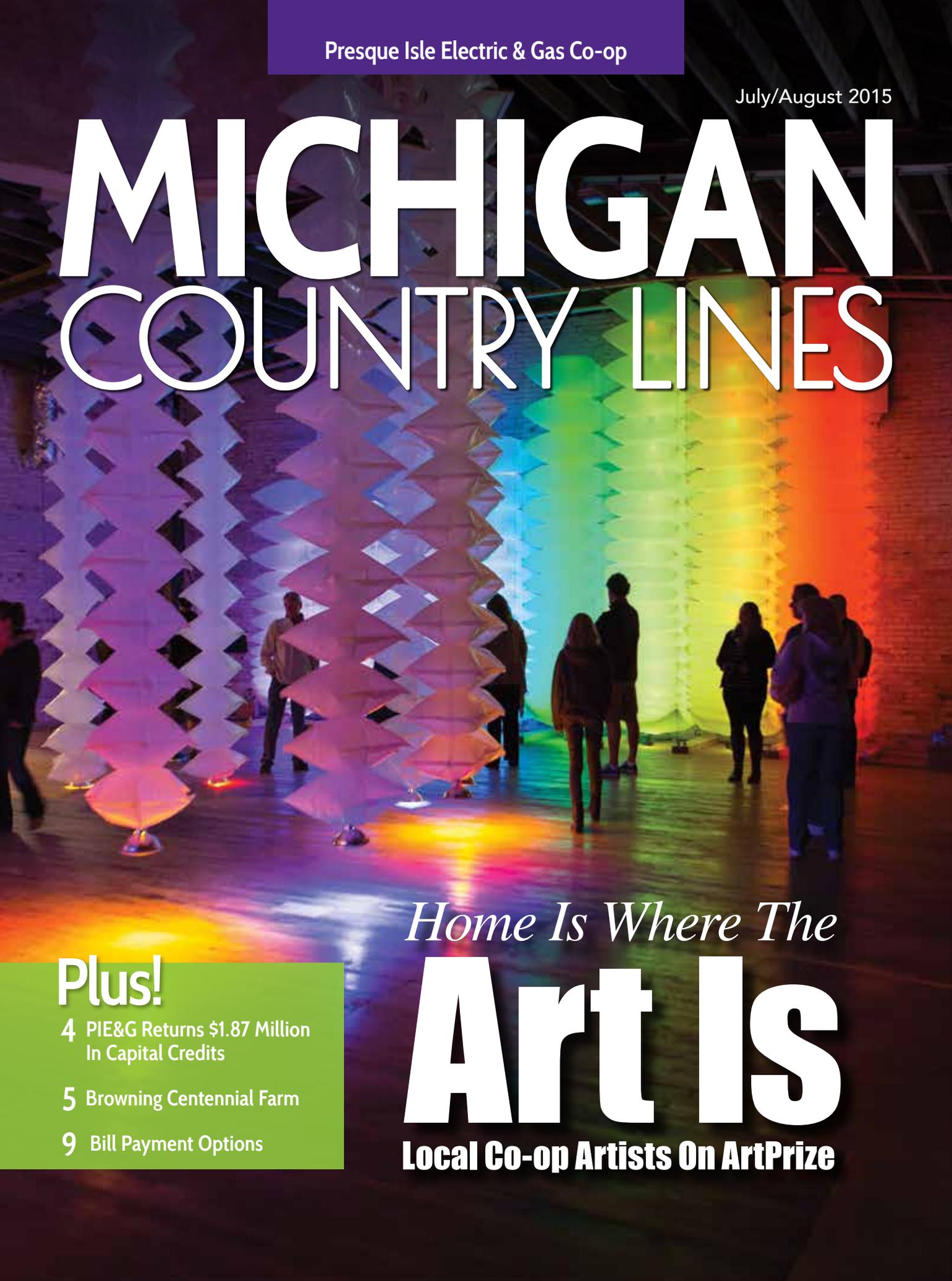


MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



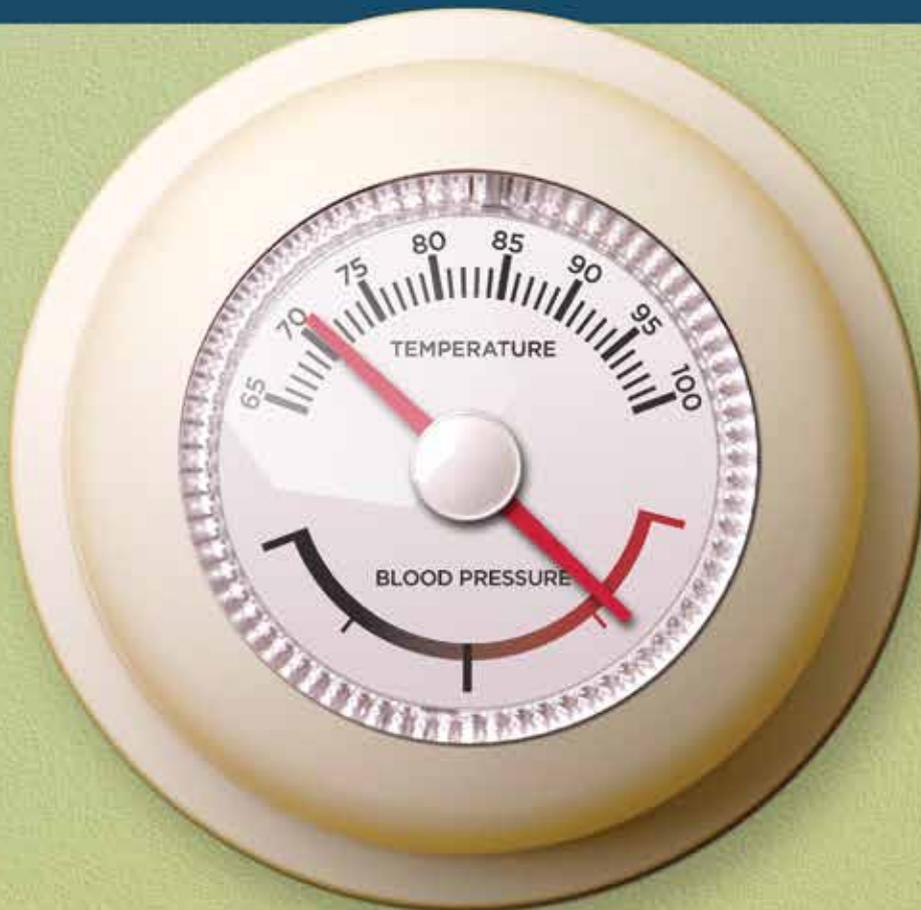
Plus!

- 4 PIE&G Returns \$1.87 Million In Capital Credits
- 5 Browning Centennial Farm
- 9 Bill Payment Options

Home Is Where The

Art Is

Local Co-op Artists On ArtPrize



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

Association officers are **Robert Schallip**, Cloverland Electric Cooperative, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

Unsolicited letters, photos and manuscripts are welcome. *Country Lines*, however, will not be responsible for their safe keeping or return.

The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

Change of Address:

Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.



IN THIS ISSUE



6 OUR ENERGY
Legislation Would Strengthen Tie Between Michigan's Peninsulas
Craig Borr



7 HOME COOKING
A New Twist On The All-American Burger
Christin McKamey & Our Readers



10 FEATURE
Home Is Where the Art Is: Local Co-op Artists On ArtPrize
Emily Haines



13 SAFETY
Water and Electricity: Stay Safe Near Boats, Docks



14 READERS' PAGE
"Tour of Honor" Recognizes Heroic Men And Valiant Women Of Our Country
Jack O'Malley
Mystery Photo Winner!

ON THE COVER*

"Trichromatic Spectra," created by Thomas Linder, was a past entry in the ArtPrize competition held annually in Grand Rapids, MI.

Linder's artwork is a kinetic inflatable installation involving thousands of LEDs that are controlled by computer animation.

Photo courtesy of Artprize.

