

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

DOAK'S NEW COURSE:

DOUBLE  
THE FUN



**Plus!**

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#### **Indian River**

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[waterfurnace.com/SpecialFinancing](http://waterfurnace.com/SpecialFinancing)

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Executive Editor  
**Casey Clark**

Editors  
**Christine Dorr**  
**Gail Knudtson**

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



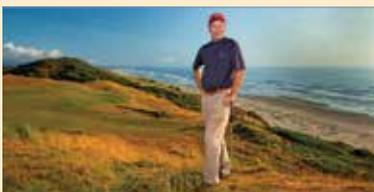
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Photos – Renaissance Golf Design

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



Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
[countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)



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**CONTACT US**

**MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

800-492-5989  
TeamMidwest.com

**MIDWEST CONNECTIONS**

844-493-4237  
TeamFiber.com

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**E-mail: [info@TeamMidwest.com](mailto:info@TeamMidwest.com)**

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*Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# Member Regulation: A Matter Of Dollars And ‘Sense’



**Robert Hance**  
President/CEO

**love history**, and the co-op story is a great historical account of how neighbors banded together with a collective resolve to improve their lives and communities, and bring power to the rural areas.

From the beginning, we were owned by those we serve and for nearly 30 years we were regulated by that membership. The co-op board, elected by the members, made decisions about rates and charges, billing practices, service standards and other issues.

In 1965, after years of investor-owned utilities looting their service areas, Michigan co-ops sought “protection” from the state. To gain territorial protection, co-ops agreed to fall under full Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) regulation.

As with any good historical tale, twists and turns emerged. In 2008, Public Act 167 passed unanimously, giving electric co-ops the option to return to our roots as member-regulated utilities. Today, six of Michigan’s nine electric co-ops have gone through this process.

History continues to unfold as your co-op considers a similar path. Your board of directors will meet on May 26 to vote on a proposal (see page 5) that would make Midwest Energy Cooperative member-regulated. The meeting is open to any co-op member wishing to provide input, after which the board will take a roll-call vote.

Member regulation is not total deregulation. The MPSC would continue regulating business matters related to safety, interconnection, code of conduct, customer choice, territorial issues, distribution performance standards, and quality of service. Deregulation primarily impacts rates and charges, with authority to establish rates resting solely on the directors you elect, Midwest members like yourself.

Why would we take this route? It really boils down to dollars and “sense.”

There are significant legal and consulting fees—around \$80,000 to \$100,000—every time we pursue a rate case. On top of that, we pay about \$55,000 in annual MPSC assessments. A member-regulated environment eliminates significant costs and makes us more nimble in establishing fair and appropriate rates.

Member regulation makes sense because your elected board already makes critical recommendations regarding electric rates and charges. Directors have the knowledge and experience to drive those decisions with the perspective and concern that only a co-op member can bring, and no motivation to generate profits for stockholders.

If approved at the May 26 meeting, this change would become effective in August and mark another historical moment for our co-op. This is a positive step forward in bringing decisions to the local board table rather than a hearing room in Lansing. It’s the co-op difference at work for our members. ■

## NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

The Midwest Energy Cooperative board will take action on the proposal to become member-regulated in accordance with P.A. 167 of 2008, at its meeting on May 26, 2015, to be held at the corporate headquarters, 901 E. State Street, Cassopolis, MI 49031. The meeting will start at 10 a.m. Members will have an opportunity to address the board on the proposal prior to board action.

The following is the proposal to be considered:

### **Proposal to Become a Member-Regulated Cooperative in Accordance with Public Act 167 of 2008.**

On June 26, 2008, Public Act 167 of 2008 (P.A. 167) became law.

P.A. 167 states that an electric cooperative, owned by the members it serves, is regulated by its members acting through its democratically elected board of directors.

P.A. 167 further states that member regulation by a cooperative in the areas of rates, charges, accounting standards, billing practices, and terms and conditions of service may be more efficient and cost-effective than regulation by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

P.A. 167 allows the board of directors of an electric cooperative to adopt member-regulation for rates, charges, accounting standards, billing practices, and terms and conditions of service by following the process set forth in the act.

