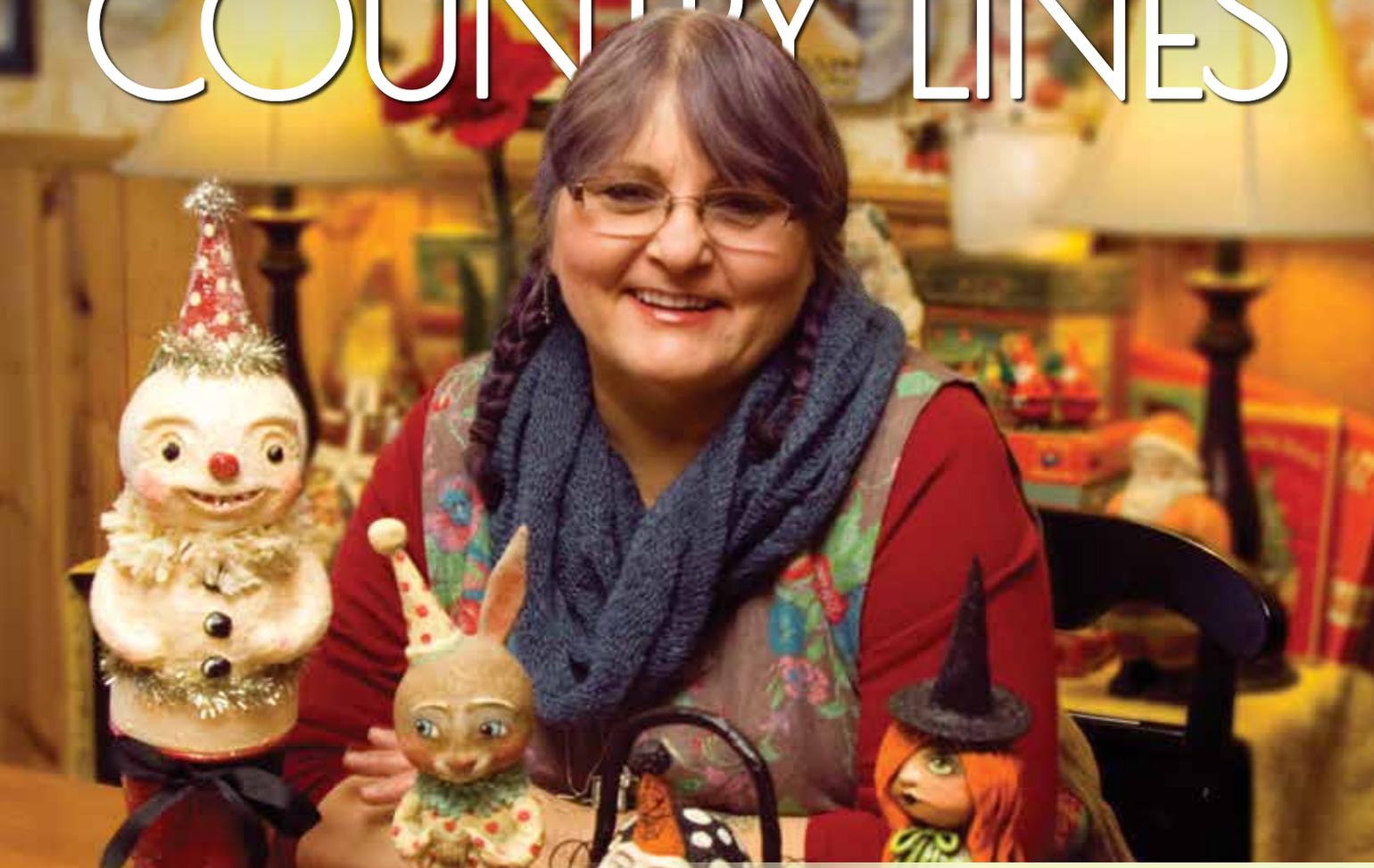


MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



HOP HOP JINGLE BOO

Debra Schoch's Folk Art

Plus!