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
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PIE&G Board Returns \$1.87 Million

\$9 Million Returned Since Inception

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PRESIDENT & CEO

Brian J. Burns
bburns@pieg.com



Brian J. Burns
President & CEO

The Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op board of directors recently authorized a \$1.87 million capital credit retirement to members. Checks are expected to be mailed in October for members who took service in the mid-1980s and 2004.

This will mark the fifth year in a row the PIE&G board has authorized a retirement of capital credits. Since its inception, the co-op has retired approximately \$9 million in capital credits. The term “capital credit” simply represents your ownership or equity interest in the co-op. You furnish capital (equity) when you pay for service *AND* the co-op’s income exceeds expenses to finish its fiscal year with a positive margin. Positive margins become “capital credits” through a process known as “allocation”. The co-op allocates “credits” to each member who took service during the years of positive margins. The amount of the capital credits is proportionate to the revenue received from each member for their energy use. Each dollar of positive margin is tracked and accounted for by allocation to each member. The co-op provides members this amount of “capital credits” on their account(s) each year.

PIE&G’s unique, not-for-profit cooperative business model—“owned by those we serve”—was necessary when “for profit” utilities chose not to serve rural areas. Area leaders wanted the benefits of electric service but had to do for themselves what private industry would not—they had to form their own ‘cooperative’ utility. For more information, see “How Capital Credits Work” below. ■

How Capital Credits Work

John and Mary Doe are PIE&G members. This is how their capital credits work:

1. John and Mary Doe use electricity at their home, for comfort and convenience.
2. John and Mary pay their electric bills each month. PIE&G tracks their energy use and totals the revenue received from the Does.
3. PIE&G’s fiscal year ends in December. Final financial obligations for the year are met; staff closes the books, which are then audited.
4. Income received over and above expenses (margin) is determined.
5. After the audit, the Board of Directors approves allocation of the year’s margins to John and Mary, and the rest of PIE&G’s members, as capital credits. Until retired, they become members’ equity in PIE&G.
6. The board of directors may authorize a cash retirement of a portion of the capital credits to members, determining the total amount to pay, from which years of service, and how they will be paid.
7. John and Mary should see their capital credit allocation notice in the top right message area of their June, July or August billing statement, depending on their monthly due date. If their account is active and they owe a balance, the capital credit retirement will appear as a line item credit on their energy bill.



Browning Family Farm Receives Centennial Designation

The Historical Society of Michigan recently certified the Browning farm in Case Township as a Centennial Farm. To be designated as a Centennial Farm, a property must be a working farm of 10 or more acres that has been continuously owned by the same family for at least 100 years. Farm owners receive a certificate and a display marker for their farm. The official green-and-yellow markers are sponsored by Michigan electric utilities like Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, to commemorate the dramatic changes electricity brought to farm operations and family life. The land was originally purchased in 1914 by brothers Aubrey and Milton Browning and has passed down to several members of the family.

The original homestead consisted of a two-room log home, a shop building, and a barn. Over the years, the owners primarily produced hay, raised livestock, and sold timber. Other structures were built on the farm including a granary, combine shed, tractor shed, woodshed, chicken coop, garage, and a shop.

Producing clover and alfalfa seed was the main source of income. Aubrey attended at least two World Fairs held in Chicago where he first learned of electricity. When a new home was being built in those days, it was wired for electricity even though electricity was not yet available in rural northeast Michigan. One of the first septic systems in the area was installed with the help of Michigan State College. Through reading, common sense and self-education, Aubrey was definitely a forward-thinking man. Aubrey served on the local school board and on the township board. Later, he helped to establish the Presque Isle Soil Conservation District.

The present owner is Jerry Scott Browning, who continues to make and market mixed hay. Jerry plans to pass the farm on to his sons to ensure the farm is cared for and preserved for future generations. ■



Scott and Pat Browning (left and center) with PIE&G Director Sally Knopf (right).



Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

19831 M-68 Hwy.,
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Onaway, 49765

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Most PIE&G natural gas rates and charges are not regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Your Board in Action

At their most recent meetings, the PIE&G Board of Directors:

- Appointed Ann Douglas, Jacqueline Robinson, Joyce Foster, Daniel Kandow and Jennifer Standen to serve three-year terms on the Presque Isle Electric & Gas Communities First Fund board of directors, commencing May 1, 2015.
- Authorized capital credit retirements in 2015 in the amount of \$1.87 million, the fifth consecutive year the board has retired capital credits.
- Reviewed prior to filing IRS Form 990.
- Discussed and reviewed the 2015 10-year Financial Forecast as presented by CFO Sobeck.
- Listened to and accepted the team reports of CFO Sobeck, manager of information systems Kieliszewski, manager of operations and engineering Szymoniak, and CEO Burns. ■

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

PIE&G will be closed **Friday, July 3**, to observe Independence Day and **Monday, Sept. 7**, for Labor Day. Payments may be made anytime at our drop box, online at pieg.com or by Pay-by-phone 1-866-999-4517 and will be posted on the next open business day.

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To report gas emergency, call
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Legislation Would Strengthen Tie Between Our Peninsulas



Craig Borr
Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association
President and CEO

The Mackinac Bridge opened to vehicle traffic between the upper and lower peninsulas nearly 60 years ago. To this day, it continues to be a vital commercial link, as well as a symbol of what Michiganders can do when we work together for our state's benefit.

Legislators in Lansing may soon have an opportunity to debate legislation that could be a similar "bridge" for enhanced

flows of electricity between our two peninsulas. But it will take a great deal of determination and willpower to move this legislation forward. There are likely to be many detractors—as there were when we built the "Mighty Mac".

Legislation was recently introduced in the Michigan Legislature that could result in the development of an additional high-voltage transmission link between the peninsulas. The Senate version of SB 282 was introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson, while the House version, HB 4575, was introduced by Rep. Triston Cole.

Currently, our two peninsulas do not operate as one when it comes to electricity. Michigan policy, utilities and regulators control the Lower Peninsula, while Wisconsin interests and utilities dominate the Upper Peninsula. All too often these competing interests and policies do not align—and customers are caught in the middle.

In addition to creating a more robust electrical tie, the legislation would form one "resource adequacy zone" to include both peninsulas, as well as increase reliability by reducing electrical "congestion" costs involved in the flow of energy between the peninsulas.

These congestion costs are a hidden tax in the cost of electricity. Portions of the northern Lower Peninsula as well as the Upper Peninsula have some of the highest

congestion costs. Residents who live in these congested areas have higher electric costs because of this "hidden tax". These costs could be dramatically reduced, and in some cases eliminated, if we as a state have the will to invest in a more robust transmission link between the peninsulas.

Since most of Michigan's electric cooperatives are net buyers of wholesale electricity, this legislation could create more competitive markets with additional buyers and sellers of wholesale energy, as well as renewable energy—and that should provide tangible long-term benefits for electric cooperative consumers.

This legislation could also expedite the development of newer, cleaner generating capacity for the Upper Peninsula—an area of our state that recognizes all too well what can happen when there is only one significant generation resource and no meaningful way to access bulk electricity from the Lower Peninsula, where most of Michigan's electrical generating capacity is currently located.

Further development of renewable energy, particularly wind, can also be enhanced with additional connectivity between the peninsulas. The Thumb region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula has been identified as the best region for developing wind energy. A more robust transmission link will allow us to export wind from the Thumb area to the Upper Peninsula—or perhaps export wind from the Great Plains and Upper Midwest to utilities throughout Michigan.

If Michigan legislators have the fortitude to enact this legislation and we eventually fund and construct a new, more robust transmission link between our peninsulas, I believe we will look back someday, like we often do when crossing the "Mighty Mac", and feel a very real sense of accomplishment that we as Michiganders have done something to benefit many generations.

Time will tell. ■





ALL-AMERICAN FAVORITE BURGERS

Enjoy new twists on well-known favorites.