That process requires the following:

- (a) A proposal by a director of the cooperative to become member-regulated, when such proposal is made at a properly convened board meeting.
- (b) Action on the proposal taken no earlier than 90 days from the date the proposal was made.
- (c) Action on the proposal taken at a meeting of the board for which written notice is given and the meeting is open to all members of the cooperative.
- (d) At the meeting, members of the cooperative shall have reasonable time to address the board prior to its acting upon the proposal.
- (e) Following member comments, a roll call vote of the board of directors shall be taken.
- (f) For the proposal to be adopted, 2/3 of the members of the board must vote in favor of becoming member-regulated.

This proposal seeks that Midwest Energy Cooperative become member-regulated in accordance with P.A. 167. Notice of the May 26, 2015, board meeting shall be sent to all members, as required by P.A. 167, by publication in Michigan Country Lines.

**PARTICIPATION:** *Any interested member may attend and participate. The location of the board meeting site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact Midwest Energy Cooperative at 800-492-5989, ext. 1094, a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.*



## Improve Home Comfort By Choosing Materials Carefully

**I**f you're looking to improve your home's comfort, consider increasing its thermal mass. Increasing thermal mass means having the house structure and interior objects absorb and hold as much heat as possible. The heavier the item, the more mass it has to better absorb heat. As the outdoor temperature changes, thermal mass helps moderate indoor temperature swings to improve comfort and efficiency.

There are several ways thermal mass can save energy. By reducing indoor temperature swings in the winter, less heat is lost through walls and windows. This is particularly true in rooms where heat is generated, such as the kitchen, bathroom, or rooms with large south-facing windows. Also, heat produced by the furnace is absorbed by the home's thermal mass and then released at night to warm it.

In summer, high thermal mass will keep rooms cooler, delay the need for using air conditioning, and keep it from cycling on-and-off throughout the day. Unless high humidity is an issue, opening windows at night and running a whole-house or window fan allows the thermal mass to lose the heat stored from the daytime. Close the windows in the morning and the cooled thermal mass absorbs heat coming in without causing the room temperature to rise as fast. The thermal mass of air is extremely low, so the cold outdoor air quickly absorbs heat from the indoor thermal mass.

Increase thermal mass by selecting the proper high mass (heavier) materials. They should be located throughout the home, but concentrate on rooms that generate heat or overheat in summer. When building a house or adding rooms, use heavy foam insulating sheathing on the outside of the wall framing, which allows it to become part of the interior thermal mass.

The thermal mass of various materials is rated by heat capacity properties. Water has a high heat capacity of 62.4 per cubic foot, compared to drywall at only 1.3 per cubic foot. Wet soil rates about 55, concrete about 31, brick about 27, and stone or tile ranges from 18 to 36. Their natural thermal properties, in addition to densities, determine these numbers.

For example, installing a dark, ceramic-tile flooring near a door or window is a great source of thermal mass. Decorative solid-brick walls work well in a room with a fireplace or large windows. Heavy granite or slate countertops in a kitchen or bath, and wood floors are also effective. The idea is to replace lighter materials with heavier ones.

Even the damp soil in large potted plants can store much heat, and plants help purify indoor air. For emergencies, storing milk jugs full of water under cabinets and near your heating system can also increase thermal mass. ■



## HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH

Delicious and nutritious recipes for living healthy.

