the 120-day public comment period is Oct. 16. The EPA intends to issue a final rule in June 2015, and states will have one year to develop implementation plans.

Obviously, much has been debated and written about the legality, feasibility and complexity of this proposal. Sadly, but not surprisingly, what has been lost in the debate is the impact on people, which could be devastating.

Once again, we are at a critical crossroads. As an industry, we have never suggested that the environmental impact should be ignored; that would also be devastating. What we suggest is that a balanced approach is critical; an approach that takes reliability, affordability and the rate-payer into consideration. All of that is in jeopardy under the current EPA proposal.

I’m not an alarmist, but it’s time for all of us to be deeply concerned about the emerging national energy policy and voice our concerns to the EPA. Our window of opportunity to affect change in the proposed policy is closing, so please visit Action.coop to send a message to the EPA that urges a balanced approach. ■



Applications Available for Winter Semester Adult Scholarship

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, and whose primary residence is in our 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 Oct. 24, 2014, for the winter semester award.

Visit TeamMidwest.com for an application to download and print or submit online. ■

Nursing Student Awarded Fall Scholarship



Katelyn Ronk was awarded the Midwest scholarship for the fall semester. She works as a nurse aid at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo while attending a full-time nursing program. "I take pride in the care I provide to my patients at Bronson, and am excited to be entering into a career where I can make a difference. My attitude is always positive, even with my financial offset."

Outside of work and school Katelyn volunteers at first aid tents at local events in the Paw Paw area. She previously coached volleyball at Paw Paw Middle School and loved giving back by mentoring the young girls.

"Helping others that can never repay you is the best feeling in the world!"



Online, Mobile Power Tools Help You Manage Your Account

When you've got a job to do, you need the right tools. As your energy provider and partner, Midwest Energy Cooperative offers a great set of Power Tools to help you manage your account and service experience. It provides the tools you need, instantly, from the comfort and convenience of your computer or mobile device.

SmartHub® is our online and mobile platform—the ultimate power tool for convenient account access and management. It provides free, safe and secure access and two-way communication with Midwest. A quick, one-time registration at Teammidwest.com is required for first-time users.

Mobile users can download the free SmartHub app from iTunes or Google play to begin using one of the many tools available. Computer users can sign up online. Once registered, just return to the TeamMidwest website and click the "Access my account" icon to be directed to the SmartHub online customer self-service site.

Following are a few of the specific ways you can use SmartHub.

- **Outage Reporting:** Quickly report a service interruption online without waiting for the next available phone representative. From the online self-service site, you can also sign up to receive outage-related notifications by email or text, and personalize your notification experience to get what you need.
- **Notifications:** Sign up to receive select notifications about your account by text or email, including outage-related information!
- **Bill & Pay:** Quickly view your current account balance and due date, make a payment, manage recurring payments, and modify payment methods. You can also check your account history right from your mobile device.
- **Contact Midwest:** Got a question or concern? We're just a quick click away!
- **Service Status:** Report a service issue or find out if there are any known issues related to your account.
- **My Usage:** Access detailed information to better understand and manage your energy use. ■

KITCHEN CREATIVITY

Looking to try something new? Co-op cooks share their custom creations.

Artichoke & Spinach Dip



2 8-oz. pkgs. light cream cheese
8 oz. pkg. light sour cream
1 c. parmesan cheese
2 small cans artichokes, diced
10 oz. pkg. frozen spinach
2 T. olive oil
1 T. marjoram flakes
½ T. red pepper flakes (dry)

Mix all ingredients and put into a 2 qt. crock pot on low. Stir often as it heats. Serve with tortilla chips.