Bratburger Summertime Sliders



1 pkg. bratwurst
1 lb. 80/20 ground beef
2 pkg. pretzel dinner rolls

Onion Jam

3 T. butter
¼ c. olive oil
2½ lb. sweet onion, sliced thin
¼ c. balsamic vinegar
1 T. fresh thyme leaves (or 1 t. dried)
1 c. pure maple syrup
salt and pepper

Remove bratwurst from casing and mix bratwurst and burger until evenly combined. Make small patties to match the size of your rolls. Salt and pepper to taste and grill or pan fry burgers to taste. Slice rolls, add burgers and top with onion jam and arugula, if desired. To make onion jam, melt butter and olive oil in a dutch oven. Add onions and sauté on low, stirring occasionally for 15–20 minutes. There should not be any “color” or browning; this process will evaporate the extra water in the onions and concentrate the sweet onion flavors. “Low and slow” is the ticket here. When the onions are soft but not quite translucent, add balsamic vinegar, maple syrup and thyme, and cook until liquid is incorporated into onion mixture. Put into 2–3 jars and enjoy! May keep in refrigerator for up to three weeks. Hot water bath or freeze and keep 6 months. Great on grilled fare, pizzas, and omelettes.

Denise Chapel, Gaylord

Bacon Blue Cheeseburger *(pictured)*

½ lb. bacon, cut into ¼ inch slices
2 lb. 90% lean ground hamburger
½ t. garlic powder
½ t. onion powder
salt and pepper, to taste
1½ c. crumbled blue cheese
8 burger buns
lettuce
sliced tomatoes
sliced onions
your choice of condiments

In a large skillet, cook sliced bacon until crispy. Remove from skillet and drain on paper towel; discard fat or save for other use. Mix bacon with the hamburger and add the garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper. Divide the burger mixture into 8 portions. Divide each portion in half and flatten into patties ¼-inch thick, using waxed paper. Place 2 T. blue cheese in center of 4 patties and top with another patty. Seal by pressing edges together. Cook in large skillet or grill until medium well, or your choice of doneness. Remove from heat and place onto bottom half of buns, and top with more blue cheese and favorite toppings. Serves 4.

Ann Brown, Niles

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite “Candy” recipes by **Aug. 1** and “Easy Chicken” recipes by **Sept. 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)!

Photos—831 Creative

STATE OF MICHIGAN BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE REGULATED GAS CUSTOMERS OF PRESQUE ISLE ELECTRIC & GAS CO-OP CASE NO. U-17848

- Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op requests Michigan Public Service Commission approval for its report relative to its Times Interest Earned Ratio (TIER) Ratemaking Mechanism for the 12 month period ended December 31, 2014, and the Company's requested Regulatory Cost Monthly Charge Adder (RCMCA) for a 12 month period for its Regulated Gas Division customers. If the request is granted, Regulated Gas Division customers will be assessed a RCMCA monthly charge of \$1.90 per month per account beginning the first billing month following issuance of a Commission Order in this docket.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, 19831 M-68 Highway, P.O. Box 308, Onaway, Michigan 49765, (800) 423-6634 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: Thursday, July 30, 2015, at 9:30 a.m.

This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge **Suzanne D. Sonneborn**

LOCATION: Michigan Public Service Commission, 7109 West Saginaw Highway, Lansing, Michigan

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 284-8090 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op's (Presque Isle) April 29, 2015 application for a TIER ratemaking mechanism review for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2014 for its Regulated Gas Division. Presque Isle represents that no revenue adjustment is required. Presque Isle requests adjustments to the schedule of Special Charges related to certain services provided to its membership. Presque Isle also requests an RCMCA of \$1.90 per month per account beginning the first billing month following issuance of a Commission Order in this docket for its Regulated Gas Division customers.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 284-8090 or by email at: mpscedockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by July 23, 2015. (Petitions to intervene may also be filed using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Presque Isle's attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

Any person wishing to appear at the hearing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of his or her wish to make a statement of position. All information submitted to the Commission in this matter becomes public information, thus available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure. Please do not include information you wish to remain private.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to the Michigan Administrative Hearing System's Administrative Hearing Rules R 792.10422 and R 792.10432. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 284-8130.

A copy of the Presque Isle's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets, and at the office of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 284-8090.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6 et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq.; and the Michigan Administrative Hearing System's Administrative Hearing Rules, 2015 AC, R 792.10401 et seq.