### Energy Balls *(pictured)*

- ¼ c. unroasted almonds or any kind of nut or seed
- ¾ c. old fashioned rolled oats, uncooked
- 2 T. ground flax seed
- 2–3 T. cocoa powder, depending on how chocolatey you want them
- 10 oz. dates
- 1–2 T. coconut oil, melted

Place almonds in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until finely chopped. Add oats, flax seed, and cocoa powder. Pulse a few more times to combine. Place dates into the food processor and turn on for about 30 seconds, or until finely chopped. Mixture should be crumbly at this point. Drizzle 1 T. coconut oil over the top of the date mixture and process for 5–10 seconds. Test mixture by squeezing between your finger and thumb. If it's too dry to stick together add more coconut oil (up to 1 T. more). Using your hands, roll mixture into 1-inch balls. Refrigerate for about 20 minutes, or until firm. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator. This Energy Ball recipe is a little something that I enjoy for an afternoon snack with some green tea. It's a great and healthy pick-me-up. Makes 24.

*Julie Barr, Manistique*

### Quinoa and Cucumber Salad

- 2 c. cooked quinoa
- 3 baby English cucumbers, sliced
- 1 can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 box sweet cherry tomatoes
- 1–2 handfuls feta cheese crumbles

Toss all ingredients in a bowl until evenly combined. Zest and juice one lime over salad and add fresh ground pepper to taste. Toss to combine. Can also add a tablespoon or two of olive oil, if desired. This is a flavorful and filling 'go to' recipe for a quick side or portable lunch.

*Denise Chapel, Gaylord*

### Spinach Pasta Salad

- ½ bag of store-bought spinach or 2 handfuls fresh, washed and torn (tearing spinach over cutting is preferred)
- 8 oz. pasta, cooked according to pkg. directions (cork screws, bow ties, wheels, work best)
- fat free, light, or regular Caesar dressing (your brand preference)
- 1 c. shredded parmesan cheese
- fat free croutons
- Extras: grilled chicken, bacon pieces, tomatoes, diced boiled egg



In a large bowl, mix pasta with a generous amount of dressing to coat evenly. Add cheese & spinach to bowl (and chicken/bacon/tomatoes/eggs) and mix well. Serve cold and top with croutons. Note: Don't add croutons to the salad or they will get soggy.

*Renee (Kohn) Coyer, Cooks*

### SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

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

Enter your recipe online at [countrylines.com](http://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)!

Photos—831 Creative

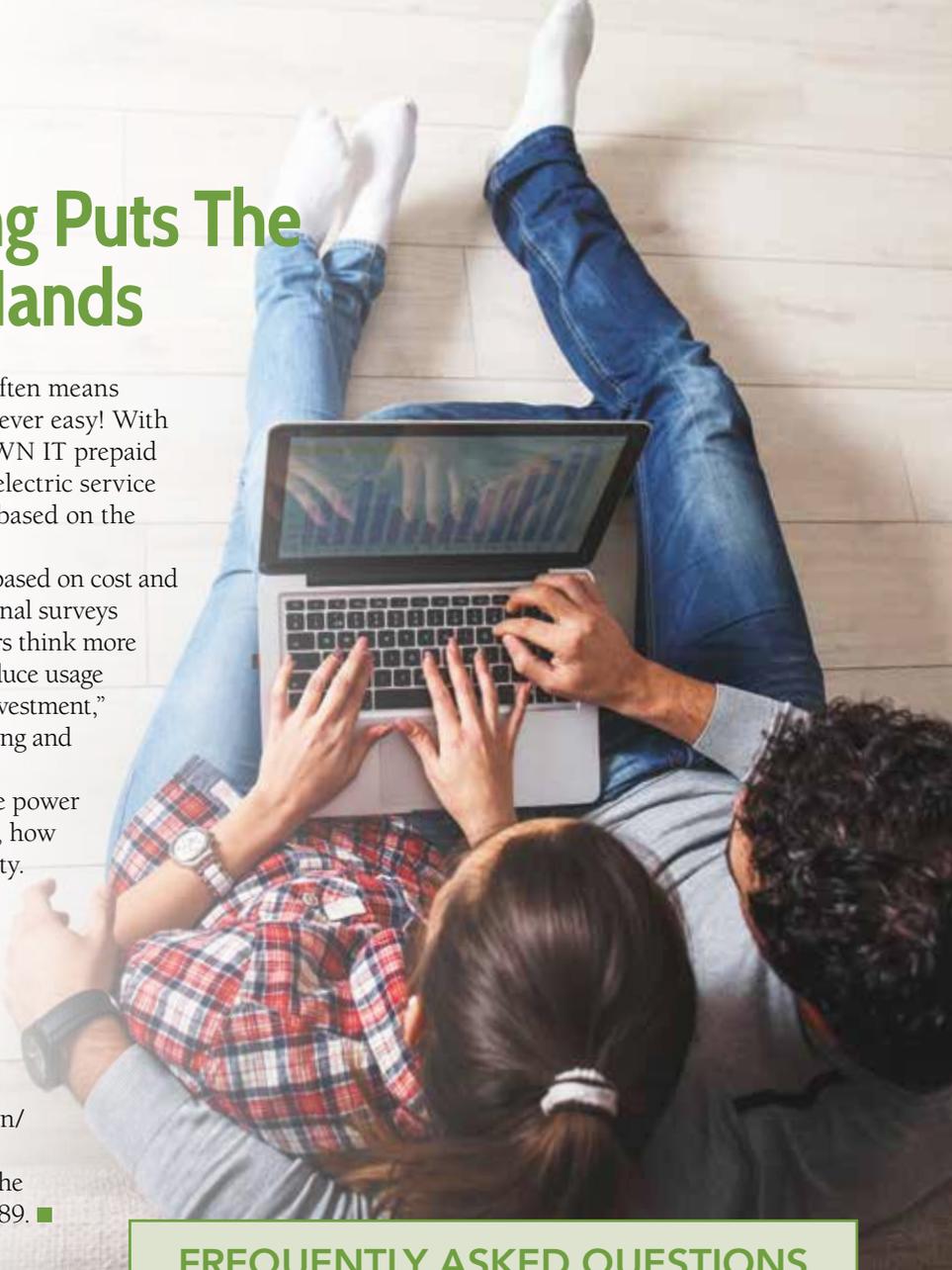
# Prepaid Metering Puts The Power In Your Hands