Paula Miles, Lawton

Fiesta Lasagna (pictured)

1 lb. burger, browned	8 oz. sour cream
1 can corn	8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 can black beans	1 pkg. lasagna noodles,
1 16-oz. can tomato sauce	tortillas or zucchini
1 can diced tomatoes	1 egg, lightly beaten
1 16-oz. can salsa	8 oz. shredded
1 small can sliced black olives	mozzarella cheese
1 envelope taco seasoning	16 oz. shredded cheddar cheese
3 T. fresh cilantro	Shredded lettuce

Brown burger. Add corn, black beans, tomatoes and tomato sauce, salsa, olives, taco seasoning and cilantro. Stir. In another bowl, mix together sour cream, egg, mozzarella, and cream cheese. Layer like lasagna in a 9"x13" pan, ending with cheddar cheese on top. Bake 30 minutes at 375°. Take out of oven, and add lettuce. Set for 10 minutes. Serve with sour cream.

Patsy Miller, Pickford

Golden Honey Glazed Chicken

3 ½ to 4 lbs. chicken, cut up 3 T. honey
½ c. Worcestershire®

Rinse chicken and pat dry. Place in a shallow pan, lined with foil. Mix Worcestershire® with honey. Baste chicken. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes, basting often.

Peggy Krentz, Alpena

Chocolate Mousse Cheesecake



1½ c. chocolate wafer crumbs, crushed
⅓ c. melted butter
¾ c. sugar, divided
16 oz. cream cheese
1 t. vanilla
3 eggs, unbeaten
2 squares dark baking chocolate, melted

Chocolate Mousse Topping:

½ c. butter	1 square dark baking chocolate, melted
8 oz. cream cheese, softened	1 c. heavy cream, whipped
¾ c. sugar	
1 t. vanilla	

Grease a 9" cheesecake pan. Mix crumbs with butter and ¼ c. sugar until crumbly; pack firmly onto bottom and up sides of pan. On low speed of mixer, beat cheese until smooth and fluffy. Gradually add vanilla, ½ c. sugar, eggs and melted chocolate, continuing to beat until creamy. Pour over crumb crust in pan. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes. Cool to room temperature. For mousse topping, cream butter and cheese together until fluffy; add sugar gradually, mixing well. Add melted chocolate and vanilla, and beat at high speed until fluffy. Fold in whipped cream; spread over chocolate cheesecake and chill at least 2 hours. Serves 10–12.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"Ethnic"** recipes by **Oct. 10** and your favorite **"Sandwiches"** recipes by **Nov. 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)!

Find more of our readers' recipes at countrylines.com

When Do Appliance Upgrades Make Sense?

For major appliances, comparing the EnergyGuide label is the best way to find the cost of using them. Based on the purchase price, you can calculate which one provides the best return.

The most efficient one is not always the best buy from a payback standpoint, but there are other factors to consider. Some people are concerned about the environmental impact of appliances, so they are willing to spend extra for the most efficient models. Choosing an Energy Star® model is a good choice.

To do a proper payback analysis, you must determine the annual operating cost of using an appliance. You may have the old EnergyGuide label, or you may find it on the internet. But remember, these are only averages. If you are already energy conscious, your operating costs are likely on the low side, so savings from installing a new appliance will be lower than Guide figures.

The easiest way to calculate this cost is to download the “Save Energy, Save Money” app from TogetherWeSave.com, which offers several home appliance calculators to help compare the cost of different appliances sizes, styles and ages, and a “Home Tour” to learn about saving energy.

Another way is to find the wattage rating on the nameplate. Divide it by 1,000 and multiply the result by your \$/kwh electric rate to get the operating cost-per-hour. If the nameplate lists amperage, multiply it by 120 to figure the watts. For appliances with a thermostat, reduce the operating cost by about 50 percent.

The rate of efficiency improvements and meaningful new features in major appliances is slowing, so don't wait if you really need a new one. An exception is TVs, as their prices are constantly dropping, and features and quality improving.

In general though, keep older appliances about 10 years, or until they need expensive repairs. If you use them as seldom and as efficiently as possible, they will not cost a lot more to use than a newer one. Even for a refrigerator, which runs constantly, your usage habits can really influence electricity consumption.

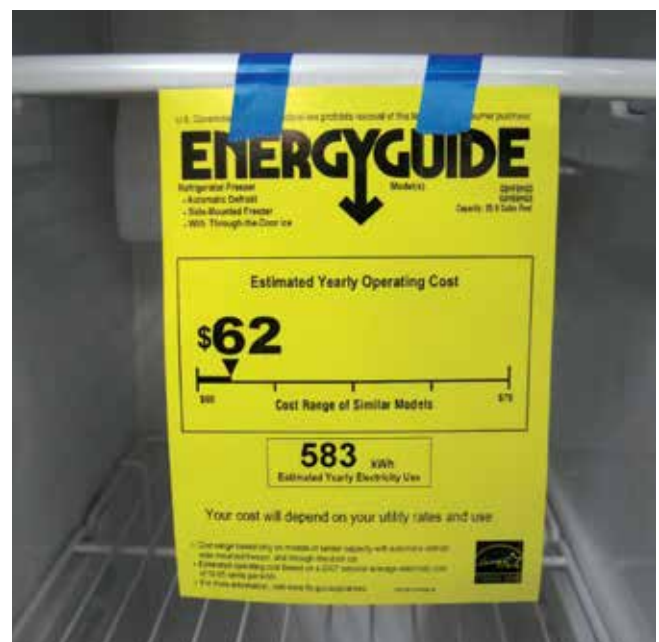
If you have a large family and do much laundry, that cost includes the water cost, and heating it. Upgrading your water heater, to perhaps a heat pump model, will reduce your dishwashing, bathing *and* laundry costs.

New front-loading washers are more energy efficient than top-loaders since they require less heated water (and less detergent). They also have a faster spin cycle, which extracts more water, so the dryer runs less.

For a new dishwasher, make sure it has a built-in water “pre-heater.” This allows you to set your water heater temperature lower without sacrificing the cleaning power of hotter water. Select a model with many cycles, so you can target the cycle length to each load's requirements.

Just like a house, a smaller refrigerator has less interior space to cool, so uses less electricity. Don't go to extremes on the small size, though. If you have to keep the door open to hunt for what you want, more energy is wasted than saved. Energy Star refrigerators use about one-half the energy of 10-year old models.

In new ranges, the energy efficiency of various models doesn't vary much. Convection ovens bake faster, so they use less electricity for some foods. Induction units lose less heat to the room air, so electricity use is somewhat less. The best way to save is to use the microwave or other small countertop appliances whenever possible. ■



Photos—James Dulley



Midwest in the Community



Supermarket Sweep

A lot of people and businesses support local food pantries with traditional donation drives, but Supermarket Sweep, a signature and popular annual event facilitated by Midwest Energy and hosted by Country Market in Adrian, takes the traditional effort to crazy new levels.

Supermarket Sweep is a spirited and competitive “food raiser” that pits team against team for a five minute sweep of the store to gather grocery items for a beneficiary food pantry. The beneficiary of the 2014 event was Damascus Road, a ministry program that helps ex-offenders, ex-addicted and homeless persons by providing guidance and help with necessities such as food, clothing and work.

The Buzz 102.5 and By Nature (photo 1) display their winning form as they navigated the aisles to take top honors in the 2014 event. Second and third place honors went to YMCA of Lenawee County and TLC Community Credit Union. Goodwill of Southeastern Michigan won the People’s Choice Award for the best decorated cart with their Peeps theme (photo 2) and Consumer’s Energy was recognized with the “Crappy Wheel Award” as the team collecting the fewest items on the shopping list. In total, 14 teams competed, generating \$1700 in cash and groceries for the pantry.



RACK Attacks

We came. We saw. We RACKed! The popular RACK Attack (Random Acts of Community Kindness) returned in 2014 as teams of Midwest employees were deployed to show kindness to various organizations, businesses and people around our service territory. On one stop, Tanya Yonker (left) and Gaby Hall organized and stored toiletries and cleaning supplies donated to a pantry program in Lawrence (photo 3). On another day the Adrian team of Pam Myers (left), Diane Wilkins and Larry Hernandez filled backpacks that were later delivered to a local preschool program (photo 4). At every stop, recipients were encouraged to pay it forward and deliver their own random act of kindness to an unsuspecting stranger.



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



5

Habitat Build

Midwest Energy provided a pizza lunch to hungry volunteers working on a Habitat for Humanity “framing blitz” in August (photo 5). Local volunteers with framing or building trade experience gathered over three days to frame a new home at the corner of First and Pearl Streets in Cassopolis for a local woman and her three children. Billy Meggs (black shirt), Midwest Propane operations supervisor and Habitat Board member, served as the volunteer Construction Coordinator for this project and assisted with the build (photo 6).



6



7

Ice Bucket Challenge

The Midwest Energy Cooperative family is always up to taking, and issuing, a good challenge to impact positive change. On a warm Friday afternoon in August, 41 employees gathered in the Cassopolis headquarters parking lot for a company ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. The cooperative and many of its employees made a donation to the ALS Association in honor of co-op members who have experienced the devastating impact of ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease).

Roger Bowser, manager of energy programs and services, represented the Midwest employee family in introducing the challenge. He shared the story of his uncle's struggle with ALS, and how he watched his dad do everything possible to help him. “At the time I remember feeling very helpless, but today we all help make a difference.” ■

FEATURE

HOWARD MEYERSON

SHORT'S BREWING COMPANY

MIXING IT UP AT

*Short's
Brewing*



Joe Short thinks of beer brewing as a “noble profession”—one rooted in ancient history. The drink of royalty and the common man, beer and pubs have long brought people together.

“Beer has a fantastic history,” exclaims Short, the 35-year-old, mustachioed CEO and founder of Short’s Brewing Company, one of Michigan’s leading craft beer companies. “It’s a story that has been left out of most history books. Pubs have been meeting houses and where court has been held; their role has shaped our culture.”

Short’s Brewing now shapes the culture of Bellaire, a scenic northern village near Torch Lake. Its story begins with a 22-year-old Joe Short, a young man with a passion for brewing inventive beers and the courage to convert a 120-year-old hardware store into a brewhouse and restaurant, later building a production facility in Elk Rapids, all of which has made Bellaire a destination for craft beer lovers.

The company celebrated its 10th anniversary in April, and is the third largest craft beer producer in the state. Michigan’s beer sector generates over 64,000 jobs, ranking the state 10th nationally in related jobs, notes the National Beer Wholesalers Association and the Beer Institute. Beer distribution alone generates 5,000 jobs and \$1.9 billion in economic activity.

“Bells and Founders are number one and two in Michigan for beer sales, but they distribute to other states,” notes Short, who lives in Elk Rapids with his wife, Leah, and their two young sons. “We produced 193 barrels our first year, 23,000 barrels in 2013, and we will do 34,000 to 38,000 barrels this year.”

Short’s beers are known for unusual ingredients, from spruce tips to marshmallows, coffee and chocolate, or fruits and spices. It is distributed only in Michigan, an approach that allows Short and his staff to be creative and develop 30 to 40 different beers each year. National distribution, he says, would require narrowing the selection, a distasteful option for the Kalkaska County native who likens brewing to being a chef.

“It’s a form of cooking with limitless creative potential,” offers Short, who brewed his first batch at 19 years old



while living at his mother’s rural Rapid City home, where he grew up. It was an unsuccessful experiment, but it would lead him to learn more.

“That first batch was really bad,” Short says. “It was brown ale. But, I became a proficient home brewer and brewed a lot of beer while in college.”

Short got his first professional job brewing beer at age 21, while working at the former Traverse Brewing Company in Elk Rapids. That led to brewing for other Michigan companies and eventually back to the region where he grew up and longed to settle.

“I realized once I went to school (at Western Michigan University) that I wasn’t a city type. I need the woods and water, and Torch Lake is one of the most beautiful places you can live [near],” Short says.

His company makes over 200 beers (visit shortsbrewing.com). Most have wacky, clever names like Dirty Sturks, a double imperial stout, and Dr. Zeus, an India pale ale. Bellaire Brown is named for its home town. The brewery offers two “stache” beers as well, Hopstache and Stache Bender—a double-strength recipe. Both have bold citrus flavors and artsy labels depicting Short’s trademark mustache.

“The names for our beers come from all the people in the company,” Short explains. “Some refer to music or food or are experience-related. ‘Night Wheeler’ (a dark black lager) comes from when we go wakeboarding at midnight when the moon is out.

“We’re the Willy Wonka of the beer world. If you can dream it, there is a good chance we can make it.” ■

Preferred Contractors Meet Cooperative Quality Standards



Choosing qualified and reputable contractors can be difficult. As a service to our members, we have compiled a list of Midwest Energy Cooperative preferred heating and cooling contractors. As part of the qualification process, we researched, interviewed and checked references on a regional pool of contractors, and included on our final list only those that we feel confident will provide the level of service that you have come to know and expect from your cooperative.

Please feel free to contact any of these contractors with confidence if you are interested in more information about their services.

American Performance Heating & Cooling

47317 Destiny Avenue
Paw Paw, MI 49079
877-865-8801 or 269-720-0803
performancegeothermal.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Bartholomew Heating & Cooling, Inc.

3025 Emerald Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
269-381-9045
TotalComfortPros.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal; home performance contractor

Bel-Aire Heating & Air Conditioning

781 Lenox Road
Portage, MI 49024
888-Bel-Aire (235-2473)
belaire.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Comfort One Heating & Cooling

200 5th Street
Michigan Center, MI 49254
517-764-1500
or
7250 West US Hwy 223
Adrian, MI 49221
517-263-3040
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Crystal Valley Comfort

800 S. CR 37
Middlebury, IN 46540
574-825-2611 or 269-273-6975
crystalvalleycomfort.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Haven Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.

10420 M-140, Suite 12
South Haven, MI 49090
269-637-1400
havenheating.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

HIS Servant Heating & Cooling, Inc.

14738 Packard Road
Hudson, MI 49247
888-789-9339 or 517-286-6929
hisservantheatingandcooling.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems

Shoemaker Heating & Plumbing

5310 US Hwy 223
Palmyra, MI 49268
517-263-9940
yourbryantman.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal & generators

Service First LLC

5605 Bent Oak Hwy
Adrian, MI 49221
517-263-9194
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Sun Services Inc.

26 Longmeadow Lane
Niles, MI 49120
269-684-3898
sunservices.us
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

The Furnace Guy Heating & Cooling

6053 S. 4th Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-544-0904 or 269-273-5241
thefurnaceguyinc.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Van Kal Heating and Cooling

647 N. State Street
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whitcherplumbing.com
Sales & service of all types of heating & cooling systems, including geothermal

Teach Kids Well About Electrical Safety

We live surrounded by electricity, but forget how dangerous it can be. Many related fires, injuries and electrocutions can be prevented when we practice electrical safety, especially with kids.

Throughout the year, Midwest Energy lineworkers use a portable display to teach school children about electrical safety, but as your child's most important teacher, you can help reinforce these lessons.

At an early age, teach your kids about the physical dangers of electrical components and how to handle electrical plugs, outlets, switches and other devices. Talking to them about electricity should include fun activities and basic facts—what electricity is, the need to respect it, and how to use it efficiently as they study, work and play.

Getting kids interested in these lessons isn't easy, however what they learn today can be a lifesaver if they encounter potential hazards, like downed power lines, play hide-and-seek behind metal electrical boxes, or try to climb a utility pole.

Some of the best teachable moments can occur around your home. Show kids how plugs work, and let them know that even if they are curious about the slits of an electrical outlet, *nothing* else should be placed inside. Each year about 2,400 kids go to the emergency room with injuries caused by inserting paper clips, pens, screws,



nails, forks, hair pins, coins and more, into electrical outlets. That's about seven kids daily who are injured from electric shock or burns.

Our reliance on gadgets has also left families at risk when they overcrowd outlets, use frayed wires, place devices near liquids, or leave electronics on for long periods. Some of the same tips can protect both kids and adults, so we should all set good examples for kids.

Supplement at-home lessons with resources, too. The Electrical Safety Foundation International (esfi.org) and Touchstone Energy (click "Kids Energy Zone" at touchstoneenergy.com) are among many national groups offering free kits, videos and interactive online tools that make practicing electrical safety fun. As your kids grow, keep teaching them about the power of electricity and how to use it safely. ■

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**WITHIN
REACH**

Jobs Are Opening in the ELECTRIC CO-OP NETWORK

October is **National Cooperative Month**, and this year, *Michigan Country Lines* is showcasing careers at electric co-ops. Read on to learn how these jobs vary and touch every aspect of business—and how you can find yourself in one of them.

The men and women who climb poles to work on power lines are the most visible electric utility employees, but it takes many others to keep the power flowing. From accounting to communications, engineering, human resources, and customer/member service, job opportunities are numerous and will increase as Baby Boomers retire in waves.

By 2017, 55 percent of electric co-op CEOs will be eligible for retirement, and that jumps to 75 percent in 10 years. Workers in other categories are also leaving in the next five years: 37 percent—senior managers, 31 percent—supervisors, 26 percent—system operations staff, 24 percent—engineers, 16 percent—skilled trades (lineworkers, equipment operators), 14 percent—information technology (IT).

This means new positions may be opening at a co-op near you. Co-ops are generally considered great places to work because people are valued over profits. Electric co-ops, specifically, are nonprofit businesses, which means they have to generate money in order to operate and meet financial lending requirements, but any extra revenue above expenses is returned to their member-owners as patronage “capital credits.”

It's common for employees to stay with a co-op (and in this industry) for 30 or 40 years because of its stability and good benefit offerings. Co-op employees often wear many hats within a single job description, and this gives them a real opportunity to build long-lasting relationships within the co-op and its network.

Preparing for the Tide to Turn

Retirements have already begun in earnest, and electric co-ops are planning to ensure that new employees are equipped to offer top-notch service. Decades of knowledge can't be replaced, but training provides a solid foundation.

To that end, training programs for lineworkers and other employees sponsored by or partnered with electric co-ops have popped up nationwide. In Michigan, there are at least six line technician programs. This means workers get proper training and start their new careers on solid footing, and co-ops get employees with a head start. And, it's one more venue for technical job training. The Michigan Electric Cooperative Association also offers in-state training for electric co-op employees.



It's also common to see new employees who spent time interning at their local electric co-op.

Electric Co-ops By the Numbers

The unique aspect about U.S. electric co-ops is that each one is an independent business, but they're all connected to a vast network serving 42 million people in 47 states. They serve 19 million businesses, homes, schools, churches, farms and other establishments in 2,500 of America's 3,141 counties. This means 900 electric co-ops nationwide employ 70,000 workers.

Much more goes on at these co-ops than just keeping the system running. Member services employees take phone calls and bill payments, and offer programs and services, such as home energy audits and scholarships for high school grads. Staking technicians and engineers plot where new power lines will be built, while purchasing employees keep equipment inventory and negotiate contracts. And, IT professionals are increasingly part of the landscape, as more digital technologies are integrated.

How to Find Co-op Jobs

Interested in joining the co-op family? National electric co-op career opportunities are available at TouchstoneEnergy.jobs, at cooperative.com, or by visiting Michigan co-op websites at countrylines.com and clicking on “Your Co-op” and choosing a co-op's name. ■

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