4 Two Co-op Director Positions Open	5 Reilley Is 18-Year Employee	8 Debra Schoch's Folk Art	10 Basketball Madness
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March 2015
Vol. 35, No. 3

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Letters to the editor should be sent to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Phone 517-913-3531. **E-mail:** cdorr@meca.coop

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

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



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ON THE COVER*

Upper Peninsula native Tom Izzo coaches the MSU Spartans basketball team. The flooring they—and most teams nationwide—play on is made in the U.P.

Photo—Matthew Mitchell

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



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Two Co-op Director Positions Open For Election



Debbie Miles
General Manager

The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is comprised of seven districts, with directors elected for three-year terms. This year, terms will expire for directors representing District 1—Green/Firesteel, and District 4—Aura/Skaneec.

Incumbents are Randy Myhren and Calvin Koski, respectively.

If you are interested in running for one of these open board positions, you must call or stop by the co-op's office to request a nominating petition. A petition must be returned to Ontonagon's office by Monday, May 4, 2015.

Due to a change in co-op bylaws enacted at the 2002 annual meeting, nominating petitions will no longer be sent to each member residing in election districts. To be valid, a nominating petition requires the signature of five active members of the co-op that receive electric service in that district (husband and wife are considered one member so either may sign, but not both). The nominated member must also sign the petition.

Election ballots will be mailed to each member of the district 30 days before the annual meeting, which is scheduled for June 20. All ballots must be returned to the co-op office no later than Noon on Monday, June 15. The ballots will be counted and results shared at the annual meeting. ■

Workin' the Lines: Reilley is 18-Year Employee

Like most utility lineworkers, Pat Reilley has worked through his share of bad storms and the extended power outages that follow, but is always amazed at the graciousness and goodwill of the people he works for.

"I've never forgotten what happened during one particularly long outage," Reilley recalls. "A customer had been without power for over 30 hours, but when we pulled in the drive the lady came out, smiled, and gave us two sandwiches and a bag of peanuts."

The assistant line supervisor and lead lineman for the Ontonagon County REA, he has worked for the electric co-op since 1997.

A L'Anse resident for nearly 40 years, Reilley first earned a degree from MTU in civil engineering before donning his lineman's hat. He learned the ropes through the Wolverine Power Lineman School and after a four-year apprenticeship and 7,000 hours of on-the-job training, received accreditation as a journeyman lineman.

Today, he still says the most rewarding part of his work is, "Helping someone in need, especially the elderly. The customers always seem to really appreciate it when we try and go above and beyond to help them, and that really makes the job worthwhile."



Married for over 20 years, he is dad to four children from ages six to 22, and his spare time is spent with his family. "I'm always with my kids, usually coaching hockey or baseball. It doesn't leave a lot of time for much else, but I wouldn't have it any other way."

"Pat has taken tremendous initiative as he progressed in his career," says Ontonagon line superintendent, Bill Tucker. "He does a great job as the lead lineman at our L'Anse outpost and is instrumental in maintaining our contract arrangement with the villages of L'Anse and Baraga. As a business owner himself, he brings a unique viewpoint to the job each day."

Pat Reilley is just one of your electric co-op's dedicated employees that strives to provide you with reliable, affordable power every day. ■



PERSONNEL

Debbie Miles
General Manager

Fay Hauswirth
Billing Clerk

OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation:
Sept. 30, 1937
Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31
countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

Ontonagon County REA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

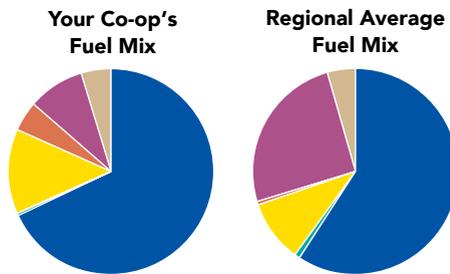
Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Ontonagon County REA as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/14.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE	Your Co-op	Regional Average
Coal	67.0%	60.4%
Oil	0.2%	0.7%
Gas	13.1%	8.9%
Hydroelectric	5.3%	0.5%
Nuclear	9.3%	24.6%
Renewable Fuels	5.1%	4.9%
Biofuel	0.2%	0.7%
Biomass	0.4%	0.4%
Solar	0.0%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.8%	0.0%
Wind	3.5%	3.2%
Wood	0.2%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas.