**M**anaging 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.

"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," says Candy Riem, vice president of marketing and member services.

OWN IT prepaid metering gives you the power to manage your budget by choosing when, how and what you pay each month for electricity. 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 information or to sign up for the program, please contact us at 800-492-5989. ■



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Does OWN IT prepaid metering cost me anything?

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 or converted into a payment agreement and paid over time through your prepaid account. If you choose to pay it over time, a percentage of each payment made will be applied to the agreement until it is paid in full.

### What will happen if I run out of funds in my OWN IT account?

If you run out of gas in your car, it stops. Your prepaid account is similar. We contact you if there is a low balance, and disconnect your electricity if your account runs out of funds. Service is restored once you make a payment.

### Can I save money?

OWN IT does not provide a lower rate, but through SmartHub® you can monitor consumption and save money by consciously reducing your energy use. Understanding how you use energy is ultimately the first step to better managing your bill and seeing real savings.

### How do I make payments?

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 purchase electricity as needed at one of our district service centers, using our automated phone system at 800-492-5989, or through the SmartHub online or mobile account access app.

### How can I check the status of my account?

Your account balance can be checked anytime on SmartHub or through our automated phone system. 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.

### How is my daily bill calculated?

Your meter is read daily and your bill is calculated accordingly. The bill includes electricity used for that day, as well as a day's worth of the monthly service charge, the OWN IT program fee, and any other credits or charges on your account.

# 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 electrical 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.