May 28, 2015

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Online Payments	Visit pieg.com . Click on “Manage My Account” to set up online access.
Automatic Payments	<p>Enroll:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online (pieg.com/Manage My Account/ log-on to Ebill/ and click on “Financial Information” on left); click link in chart under “Select the Account to Add automatic bill payments” for either “Set up checking or savings account” or “Set up credit/debit card”; OR • Contact PIE&G to request “Auto Pay” form to be mailed for your signature and return to PIE&G for monthly withdrawals from your bank account (checking, savings or debit card) or on your credit/debit card.
By Phone—24/7	Call 866-999-4571 with your account number(s) ready. (For first time check payment by phone, please call PIE&G Member Services at 1-800-423-6634 to request a Personal Identification Number (PIN) to set up account.)

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Acrylic on canvas of a factory ceiling by John Dempsey.

Home is Where the Art Is

Local Co-op Artists on ArtPrize

Coined the largest open art competition in the world—Grand Rapid’s ArtPrize has made its mark on the art world. It has been covered by the likes of *The New York Times* and *GQ* and lauded as both a great art experiment and lambasted as the art equivalent of a reality TV show.

The art competition opens up to any adult artist with the \$50 entry fee and a venue willing to act as its pop-up gallery for the event. When it launched in 2009, no one knew what to expect, but after the first week local restaurants had run out of food, hotels were booked solid and over 200,000 people came from around the country to check out the phenomenon. The big twist is the two \$200,000 grand prizes and eight category awards, resulting in more than \$500,000 awarded by both the public and a jury of art experts.

Whether you love the artful canvas that Grand Rapids becomes once a year or prefer your art in a climate-controlled museum amongst whispered commentary—ArtPrize has some very real rewards for Michigan artists.

“A large number of people see my work at ArtPrize. It is a large-scale event by any measure,” says John Dempsey, who lives on the Ocqueoc River and is a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. “The number of people who come to see ArtPrize is extremely large



Colleen Whittaker’s Michigan map is made from authentic license plates fitted together like a puzzle.



Craig Snook's artwork, created with shredded paper, makes a kaleidoscope of colors that represents the beauty of a Michigan woodland landscape.



Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa's "urban interweave" artwork is acrylic and mixed media on canvas.

compared to all of the other exhibition opportunities available to the vast majority of contemporary artists."

A Traverse City artist and member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Royce Deans says that with the sheer volume of people having exposure to his artwork, the feedback is immediate and thrilling. "ArtPrize is a good place to try out some new ideas in front of people. It can be a little dangerous."

The opportunities that ArtPrize exposes participating artists to can be anything from potential buyers, connections with fellow artists and even future employers. Grand Rapids artist and member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa credits her current teaching position at Kendall College of Art and Design to her participation in ArtPrize. Lily's daughter, Isabella Kostrzewa, entered the ArtPrize young filmmaker awards and won second place. Her prize allowed her to purchase video equipment to continue her passion.

While exposure to a massive audience and opportunities is rewarding, many artists have also benefited on a very personal level.



Royce Deans' "kitsch 2 kunst" is a matrix of 36 panels with original paintings.

"I gained a lot of confidence as an artist," says Craig Snook, an artist who splits his time between Saginaw and Lakeview, and is a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative. "It was a great learning experience and it is fun being known as an 'ArtPrize artist'."

Colleen Whittaker, a Traverse City artist and member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, says overhearing people comment on her artwork allowed her to capture uncensored opinions from the public. "The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, but the ones I remember are the critical comments—which I keep in mind while creating new work. Feedback from such a wide variety of people is invaluable in my quest to create art that appeals to a wide range of people while still being true to my artistic vision." ■

**ArtPrize 2015 will take place
Sept. 23–Oct. 11. Visit Artprize.org
for more information.**

Upgrade, Save with ENERGY STAR® Appliances

Take a look around your home—are outdated appliances wasting money and energy? Wish you could replace that old, malfunctioning refrigerator or dishwasher, but don't know where to start—or if you can afford it? If so, a smart way to begin your search is to look for appliances with the ENERGY STAR® label. Presque Isle Electric and Gas Co-op's Energy Optimization program offers dozens of rebates to help offset the purchase price.