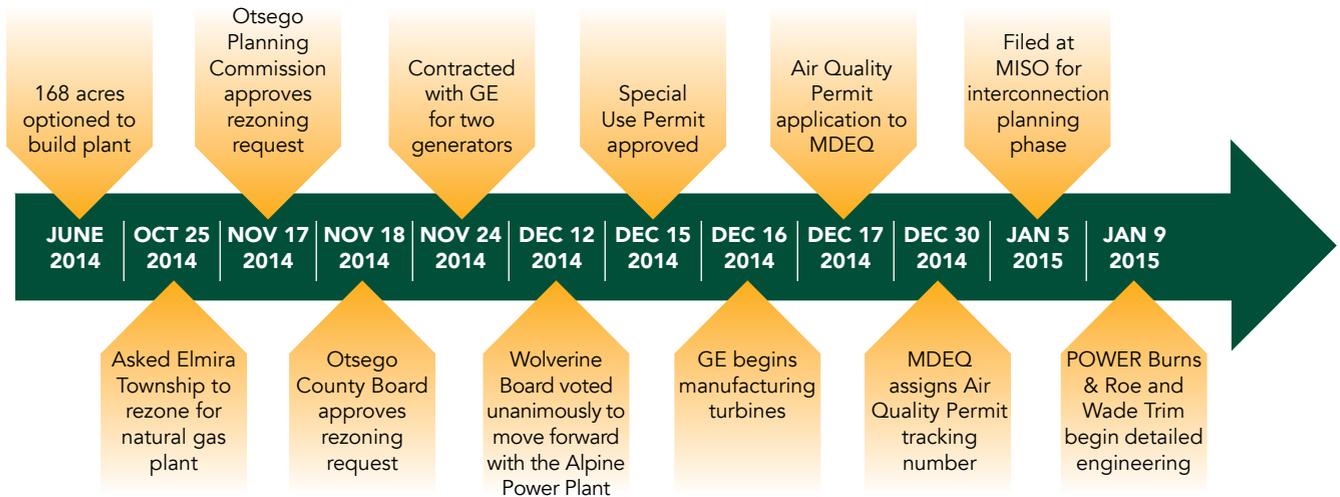
EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	2.3	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,829	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.0	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/14.

Figures for Ontonagon County REA are based on those of its principle power suppliers, WPS and WE Energies.

Wolverine Power Moves Forward With Natural Gas Plant



Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative Inc., of Cadillac, is moving forward with a new 432 megawatt natural gas-fueled electric power plant, located in Elmira Township, near Gaylord. The Alpine Power Plant will use natural gas to generate electricity during times of peak demand and to compliment the ever-increasing amount of intermittent renewable energy in our state, like wind and solar. The Alpine Power Plant is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2016.

“The members of the planning commissions and boards of Elmira Township and Otsego County have voted unanimously to approve our applications, sending the message that this project is widely supported,” said Ken Bradstreet, project spokesman. Visit alpinecleanenergy.com to learn more and keep updated on this project. ■

New Touch-Control Faucets Save Water, Energy

The right kitchen faucet can have a strong impact on your water and energy savings.

Today, one-handle faucets are common, as their size and shape impact water use, but the newest, most efficient models can be controlled by the wave or touch of a hand. By not adjusting a handle, water is not wasted by readjusting the temperature. This provides a lot of savings—especially when washing dishes by hand.

A standard faucet uses more water and energy when washing dishes by hand than running a properly-loaded, efficient dishwasher. With a touch-control faucet, hand-washing dishes can be more efficient than a dishwasher. Also, fewer germs are spread because the faucet is touched less often with dirty hands, and the attractive finish lasts longer.

There are two “no-hands” models. One senses touch from your body (hand, forearm, elbow). For example, when rinsing dishes, you can hold several plates in each hand and tap anywhere on the faucet with your arm to control the water flow.

The other model has a sensor on top (a hand-wave controls it), and another on the faucet neck that triggers when your hands are in hand-washing position.

Tall faucet spouts with a pull-down sprayer are also efficient. Depending on under-cabinet clearance, pick the

tallest that fits, as the height is handy when rinsing a large pot. Choosing one with a pause button also lets you temporarily stop the flow without waving or touching the fixture.

Whichever faucet you have, never ignore a dripping one, since even a slow leak increases energy costs. After heating and cooling, heating water is the greatest energy user, but cold water also uses a lot of energy to purify, pump and treat.

Companies offering touch-control faucets include: American Standard, 800-442-1902, americanstandard-us.com; Delta Faucet, 800-345-3358, deltafaucet.com; Kohler, 800-456-4537, kohler.com; Moen, 800-289-6636, moen.com; and Pfister, 800-732-8238, pfisterfaucets.com. ■



Photo—Moen

—James Dullely



SOUP FOR THE SOUL

In a slow cooker or on the stove, these soups are the ultimate in comfort food.

Easy Taco Soup (pictured)

1½-2 lbs. ground beef
1 large onion, diced
2 15.5-oz. cans pink or red kidney beans
15.5-oz. can pinto or chili beans
15.5-oz. can shoe peg corn (or whole kernel corn)
14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes and green chilies

2 14.5-oz. cans, any brand, Mexican-style tomatoes
4.5-oz. can diced green chilies
4.6-oz. can black olives, drained and sliced
1¼-oz. pkg. taco seasoning mix
1-oz. pkg. ranch salad dressing mix

For Garnish:

tortilla chips
sour cream
grated cheese

chopped green onions
sliced black olives

Brown the ground beef with onions. Drain excess fat, then transfer to large crock pot or large pot on stove. Add beans, corn, tomatoes, olives, chilies, taco seasoning and ranch dressing mix. You may need to add ½ c. of water for desired consistency. In the crockpot, cook on low for 6 hours. On the stovetop, simmer on low about 1 hour. Break the tortilla chips and put in bottom of bowls and cover with soup. Top with your choice of garnishes.

Melody Brown, Big Bay

Butternut Cheesy Bacon Chowder—Gluten Free

4 c. chicken broth
1 butternut squash, roughly 3–4 c.
1 c. diced onion
1 c. diced celery
1 ½ t. salt

¼ t. black pepper
2 c. bacon or diced ham, cooked
2 c. shredded sharp cheddar
1 ½ c. heavy whipping cream
fresh chives, optional

Combine first six ingredients and cook until vegetables are tender. While vegetables are cooking, fry your meat of choice and drain. Using a blender, purée the vegetables and return them to the pot (an immersion blender works best). Add meat, cheese and heavy cream to the cooked vegetables. Heat through for about 5 minutes, but do not boil. Garnish with fresh chives, if desired.

Anna Kinsey, LeRoy

Mushroom Barley Soup

1½ lbs. cubed beef
1 T. vegetable oil
2 c. finely chopped onion
1 c. diced carrots
½ c. diced celery
4-oz. can mushrooms, undrained
1 garlic clove, minced

14.5-oz. can beef broth
14.5-oz. can chicken broth
2 c. water
½ c. pearl barley
1 t. salt
½ t. pepper
3 T. chopped parsley, for garnish



In a soup pot, brown meat in oil. Remove meat with a slotted spoon and set aside. Sauté onion, carrot and celery in drippings until tender, about 5 minutes. Add meat back into pan along with all other ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 1½ to 2 hours or until barley and meat are tender. Stir in parsley.

Geraldine Rutkowski, Ubly

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"Camping"** recipes by **April 1** and your favorite **"Burgers/All American"** by **May 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprinted or typed on one side, please): *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

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



HOP HOP JINGLE BOO

Debra Schoch's Folk Art

On the Lake Superior shore, Debra Schoch creates whimsical papier mâché holiday folk art figurines from her home in the tiny U.P. town of Ontonagon. A self-taught artist, she began experimenting in the early '80s when she was looking for a craft project she could do with her daughter, Simone. Today, her initial "wet newspaper" creations are outstanding artworks in a successful business that reaches as far as the Philippines.

Debra named her business Hop Hop Jingle Boo after her three favorite holidays and does her artwork, "When the mood strikes," she says. "Some days I wake up and say to myself, 'This is a crafting day,' and on those days I will have a 'workathon' of about 16 hours." The process begins with an 80-pound bale of papier mâché (sometimes called "poor man's pottery"). "I put some mâché into a large Tupperware® bowl and as corny as it sounds, I wait for it to talk to me and tell me what it wants to be and that is how I come up with the creation."

Using common household items as forms, such as lightbulbs and empty dish soap bottles, she applies and works the mâché into the desired design. The figurine then goes into a special drying box that her husband, John, created. Three days later, she begins working her magic by hand-painting each figurine with acrylic paint. The collars adorning many of her figurines are hand-stitched from 3 yards of crepe paper. The final touch is affixing the figurine to a painted wooden base that John creates. Each original takes about one week to produce.

Like many artists, Debra started by selling her work at local craft shows, but in 2004 her clientele became global when the national firm Bethany Lowe Designs asked her to join their team of artists. Debra's designs are a perfect fit for



This figure, and more of Debra Schoch's holiday artwork, can be found at hophopjingleboo.etsy.com and is featured in the national Bethany Lowe folk art magazine (bethanylowedesigns.com) or call 800-944-6213.

Photos—Yvonne Whitman



Photo—Michael Galetto/Brockway Photography

the catalog and showroom company that provides vintage folk art and holiday designs for the wholesale industry. The popularity of Debra's designs earned her the prestigious designation of "Best Seller for 2012" for the Lowe company.

Each holiday season, Debra creates about 15 original samples that Bethany chooses from, which are then made into samples for showrooms, such as the Atlanta AmericasMart Gift Mall, where buyers order their desired products from Bethany Lowe. An order is then sent to a factory in the Philippines, where Debra's designs are mass-produced in resin and hand-painted, eventually making their way to retail shops around the world.

In Michigan, Debra also has a loyal fan base that is never more evident than at the annual Ghoultide Gathering festival in Chelsea, Mich. Ghoultide is a by-invitation-only Halloween art show, where she is often asked to autograph her pieces. Lisa Brown, who for the last four years has traveled from Dublin, Ohio, to attend, says, "I just love Debra's work. It's whimsical and fun and reminds me of my childhood. It brings me back to that time." In turn, Debra says, "I couldn't do what I do if it weren't for my customers." ■



BASKETBALL MADNESS

'Floored' By Michigan Companies

Tom Izzo surveys the basketball court in Michigan State University's Breslin Center and still relishes what that court represents. Fifteen years earlier, Izzo led the Spartans to the NCAA championship on that very floor in Indianapolis.

After beating Florida, MSU purchased the portable court for its own use from Horner Flooring Co. Inc., which has manufactured sports flooring in Dollar Bay, MI, since 1891, the year Dr. James Naismith invented basketball.

"You wouldn't put the U.P. and basketball together for being famous," Izzo says. "But when you think about it, it makes some sense."

The Upper Peninsula has been the center of the athletic flooring universe for over 100 years. And, Izzo's one NCAA title, six Final Four appearances, 11 Big Ten regular season and tournament crowns, 17 consecutive NCAA Tournament bids and eight National Coach of the Year awards make the Iron Mountain native one of Michigan's most prominent sports figures. So, it all makes perfect sense.

Michigan State's journey to the 2009 Final Four at Ford Field in Detroit and most recent national semifinal appearance the following year back in Indianapolis, ended on courts made by Connor Sport Court International Inc., located in the heart of Iron County. Connor Sport has been in business since 1872 and in 2005 was named the official supplier of courts for the men's and women's Final Fours.

Both U.P. companies have amassed an astounding list of venues they have equipped—from high schools and colleges and professional facilities to the Olympics.

During the Spartans' last practice before defeating the Gators on the Horner floor that momentous

Monday night in April 2000, Izzo commiserated with his equally renowned boyhood rival, former Iron Mountain High School and Northern Michigan University teammate and best friend, Steve Mariucci, who at the time was the head coach of the San Francisco 49ers.

"We were laughing about it, saying me, you and this floor were made up in the U.P.," Izzo says. "I always knew about the floor companies up there and there's no question that when I'm watching a Final Four or an NBA event, I take a lot of pride in it, being a Hooper."

Proximity to a select variety of hard maple trees, which thrive in the U.P. climate, is the reason Michigan has become the world leader in athletic flooring.

The U.P. companies have
amassed an astounding list
of venues they have
equipped—from high schools
to colleges to professional
facilities to the Olympics.

"Hard maple trees obviously grow south of there, as well, but when you go that far north the growing season is real short," says Jason Gasperich, Connor Sports' sustainability director. "So, what happens is you end up with a very tight-grained, dense hardwood."

The old-growth forests have been replanted numerous times by an industry that has been at the forefront of renewable resource development. Some 40 different sawmills supply the lumber and a minimum of 30 trees—roughly



Photos—Matthew Mitchell

25 years old and up—will be used to make the court on which the Final Four will be played at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, April 4–6.

Michigan State's court has been taken apart and put back together countless times between non-sporting events, such as commencement exercises and concerts.

According to MSU Deputy Athletics Director Greg Ianni, who oversees the Spartans' athletic facilities, Horner has taken the floor back to the U.P. to be refurbished on numerous occasions, though it is nearing the end of its life expectancy.

After the surface is replaced in the next year or so, parts of it will be put on permanent display, others stored in the school's archives, and "pieces will be made available to our fan base," Ianni says. "The quality of the court has been terrific, and the irony of the fact that this floor was built in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where our head basketball coach came from, is quite unique." ■



Steve Grinczel is the online columnist for MSU's athletics website, *MSUSpartans.com*, and the co-host of the "Griff & Grinz" sports radio talk show on WQTX-FM (92.1).

He covered the Spartans for 24 years for Booth Newspapers of Michigan and lives in Haslett, MI.

Help Us Celebrate National Lineman Day

As the “first responders” of the electric co-op family, lineworkers perform around-the-clock in dangerous conditions and challenging situations to keep power flowing and protect the public’s safety. That’s why electric co-ops have designated a National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year, April 13 is the day we honor the hard-working men and women who keep the lights on.

Resolutions adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) explain it best:

“Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas there would be no electric co-ops without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of lineworkers.”

“Electric lineworkers do not often receive the recognition they deserve,” says Ontonagon County REA general manager, Debbie Miles. “They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to



Your electric co-op’s lineworker crew includes (L–R) Luke Jouppe, Kelly Clark, Pat Reilley, Dony Ison, Brad Hanson, Gil Martinez and Nels Erickson in the red cap.

their communities. Our lineworkers, and those across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition.”

Ontonagon County REA invites you, as a co-op member, to take a moment to “thank a lineworker” for the job they do and show support for those who help light our lives. ■

POWERING YOUR LIFE

through rain, sleet and snow over 2.5 million miles of line.



**April 13, 2015, is National Lineman Appreciation Day.
#ThankALineman**

POP QUIZ:

Do you know what to do if a power line falls on your vehicle?

Do not drive away or get out. Stay inside until utility workers say it's okay. Warn others to stay away. If you must leave the vehicle – only in case of fire – jump free without touching the ground and auto at the same time, keeping both feet together, and hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out, and walking or running allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. This makes your body the electricity's path, and electrocution results.

Other safety tips:

Never drive over a downed line. It could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.

Never touch a downed line or a person or object that is touching it! You could be injured or killed, too.

Call 911 immediately to report a downed line, then call your electric co-op or the local utility.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Your home works hard for you. Consider giving it an energy checkup. Hire a professional energy auditor to diagnose where your house could be losing energy and where you can start saving money. Auditors check for air leaks, inspect insulation, survey heating and cooling equipment and more. After making efficiency upgrades, you could save 5-30 percent on your energy bills!

Source: EnergySavers.gov

Statement of Non-Discrimination

The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is the recipient of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter by mail to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email to program.intake@usda.gov.

Calling All ArtPrize Artists in Michigan!

We would like to spotlight Michigan artists who participated in 2014, or are entering the 2015 ArtPrize® competition, in the July/August issue of *Country Lines*.

For 19 days, 3 square miles of downtown Grand Rapids becomes an open canvas of art. Artists from around the world enter the contest, and viewing their work is free and open to the public.

If you are an electric co-op member who participated in the 2014 ArtPrize event, or you are entering in 2015, please send your contact information by e-mail to Christine Dorr at cdorr@meca.coop or by mail to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. The deadline is April 20.

ArtPrize 2015 will take place Sept. 23–Oct. 11

For more information about the event, please visit Artprize.org ■



Thumbs Up For The Thumb!

Quick! Name your favorite part of our state. Many will say the U.P., Leelanau County, or Grand Traverse Bay. My hunch is some will say, “the Thumb.” We wouldn’t be the Mitten State without a thumb, so let’s pay it some homage...

Phil Parrot, a Thumb native and owner of Parrot’s Tours (parrotstours.com or 810-376-9245), in Deckerville, sends vacationers to destinations worldwide, but he’s often asked about the Thumb area by other travel professionals. Parrot’s ready response is, “There’s the Upper Peninsula, Leelanau Peninsula, and Old Mission Peninsula, but the Thumb is Michigan’s undiscovered peninsula.”

Comprised of Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Lapeer and St. Clair counties, it boasts 150 miles of shoreline, 2,100 miles of rivers and streams, 51,000 acres of public recreation land, 49,000 acres of state game/wildlife areas, and many annual festivals and events.

Tour the Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay shoreline along M-25 with 160 miles of quaint towns and four lighthouses. The village of Sebewaing claims bragging rights as the “Sugar Beet Capital of the World” by hosting an annual Sugar Festival with a parade, carnival and entertainment tent. Caseville, near the Thumb’s tip on sandy Saginaw Bay, hosts the well-known Cheeseburger Festival every August. Algonac sits on the largest fresh-water delta in the world, with canals and an impressive 1,800 feet of boardwalk that credit its nickname as “The Venice of Michigan.”

And, visitors will want to explore the Sanilac Petroglyphs Historic State Park. The great Thumb fire of 1881, Parrot says, burned over 1 million acres and revealed prehistoric rock carvings made 300 to 1,000 years ago.

Seek a pleasant place by visiting it and giving a thumbs up for “the Thumb”! ■



Jack O'Malley



Photo courtesy of ArtPrize 2015. Photo credit: Brian Kelly.



Jan Photo

The January Mystery Photo Contest winner is Laura Neuman, of Mackinaw City, a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op member who correctly identified the “snow people” figures in front of the tourist information building in Paradise, MI.

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