## Southwest Michigan:

### **Bender Electric**

19636 Allegheny  
Cassopolis, MI 49031  
269-445-3260

*Residential & commercial, repairs, trenching, bucket truck*

### **Byler Electric, Inc.**

550 Florence Rd., P.O. Box 86  
Constantine, MI 49042  
269-435-7156

*Industrial, commercial, residential & agricultural; new construction; service upgrades; bucket truck; trenching; Guardian/Generac generator dealer & service*

### **Edison Electric**

31158 56th Avenue  
Paw Paw, MI 49079  
269-657-6955

*Industrial, commercial & residential; electrical construction & maintenance*

### **Esper Electric, LTD**

7775 North 6th St.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
269-342-6909

*Full service electrical contractor for residential, commercial & industrial*

### **Hi-Tech Electric Co.**

839 Lenox Avenue  
Portage, MI 49024  
269-323-1111

*Industrial, commercial & residential; data & communications systems; access controls; service & lighting upgrades; generator sales & service*

### **Jones & Son Electrical Contractors, Inc.**

23482 CR 4, Elkhart, IN 46514  
574-206-9465

*Residential & commercial services*

### **Kerwin Electric, Inc.**

7930 S. 8th St.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
269-375-6543

*Residential, commercial, industrial & agricultural; generators; crane service; solar & wind power*

### **Ketelhut Electric**

7445 Territorial  
Watervliet, MI 49098  
269-468-5341

*Commercial & residential, all electrical & cabling needs*

### **Kusmack Electric, Inc.**

39560 72nd Ave.  
Decatur, MI 49045  
269-720-3821

*Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling & service upgrades, troubleshooting, generator installations*

### **Midway Electric Inc.**

51433 63rd Ave.  
Lawrence, MI 49064  
269-674-3213

*Residential, commercial, & industrial; data & communications systems wiring*

### **Peterson's Electric, Inc.**

2010 West W Ave.  
Schoolcraft, MI 49087  
269-679-4797

*Commercial & residential service & repair*

### **Wolverine Electrical Contracting, Inc.**

2700 Old US-31 North  
Niles, MI 49120  
269-683-4850

*Commercial, industrial & residential; bucket truck; trenching; data & communication systems wiring; Generac generators sales & service; electric thermal storage heating sales & service*

## Southeast Michigan:

### **Creighton Electric L.L.C.**

260 Westfield Dr.  
Archbold, OH 43502  
419-445-2223

*Commercial, industrial & residential; full service electrical contractor; high voltage work; excavation work; Generac sales & installation*

### **Ford Electric L.L.C.**

8442 Brooks Hwy., Onsted, MI 49265  
517-467-4133

*Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling, repairs, troubleshooting, generator systems*

### **MTC Electric**

P.O. Box 39, Tecumseh, MI 49286  
517-260-1664

*Residential, commercial & small industrial; troubleshooting*

### **Neil's Electric, Inc.**

2366 Carleton Rd.  
Adrian, MI 49221  
517-265-4459

*Residential & commercial electrical installation and service*

### **Sexton Electric**

6035 U.S. Hwy. 223  
Addison, MI 49220  
517-252-5187

*Residential & light commercial electrical*

### **Snyr Electric**

8380 Round Lake Hwy.  
Manitou Beach, MI 49253  
517-270-7777

*Residential, commercial & industrial; underground wire locator; trenching; aerial bucket truck; generator installation & repair*

# DOAK'S NEW COURSE: DOUBLE THE FUN

A golfer's bucket list of courses likely includes "Top 100" links by golf course architect Tom Doak, such as Pacific Dunes in Oregon and Tasmania's Barnbougle Dunes. With his new project at Forest Dunes Golf Club in Roscommon, MI, Doak's own bucket list—of golf courses he'd like to design—is shorter by one.

Doak, whose Renaissance Golf Design is based in Traverse City, has conceived a reversible 18-hole golf course, playable from two directions with the greens yielding different layouts. "I'd been thinking about it for a long time," he says. "I saw something in an old architecture book and I had it in the back of my mind: 'Okay, I'd like to try that sometime.'"

Enter Forest Dunes owner Lew Thompson's quest for a companion to his highly-acclaimed Tom Weiskopf course. "When I first met Lew and went to look at the property and saw it was fairly open, fairly flat, I thought it would work for this idea." Importantly, Doak adds, "Thompson didn't say anything about it being ranked in the Top 100 courses—he already has one of those. He wanted something that would make people say 'Wow.'" And, Thompson admits, he wanted something to keep golfers for another day of play-and-stay at his Adirondack-style lodge.

The location is a bonus for Doak, who has called northern Michigan home since 1989 when he completed his first solo project, High Pointe Golf Club, near Traverse City. The Cornell University graduate was just 26 when Fred Muller, the golf pro at



To keep up to date on the new course, please visit

**RENAISSANCE GOLF DESIGN**

[www.renaissancegolf.com](http://www.renaissancegolf.com)

**FOREST DUNES**

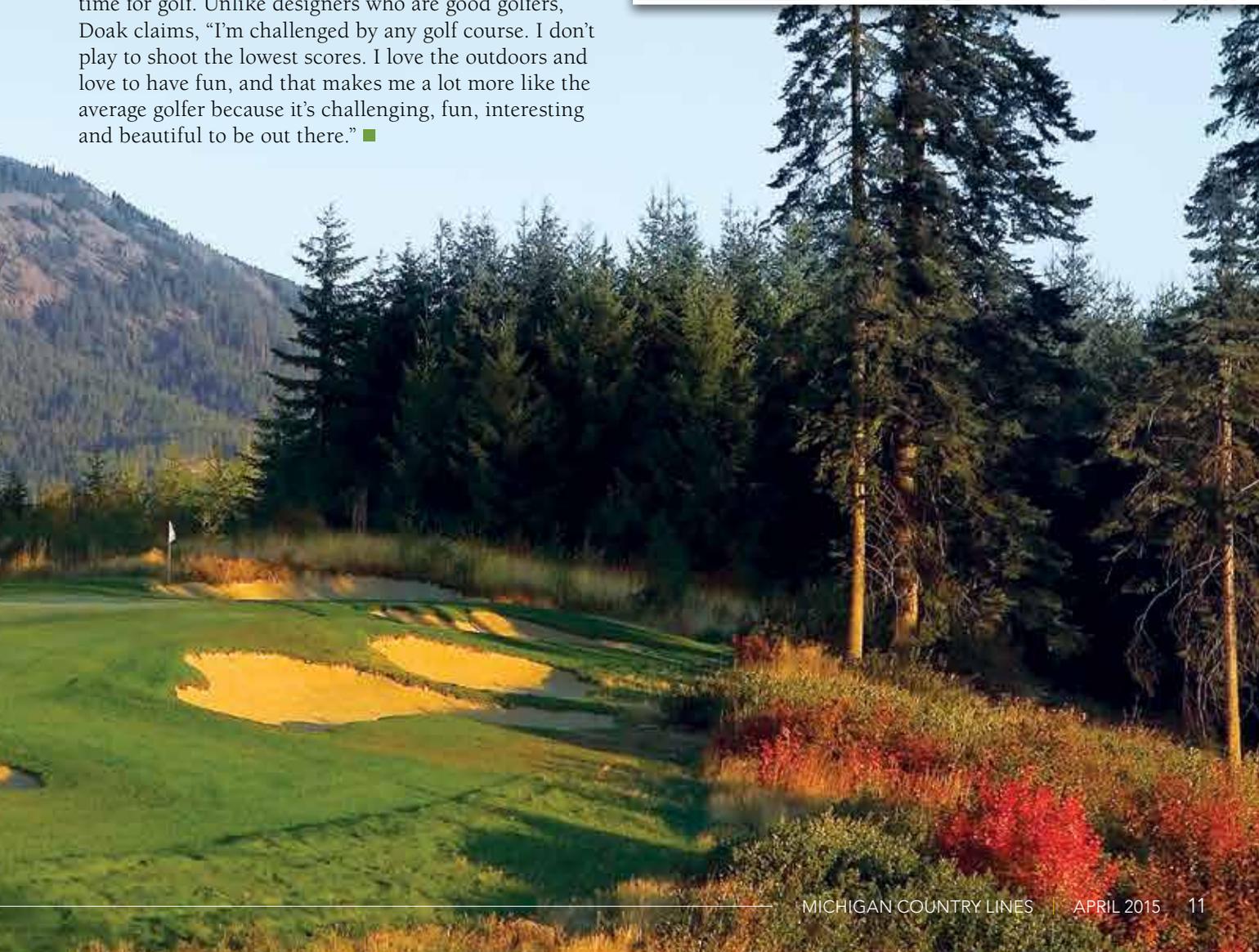
[www.forestdunesgolf.com](http://www.forestdunesgolf.com)

Photo — L.C. Lambrecht Photography  
Rock Creek Cattle Golf Course, Deer Lodge, MT

Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort, recommended him for that job. Muller met Doak when the college student came to play Crystal Downs because its designer, Alister MacKenzie, was his hero. After graduation Doak spent nearly a year playing the great courses around the world and caddying at St. Andrews in Scotland, and three years working for another hero, Pete Dye. “I’m still sort of amazed that the owner of High Pointe hired me at that age. I think the key was that I was going to build the golf course—not just design it. I was pretty ridiculously confident.”

Doak’s second Michigan course was Black Forest, at Wilderness Valley in Gaylord (“one of the hardest courses I’ve ever built”); since then, he and his team have handled new courses and renovations across the U.S. and around the globe, from Mexico to Scotland and China. Doak is looking forward to more time with his family as he and associate Brian Slawnik develop the Roscommon project, due to open in 2016.

Michigan’s four seasons remind Doak of growing up in Connecticut, but he’s not a fan of winter. He laughs, “It’s really easy to be here all summer,” when he finds time for golf. Unlike designers who are good golfers, Doak claims, “I’m challenged by any golf course. I don’t play to shoot the lowest scores. I love the outdoors and love to have fun, and that makes me a lot more like the average golfer because it’s challenging, fun, interesting and beautiful to be out there.” ■



## Barth Retains Board Seat



**Clarence Barth**  
District 4

Clarence “Topper” Barth retained his seat in the 2015 District 4 director election, beating challenger Carol Higgins of Mendon. Ron Armstrong, District 3, and Ken Swope, District 8, both were unopposed. All three directors were re-seated at the April board meeting.



**Ron Armstrong**  
District 3

Midwest Energy is governed by a nine member board of directors, and each director is elected to serve a three-year term. Directors are elected by and represent members living in his or her district.



**Ken Swope**  
District 8

Three seats on the Midwest Energy Cooperative board of directors will be up for election next year. Members interested in serving on the board should contact the cooperative at 800-492-5989 for information about the process. All board members must reside in the district they represent.

In 2016, Districts 6, 7 and 9 will be up for election. ■

### District 6

*Currently represented by Ben Russell of Constantine.*

**Includes Michigan Townships:** North Porter, South Porter, Constantine, Mottville, Florence and White Pigeon

**Indiana Townships:** Washington, York and Van Buren

### District 7

*Currently represented by Colyne Sorsby of Cassopolis.*

**Includes Michigan Townships:** Jefferson, Calvin, Ontwa, and Mason

**Indiana Townships:** Harris, Osolo and Cleveland

### District 9

*Currently represented by Harry Gentz of Blissfield.*

**Includes Michigan Townships:** Medina, Seneca, Fairfield, Ogden and Riga, and southern portions of Blissfield, Deerfield, Dover, Hudson, Madison and Palmyra

**Ohio Townships:** Mill Creek, Gorham, Chesterfield, Royalton, Franklin, Dover, Pike, Clinton and German



# SMART SAVING

## FREE ONLINE HOME AUDIT.

Did you know that some problems with your home can be signs of major energy waste—while costing you money? Problems such as mildew, ice dams, and overall discomfort can be attributed to inefficiencies in your home. Help improve your home by assessing its energy performance using the Home Energy Optimizer.

### BENEFITS

- Convenient—ability to save and edit responses or finish later
- Do-it-yourself, affordable, energy-saving actions
- Completion entitles you to a **FREE** energy-saving kit

Get started today at [michigan-energy.org/Stephenson](http://michigan-energy.org/Stephenson) and click on “Online Home Audit.”