Look for the ENERGY STAR label

ENERGY STAR is a trusted brand for quality products that use significantly less energy than required by minimum federal standards. ENERGY STAR products provide the same features that you're already used to, but can use up to 75 percent less energy than standard models.

Rebates

While ENERGY STAR qualified products can cost a bit more up front compared to standard versions, the initial investment is almost always recouped by the long-term savings that result. To encourage the purchase of ENERGY STAR products and appliances, PIE&G's Energy Optimization program offers rebates (see chart).

Purchase your new ENERGY STAR appliances at the store of your choice, then apply for a rebate from the Energy Optimization program. Simply fill out the rebate form online at michigan-energy.org and mail, fax, or email it to the Energy Optimization program to receive your check. Please visit michigan-energy.org for more information, or call **877.296.4319**. ■

ENERGY STAR Product/Appliance	Rebate Amount
Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs	Varies by retailer via in-store mark-down
LED light bulbs	Varies by retailer via in-store mark-down
Outdoor LED (1 or 2 bulb) fixtures	\$10
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CFL fixture	\$10
Smart power strip	\$10
Room air conditioner	\$25
Dehumidifier	\$25
Dishwasher	\$25
Clothes washer	\$25
Clothes dryer	\$25
Refrigerator	\$25
Chest freezer	\$25
TV (21"–50")	\$25
TV (51" +)	\$50



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ENERGY TIP: Receive your rebate faster by using the online application.



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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.

Check Your Boat, Dock, and the Neighbor's, Too!

Almost one-half of Michigan is comprised of water, so it's easy to see why Michigan boasts a thriving recreational industry and leads the nation with approximately 1 million registered pleasure boats. For boating and water safety, there are items you must legally have on your watercraft—life vests, fire extinguisher, throwable flotation device, and properly working lights—but make sure the boat and the dock are safe, too.

To help prevent accidents, the National Electrical Contractors Association says:

- All installations should be performed by a professional electrical contractor.
- All dock receptacles must comply with the National Electrical Code, which mandates a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). A GFCI measures a circuit's current and senses any imbalance (such as a discharge into the water), which trips the GFCI and cuts off the power.
- Test a GFCI at least monthly. Locate it along the ramp to the dock so it can be easily tested by local fire departments.
- Metal dock frames should have "bonding jumpers" that connect all metal parts to an on-shore

grounding rod. This means any dock part that becomes energized by electrical malfunction will trip the GFCI or circuit breaker.

- Ask neighbors if their dock electrical systems have been inspected and are up to Code.
- Household wire is not suitable for boats.
- *Do not* use wire nuts (these are for solid conductor wire, which should never be on a boat) or splice connectors (can cut wire strands)!
- Fuses are rated to protect the wire, not the stereo. If a fuse blows continuously, something else is wrong.
- If you rent a dock or boat, notify the owner of safety violations immediately.
- Have your boat's system (especially with onboard generators) checked at least annually, and when something is added or removed.
- Ropes, string, masts and rigging also conduct electricity—don't be the common ground between water and electricity! ■

See SafeElectricity.org for more tips.

There's A Story In Every Photo



Presque Isle Gas & Electric Co-op is pleased to announce our new "Photo Contest." Co-op members are invited to submit photos now through Sept. 21. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines* during 2015.

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: All About Michigan due July 20; Sunrises/Sunsets due Aug. 20 and Kids At Play due Sept. 21. Details and instructions for photo submission—including contest rules, topic list, publication date, and submission deadlines—can be found online at <http://bit.ly/1JX5Afh>.

We look forward to seeing your best shot!

One Last Mission

World War II seems like ancient history to a lot of folks. After all, it ended nearly 70 years ago! Never mind that 16 million Americans served, and over 400,000 lost their lives in a war spanning 61 countries. Despite the staggering statistics, school history books dedicate little more than a page or two to what many today call “The Greatest Generation.”

Recently, I was privileged to join 150 WWII veterans and volunteers as they set off to rewrite a page in history during a “Tour of Honor” thanks to Mid-Michigan Honor Flight. Embarking on a one-day tour of Washington, D.C., that included stops to Arlington National Cemetery, Iwo Jima and of course, the National World War II Memorial, veterans learned first-hand the scope of this country’s gratitude.

