

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



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A Barrel Of Fun:

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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*

Zeak DeWyse is a builder and electric co-op member who has started a new business making portable, barrel saunas. Called the U.P. Sauna Company, their cedar saunas are suitable for most any landscape, but are also proving to be a good fundraising draw for charitable causes.

Photo—Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



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Robert Hance

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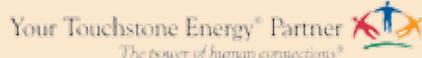
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The Broadband Revolution is Underway



Robert Hance
 President/CEO

Later this month, I enter a new decade of life—this baby boomer is on the countdown to 60! At this age it's fun to see life through the lenses of little people, specifically my grandchildren. They've never seen things like wall-mount phones, typewriters or film cameras. They cut their teeth while playing with apps on their parents' smart devices and can easily navigate the functions on the remote controls sprinkled around their homes. My, how things have changed!

Nearly 80 years ago, electricity was unavailable in many parts of America because it was not financially lucrative for the incumbent providers to build in the rural space. But someone cast a vision, born of the reality that geography should not define access to essential services, and from that the electric cooperative movement was born.

Today's essential service is broadband internet. It's as critical as electricity in our technology-driven world. Just ask your grandkids! The way we communicate, conduct business, learn and have fun are all largely driven by broadband-powered technology. Yet, many still live without access for the same reason that electricity eluded folks for so long.

Team Midwest is changing that, at least in our little corner of the world.

For several years we have worked with committed partners to change national policy so that electric co-ops could access available dollars to deliver a viable broadband option in the rural space. It has been a David and Goliath battle, and as of this writing we haven't fully defeated the giant. But our little, persistent voices have opened opportunities for funds never previously imagined.

Over 2014, we spent much time with our new best friends at the Federal Communications Commission. While advocating in Washington, we launched a small-scale fiber-to-the-premise project in southwest Michigan and over the course of the year, lit up over 400 homes and businesses.

We're not stopping there. Your board of directors has authorized a five-year build-out of our entire southwest Michigan service area. It's a game-changer for the rural communities we serve, and provides brand new opportunities that will help our communities grow and thrive economically.

"When will I have service?" is the \$64,000 question, and we simply can't answer that yet because there are so many moving parts. Right now, we're focused on the time- and labor-intensive process of building the massive infrastructure. During this first quarter, we will finalize and announce the 2015 build, and subsequent construction plans will be shared.

There's a rural broadband revolution underway, and your co-op is leading the charge. Stay tuned for more information! ■

What's On Your Mind?

Sign up today for your co-op's member dinner-and-dialog.

Want to know how energy regulation will impact your bill? Interested in our ongoing efforts to deliver a viable broadband solution to our members? Eager for more information about what we're doing to help you manage energy costs and improve your service experience?

In February and March we will host our annual member dinner and dialog events across our service territory. Six regional meetings are held across southwest Michigan, and two in southeast Michigan. We pick up the dinner tab for you and your guest, asking in return for your active participation in what we hope is a meaningful and productive two-way conversation about what's going on at Midwest.

Members are invited by random selection from our system, and invitations are mailed in late January. The number of attendees is limited based on the size of the venue, and in an effort to promote a meaningful and



productive exchange. If you are interested in attending one of the meetings, please contact Nicole Barfell at 269-445-1112 or sign up at TeamMidwest.com and we will mail you an invitation. If invitations have already been mailed, we will add you to our preferred waiting list and contact you if we have openings at any of the meetings. ■

Weather, Holidays Impact January Energy Bills

Many people wonder why January electric bills reflect higher energy use with no real changes in their homes. It's Mother Nature and Santa Claus working in cahoots!

Colder weather and fewer daylight hours mean higher demand for electricity, including more usage for lighting, heating and general indoor activities. Adding to that is the extra load used over the holidays. Many of us had festive light displays inside and out. We also cooked more, entertained guests and generally spent more time at home using all of the wonderful appliances, gadgets and toys that are powered by electricity. All of this impacts your energy use and is reflected on your January electric bill.



What you'll also see if you look closely at your January bill is a slight decrease in the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA).

Power supply, or the actual cost of generating and transmitting the power used, comprises about 60 percent of a typical residential bill. Midwest does not generate electricity; we are essentially a transportation company. Electricity is generated and delivered to our substations by other providers, and we then transport it across our distribution system to your home or business. We collect power supply costs via your monthly bill, and then turn around and pay the money back out to our power supply partners.

Power supply costs are represented in two lines on your bill: the Energy Charge and the PCA. The Energy Charge is based on the most current rate filing with the Michigan Public Service Commission. The PCA is the difference between the energy charge and what we actually expect to pay based on a lot of projections and assumptions from our power supply partner. It's a combination of art and science.

The 2015 PCA is \$.00540/kWh, down from \$.00596/kWh in 2014. It won't make a huge dent in anyone's electric bill, and frankly most won't even notice. But as your energy cooperative, we strive to do the right thing and work hard to help you manage energy consumption and costs, and are happy to pass along any opportunities for savings that we can. Happy New Year! ■

EATING ETHNIC

Experience distant lands with these flavorful dishes.

Moroccan Tagine in Crockpot *(pictured)*

Olive oil	1 T. honey
6–8 pieces bone-in or boneless pork or chicken	1 cinnamon stick
McCormick® Moroccan Seasoning	$\frac{2}{3}$ c. dried apricots, chopped
$2\frac{1}{2}$ c. chopped onions	2 15-oz. cans chickpeas
$\frac{1}{4}$ c. finely chopped garlic	$\frac{1}{4}$ c. cilantro leaves (optional)
1 c. unsalted stock (chicken, pork or vegetable)	Lemon wedges (optional)

Heat a large skillet on medium-high heat. Add olive oil to pan; swirl to coat. Sprinkle meat with Moroccan seasoning. Add meat to pan and cook 5 minutes until well-browned. Remove from pan and let rest (do not brown the other side). Add extra olive oil if needed, onions and garlic. Sauté for 4 minutes. Add more Moroccan seasoning to taste, cook another minute stirring constantly to loosen browned bits. Add stock, honey and cinnamon stick; bring to a simmer. Carefully pour mixture into crockpot. Stir in apricots and chickpeas. Arrange meat so the browned side is on top of the chickpea mixture. Cover; cook on low for 7 hours. If desired, garnish with cilantro and lemon wedges. Serves great alongside couscous, quinoa or rice.

Leann Butler, Wolverine

Cream Cheese Kieflies

1 c. real butter	1 egg yolk
8-ozs. cream cheese	$2\frac{1}{2}$ c. flour

Filling:

2 c. nuts (pecans), ground fine	$\frac{1}{2}$ c. honey
1 egg white, beaten stiff	$1\frac{1}{2}$ c. powdered sugar

Mix all ingredients and shape into teaspoon-size balls. Refrigerate overnight. Take out about 5 from fridge at a time. Roll out until paper thin. Fill each pastry with 1 teaspoon of filling. Roll like a candy kiss and pinch each end. Place on ungreased cookie sheet and bake at 400° until brown.

Barbara Kedik, Dowagiac

Congratulations

to Patsy Castagne-Miller of Pickford. Her name was drawn from all readers whose recipes we printed in 2014 and *Country Lines* magazine will pay her January electric bill (up to \$200) as a prize.



Patsy and her family have been Cloverland Electric Cooperative members for nine years. Besides cooking and creating, she loves the outdoors, and her other hobbies are growing flowers and vegetables. "I love to try new recipes all the time," she says. "Some people say I can make great soups!"

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "**Healthy Living**" recipes by **Jan. 10** and your favorite "**Pizza**" recipes by **Feb. 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 2015 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2016 electric bill (up to \$200)!

Visit countrylines.com for more reader recipes!

Photos—831 Creative

Electric Capacity Shortfall Projected for 2016



Craig Borr, CEO,
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

Have you ever wondered why a grocery store builds 15 check-out lanes, but only has three of them open most of the time? Simply put, the store has built its “lane capacity” to meet peak demand, the roughly 10 percent of the year when the store is busiest.

It works the same way for electricity providers, including your electric cooperative. Most of the time

there are enough power plants and renewable resources running to meet our member-owners’ needs. At other times, particularly on very hot or cold days, energy needs increase and additional electricity is needed to meet this “peak demand”.

Unlike the grocery store, where a capacity shortfall means a longer wait in line, a shortfall in electric capacity can cause the lights to go out. And, it is your electric cooperative’s job to make sure it has the capacity to meet its members’ maximum need at all times.

The startling fact, however, is that the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO) estimates that Michigan’s Lower Peninsula is facing a 3,000-megawatt (MW) capacity shortfall as early as 2016. The “mitten” needs roughly 15 percent more generating capacity than is currently operating. Ironically, MISO is projecting the Upper Peninsula will actually have a small amount of excess capacity beginning next year.

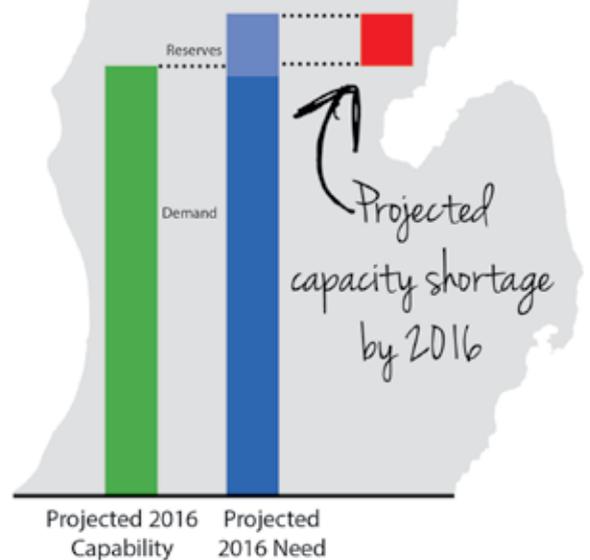
What is causing this projected deficiency, why should you care, and what are electric cooperatives doing to ensure that the lights stay on for you, our member-owners?

Who is MISO and why are they projecting a shortfall?

MISO is the independent nonprofit grid operator, based in Carmel, IN, that is responsible for operating wholesale electricity markets in both of our peninsulas, much of the Midwest, and parts of Canada. Electric utilities in MISO are required to have enough generating capacity to meet their projected peak needs as well as a 15 percent “reserve” margin each year.

Lower Peninsula utilities, MISO warns, will not have adequate generation and reserves, starting in 2016, because of projected growth in electricity sales combined with the closure of many, older coal-fired power plants throughout Michigan and the Midwest that will not meet

Projected Capacity Needs for 2016, Lower Peninsula



new air quality standards required by the Environmental Protection Agency.

What are electric co-ops doing to meet the projected shortfall?

Wolverine Power Cooperative, the Cadillac-based wholesale power supplier to five of Michigan’s nine electric distribution cooperatives, is certainly doing its part.

In October 2015, Wolverine announced the development of a new, 400-plus megawatt clean natural gas-fueled electric peaking plant. Located west of Gaylord, it would meet the future needs of Wolverine’s member distribution cooperatives. However, *the Lower Peninsula needs nearly seven more plants of this size if it expects to meet MISO’s estimated shortfall.*

Wolverine is working to obtain necessary approvals from local, state and regional agencies, and if all goes well, construction on the plant could begin later this year. Named the Alpine Generating Plant, Wolverine will use clean natural gas to generate electricity during times of peak demand and to generate energy that complements the ever-increasing amount of intermittent renewable energy in our state.

Even more capacity needs to be built soon.

I am proud to say that Wolverine is doing its part to meet the future needs of its member cooperatives, as are others, such as municipal electric utilities in Lansing and Holland. But we need more capacity to be built very soon.

To learn more about the exciting new Alpine project, visit alpinecleanenergy.com. ■

Midwest in the Community

Giving back to our communities is one of the core values of Team Midwest. 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've impacted our communities and members in recent months.



Rachel's Challenge

We continued efforts to affect positive change in schools by bringing the Rachel's Challenge program to over 1,500 Dowagiac and Sand Creek students, teachers and community members in October. It includes student-empowering, educator-motivating programs and strategies that equip students and adults to create and sustain safe, caring and supportive learning environments essential for academic achievement. The programs are based on the writings and life of 17-year-old Rachel Scott, the first student killed at Columbine High School in 1999. Following the program, students sign a banner that is hung in the school as a reminder of the impactful program.

United Way Day of Action for Seniors

On a cold, blustery day in November, about 500 community volunteers, including eight co-op employees, participated in the 2014 United Way Day of Action for Seniors. Volunteers completed various indoor and outdoor tasks across Berrien and Cass counties, helping about 200 seniors prepare for winter. Lineman Zac Lock powered through piles of leaves on the crisp fall day, while customer care representative Libby Marlowe weatherized windows.



Electrical Safety Demonstration

Safety is a key part of our everyday culture. That commitment includes offering safety awareness and education beyond our walls and into the community. Our free programs are innovative and interactive, providing a meaningful experience for audiences of all ages. We recently hosted employees from Mint City Tree Service LLC out of Bremen, IN, for a program at our Cass office. Rich Drews, line layout technician, and Marty Smego, lineman, presented the demonstration. ■

Midwest Supports Students With \$1,000 Scholarships

As part of our commitment to strengthening and giving back to community Midwest Energy Cooperative invites high school seniors to apply for one of four \$1,000 college scholarships to be presented this spring. To qualify, the student's immediate family must currently receive monthly electric service from the cooperative at their primary residence.



Selection for the scholarship is based on academic performance, extracurricular activities, community involvement and/or employment, and honors and awards. Applicants are also asked to submit a short essay. A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 on a four-point scale is required and an official transcript will need to be submitted for final approval.

Scholarship applications and all pertinent information must be postmarked by Friday, March 13, 2015, and winners will be notified in April. Visit TeamMidwest.com to view and download or submit your application. ■

Audits Conducted in January

Early in January, we send out a letter on behalf of our CPA auditing firm, the Traverse City-based Harris Group. The letter is on Midwest Energy Cooperative letterhead and sent to a randomly selected group of business and residential members to confirm account balances as of the end of the year. It includes a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

This is a legitimate outreach and an important part of our annual audit process. If you receive this letter, please complete and return it in order to assist our auditors in their process.

Co-op Employee Family Recognized at Annual Event

Diane Wilkins, customer care representative in the Adrian district office, was recognized as the 2014 Midwest Employee of the Year at the annual Employee Appreciation event in December. The award is based on an exemplary display of one or more of Midwest's core values of innovation, integrity, passion and community.

Diane was nominated for going above and beyond the call of duty to assist a member who was having difficulty paying her bill. She provided information on available agency assistance and encouraged the member to reach out to the Department of Human Services (DHS) for an application. The member returned to the office and admitted that she was embarrassed to approach DHS because she couldn't read. Diane encouraged her to pick up an application and return for help. When she returned, Diane sat privately with her and helped her complete the form. The member later shared that literacy issues ran deep as neither her mother nor father could read.

"Heroic deeds come in all shapes and sizes, and Diane's compassion for our members was truly an act of heroism for this woman. Her actions spoke volumes about her character and depth of commitment to service," says Bob Hance, president/CEO.

In honor of Diane's award, a \$250 donation was made to a charity of her choosing.

During the evening's festivities, the following 15 employees were also recognized for a combined 200 years



Nine employees recognized for their years of service were present at the annual employee appreciation event in December. They included (L-R) Diane Wilkins, Meghan Tarver, Katie Mack, Patty Nowlin, Greg Karmol, Denise Smith, Donn O'Shinski, Jeremiah Hunsberger, Mike Roush.

of service to the company: **5 years** – Roger Bowser, Katie Mack, Meghan Tarver and Diane Wilkins;

10 years – Prentice Carpenter, Mike Miller and Donn O'Shinski; **15 years** – Tom Baumeister, Todd Hartsell, Jeremiah Hunsberger, Greg Karmol, Patty Nowlin and Shellie Raymond; **20 years** – Denise Smith; **40 years** – Mike Roush. ■



Zeak DeWyse (standing, far right) has a crew of six local workers that help him handcraft his company's unique barrel saunas.

Photo—Shawn Malone/Lake Superior Graphics



A Barrel Of Fun:

Portable Sauna Is Good Fundraiser, Too

It's 18 degrees outside. Steam rises from a large hole cut in the middle of Millecoquin Lake. A mixed group of younger and older people are standing around looking like they're getting ready to go to the beach, except their lips are quivering and their teeth chattering. They're getting ready to take the "Polar Bear Plunge" challenge to benefit the Engadine Intermediate School District.

Luckily, after their plunge, warmth awaits these "polar bears" in what looks like a huge wooden keg resting on its side on the frozen lake. The attractive, cedar-hewn structure is actually a sauna, built by the Upper Peninsula Sauna Company in tiny Engadine, MI. Saunas and polar bear plunges certainly aren't new in the U.P., but this type of barrel sauna is definitely a novelty that is catching on fast because they are extremely mobile (trailerable) or can be stationary, and fit into most any lifestyle and landscape.

The saunas are manufactured by a seasoned crew of builders led by Zeak DeWyse, a local, licensed contractor and owner of DeWyse Construction. A Cloverland Electric Co-op member, DeWyse says he was looking for another source of income that would keep his crew busy when he latched onto the idea of building barrel saunas.

"It wasn't my original idea," DeWyse says about the sauna's unique construction. "I saw one for sale on the west end of the U.P." He also bought a barrel-shaped sauna from a backyard mechanic that he and his building crew used as a prototype. The saunas the DeWyse crew builds are crafted out of cedar felled from the woods near Engadine and sawn in local mills.

The Upper Peninsula Sauna Company is a welcome addition to the community and to the employees of DeWyse Construction. DeWyse says it has allowed his workers to stay busy during inclement weather. The company is a part of DeWyse Construction and shares the



The cozy barrel sauna holds four adults comfortably and comes with a custom-fabricated woodstove, solar lights, a thermo-hygrometer, water pail, and a cedar spoon. The stove rocks all come from the U.P.

same building—a very old one on Main Street—which was vacant for several years.

"It's working out really well that my guys aren't losing days from their income," DeWyse explains. "When it rains everybody comes to the shop and we build saunas, so that's been kind of a gift for our employees."

Supporting local events is nothing new for the DeWyse company. They're very much involved with the community, especially the schools, and helping other volunteers with fundraisers, parades, and similar events. The saunas are a good draw and have been used to raise funds for different causes. Besides the Polar Bear Plunge, DeWyse recently offered a barrel sauna to anyone who can make a hole-in-one during golf scrambles. The prize is placed on the designated hole.

Along with beating the winter blues, DeWyse adds, there are health benefits to taking a sauna, including removing toxins from your body and sweating-out colds, the flu, and sore muscles—and avoiding hypothermia after an icy plunge in a lake! ■

Below: An aerial view of the "Polar Bear Plunge" local school fundraiser. Plunge participants can warm up in the Upper Peninsula Sauna Company's barrel sauna set up at the right of the hole cut into the lake.

Photos—Sigurd Utych



Who's Your Legislator?

A s a guide to help you understand who represents you in the Michigan Legislature, we have listed here all the legislators (both House and Senate) that represent districts that include the Midwest Energy service area (see map, below). Whatever their background, most represent districts with large rural populations, which are areas where electric co-ops serve. In fact, several legislators are electric co-op members themselves.

There are a total of 44 new members in the Michigan House of Representatives and 10 new members in the Senate. Legislation affecting cooperatives and their owners most likely originates in those committees covering utilities, energy, technology, transportation, environment, land use, safety and taxes.

Michigan Senate



Sen. Dale Zorn
17th District
R-Ida
(517) 373-2617



Sen. Margaret O'Brien
20th District
R-Portage
(517) 373-5100



Sen. John Proos
21st District
R-St. Joseph
(517) 373-6960



Sen. Tanya Schuitmaker
26th District
R-Lawton
(517) 373-0793

In the Senate, Republicans continue to hold the majority, by 27–11. Unlike the House, the Senate ran for the first time under new district lines. Visit senate.mi.gov for more information.

Michigan House of Representatives



Rep. Nancy Jenkins
57th District
R-Dover Township
(517) 373-1706



Rep. Aaron Miller
59th District
R-Sherman Township
(517) 373-0832



Rep. Brandt Iden
61st District
R-Portage
(517) 373-1774



Rep. David Maturen
63rd District
R-Indian Lake
(517) 373-1787

In the House, Republicans continue to hold the majority, by 63–47. The House district lines are the same, since the redistricting process that occurs every 10 years was established in the last election. Visit house.mi.gov for more information. ■



Rep. Brett Roberts
65th District
R-Eaton Township
(517) 373-1775



Rep. Aric Nesbitt
66th District
R-Porter Township
(517) 373-0839



Rep. Dave Pagel
78th District
R-Berrien Springs
(517) 373-1796



Rep. Al Pscholka
79th District
R-Lincoln Township
(517) 373-1403



**Midwest Energy Cooperative
Service Area**

Powering Up When an outage occurs, line crews work to pinpoint problems

1 High-Voltage Transmission Lines

Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of consumers) rarely fail. But when damage occurs, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

2 Distribution Substation

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.

3 Main Distribution Lines

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

4 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

5 Individual Homes

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate these local issues.

graphic by Funnel Inc.

When a major storm causes widespread damage, it can cause longer outages. Co-op line crews work long, hard hours to restore service to the greatest number of members in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.

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ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319

Energy Optimization MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

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.

Snowmobile Museum, Trails Are Winter Fun

Did you know that over 6,500 snowmobile trails run throughout Michigan? To survive winter, you may want to buck-up with boots and a snowsuit to explore some of them. A few phone calls or an easy internet search reveals resorts and sport shops that rent snowmobiles.

Once #1 in the country for registered snowmobilers, Michigan now ranks second behind Minnesota. But don't let that cool your sleds. Bill Manson, of the Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSAsnow.org), says the related family time draws folks in and keeps them coming back. "In the early days of snowmobiling, the sport was a 'guy thing.' Now, everyone including the grandparents are out enjoying the woods together."

Higher quality machines are credited with the wider range of people enjoying the sport. Ergonomic seats with warmers, smooth suspensions, and easy handling allows the entire family to ride comfortably, go fast, and have fun.

Originally, snowmobiles were designed as work vehicles, says Charlie Vallier of the Snowmobile Museum in Naubinway, MI (on U.S.-2). "Sleds first appeared in Wisconsin around 1924 and were used by utility companies, trappers and commercial fishermen. Not until the late '60s did consumers realize they could be used for recreation."

Nostalgia for the old machines runs deep—enough so that the Snowmobile Museum recently expanded. "Throughout winter, enthusiasts can find at least one vintage snowmobile show on the Great Lakes every



1962 Polar

weekend," Vallier adds. "People love the old sleds. Seeing them, restoring them, and riding them. They represent a simpler time."

A walk through the Snowmobile Museum is a walk through that time (open daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., at \$5

for adults and kids 16 and under free). Over 130 different machines spanning the decades are displayed, and the folks who restore them love to share stories of the days when sleds didn't have seat warmers!

Share a story idea by email to jack@countrylines.com or write J. O'Malley, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. ■



Jack O'Malley



«« Do You Know Where This Is?

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

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com or send by mail to: *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include the name on your account, address, phone number, and name of your co-op. Only those sending

complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the March 2015 issue.

The November-December contest winner is Keith Kettinger, of Lake Ann, a Cherryland Electric Cooperative member who correctly identified



Nov/Dec Photo

the photo as the blacksmith building at the Almira Historical Society Museum in Lake Ann.

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