**Energy  
Optimization**



**Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

ONLINE: [michigan-energy.org](http://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](http://michigan-energy.org).

## What's The Best Way To Protect Electronics From Power Surges?

**P**ower surges can cause major damage to electrical items in your home. Did you know there are ways to protect your products from electrical surges?

A surge is an unexpected increase in voltage in an electrical current that causes damage to electrical equipment. A surge will enter a home through any number of avenues. The most obvious is through the power lines. Less obvious is through the telephone lines, cable/satellite connections, water lines and any other metallic system that connects to your home. So, to protect against surges, you need to take a three-pronged approach.

**1.** Get an electrician to survey and test your home's grounding system.

**2.** Protect your electrical service entrance with a surge device. It can be installed behind the meter or at the main electric panel. The device will "clamp" the surge and reduce its power. These devices destroy themselves rather than allowing the surge to pass through.

**3.** Protect expensive electronics at their point of use. Computers and entertainment equipment are prime examples. Use a quality power strip or wall device product with a power surge feature from a manufacturer such as Monster, Belkin, Tripp Lite, or APC, to name a few. Look for one with a joule rating of at least 1,000, a connected equipment warranty and compatibility with digital signals from cable and satellite. Some have a "smart" strip that turns off all but one connected device when not in use. ■

## Help Us Celebrate National Lineman Day

**A**s 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," said Midwest Energy President/CEO, Robert Hance "They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to their communities. Our lineworkers, and those across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition."

Midwest Energy 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. ■



# Honoring Veterans One Cane At A Time

**T**he idea came about in 2004 when Jack Nitz of Tulsa, OK, watched a news segment about wounded post-9/11 veterans.

The visions of vets with leg wounds and amputations weighed on his mind. Nitz knew that as a woodcarver and cane maker, he could make a difference in the lives of these heroic veterans.

Nitz proposed the idea of making unique canes that veterans could proudly use to the Eastern Oklahoma Woodcarvers Association. His eagle-head cane has since spawned a program that enlists thousands of woodcarvers across the nation to support and honor U.S. veterans.

In 2007, Jim Wilsford from Tennessee came to Michigan to teach a class about making these eagle-head canes for veterans. Members of the Michigan Wood Carvers Association (MWCA) were so impressed they also decided to sponsor the project. To date, over 2,500 canes have been presented by MWCA.

During a visit with my friend and carving mentor, master carver Dick Lamphier of Elk Rapids, MI, he showed me an eagle-head cane that he was working on, and explained who the canes were being made for. I was very impressed by the whole project.

Initially, Lamphier had no interest in carving eagle heads. While at a seminar in Midland, Lamphier had the opportunity to witness the presentation of one of these canes to a veteran of the Vietnam War. There were about 250 people in attendance, and hardly a dry eye in the place. Witnessing the feelings and emotions that were on the faces of so many, Lamphier became determined to do what he could to assist with this healing program. Since that day, on two separate occasions, he has witnessed veterans from Afghanistan walking with these personalized canes.



Jim Carpenter works on the details of his carving.

In each instance, he complimented the veteran on the beauty of his cane. Each raised his cane with a BIG SMILE to acknowledge the compliment. Clearly, they held them up with great pride! Currently, 12 local carvers are working with Lamphier to create these tokens of thanks to our veterans.

Recently, while inspecting an overhead electrical line in the Suttons Bay area, I found a large basswood near a line that had found favor with woodpeckers. The tree was a potential power outage and needed to come down. The property owner agreed to donate the wood and another Cherryland employee, Dave Bott, volunteered his sawmill to cut the logs into usable material. This wood has been donated to the Michigan Wood Carvers Association and after it has cured, will be used to create more canes.

Visit [miwoodcarvers.com](http://miwoodcarvers.com) to learn more about the Patriot Cane/Memorial Project. ■

*Jim Carpenter is the line superintendent for Cherryland Electric Cooperative.*



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