Dedicated in 2004, the WWII Memorial serves as a fitting tribute to the magnitude of this global conflict. Set between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, stone architecture, bronze sculptures and water features pay homage to both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. More impressive, though, were the tourists who stopped to salute or shake hands with members of the Honor Flight as they walked by. Hearing young and old alike say “thank you” reminded me that in an era when history might be lost to the archives, there are still many who care.

Averaging 92 years old, many veterans pass before having an opportunity to see the monument built in their honor. Honor Flights transport WWII and terminally ill veterans to Washington, D.C., where they can visit the memorials dedicated to their service and sacrifice. Paired with an attentive guardian, each vet was personally escorted from one memorial to the next with a volunteer staff of medics on-call in case of emergency. Every effort is made to make this a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From the corridor of flags lining a path to the departure gate at Cherry Capital Airport to the Pin Curl Girls singing us off at Reagan International Airport to the welcome home celebration at the U.S. Coast Guard Base in Traverse City, no detail was overlooked.



And while attention to detail is obviously critical to the enjoyment and safety of those participating in an Honor Flight, the unplanned displays of gratitude were often the most touching. A man walking through Arlington National Cemetery dropping his bags to salute our three-bus motorcade. A group of middle school students stopping to give thanks. A tour guide inviting a veteran to share his story. A veteran commenting softly in front of the Freedom Wall, “I never thought I’d see this.”

Reporting for WTCM Radio, I wasn’t paired with a veteran like most others traveling that day. Still, I had a few sentimental moments of my own. As I silently thanked my dad for his service in the Pacific Theatre as a member of the Fifth Air Force in New Guinea, I had the undeniable feeling he was with me while I paid reverence to a monument he didn’t live to see.

Harry Truman once said, “Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices.” Within the next five years, most, if not all of our WWII veterans will be gone, and with them, a living piece of history. So the next time you see one, say ‘thanks’. Because we all know freedom isn’t free. And it’s never too late to thank a veteran. ■



Jack O'Malley



Mystery Photo Contest Winner

The May 2015 Mystery Photo contest winner is Michael Mattox, a Midwest Energy Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as “Turnip Rock” in Port Austin, MI, just off the shore in Lake Huron. The unique shape of the rock-island is the result of thousands of years of erosion by storm waves.

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Severe Storm Preparedness Kit Checklist

- Water** – fill up bathtubs and containers with water for washing, and also stock up on bottled water for consumption.
- Food** - at least enough for 3 to 7 days, non-perishable packaged or canned food, juices, foods for infants or the elderly, snack foods, non-electric can opener, cooking tools, fuel, paper plates and plastic utensils.
- Blankets, Pillows and Seasonal Clothing Items**
- First Aid Kit / Medicines / Prescription Drugs**
- Special Items - for babies and the elderly**
- Toiletries / Hygiene items / Moisture wipes**
- Flashlight / Batteries**
- Radio and Clock** - Battery operated, also consider purchasing an NOAA weather radio
- Telephone** - Fully charged cell phone with extra batteries and a traditional (not cordless) landline telephone
- Emergency Numbers** – Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers including the local utility company
- Cash (with some small bills) and Credit Cards** - Banks and ATMs may not be available for extended periods
- Keys**
- Toys, Books and Games**
- Important documents** – (in a waterproof container or bag) insurance cards, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, birth certificates etc.
- Tools** - keep a set with you during the storm. Some items include duct tape, screw drivers, work gloves, safety goggles, etc.
- Vehicle fuel tanks filled**
- Pet care items** - ample supply of food and water, proper identification, immunization records, medications, a carrier or cage, muzzle and leash.
- Keep family and friends out of flooded basements to avoid electrical shock.**
- Keep family and friends away from all downed power lines during or after a storm.**
- Be sure to follow all manufacturers’ recommendations when using a generator to avoid tragedy. Never plug it into a wall outlet or directly into the home’s wiring, and never operate in an enclosed space.**

For additional safety information, please visit: