

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



**Over \$2 million
given away!**

Thank You

FOR SUPPORTING YOUR COMMUNITY

2015 Tri-County Electric People Fund
Annual Report

YES
I want to support
the People Fund!
SEE INSIDE BACK COVER TO
LEARN HOW

Who Does the People Fund Help?

A few of the Thank Yous sent to the People Fund in 2015:

Grants Made to Families

60.0%

Housing Expenses

31.4%

Medical & Dental

3.5%

Special Needs

3.0%

Transportation

2.1%

Funeral Expenses

Grants Made to Organizations

22.3%

Emergency Assistance

16.8%

Community & Public Services

16.0%

Youth Programs

15.6%

Food Banks

9.2%

Housing Assistance

5.9%

Family Services

4.5%

Medical, Dental & Hospice

4.0%

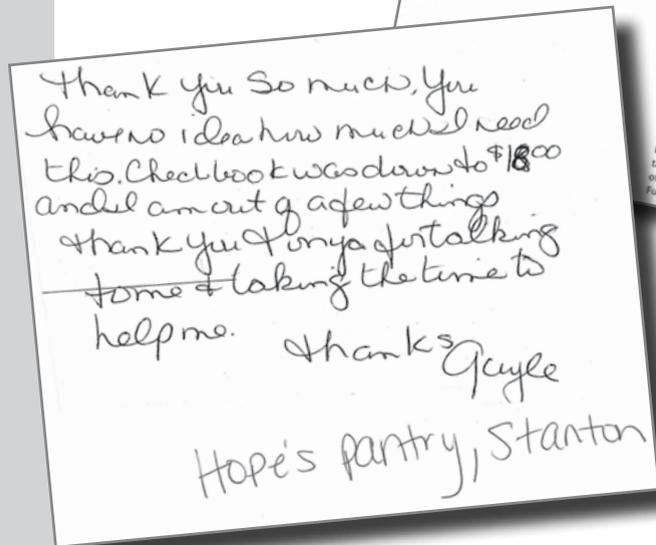
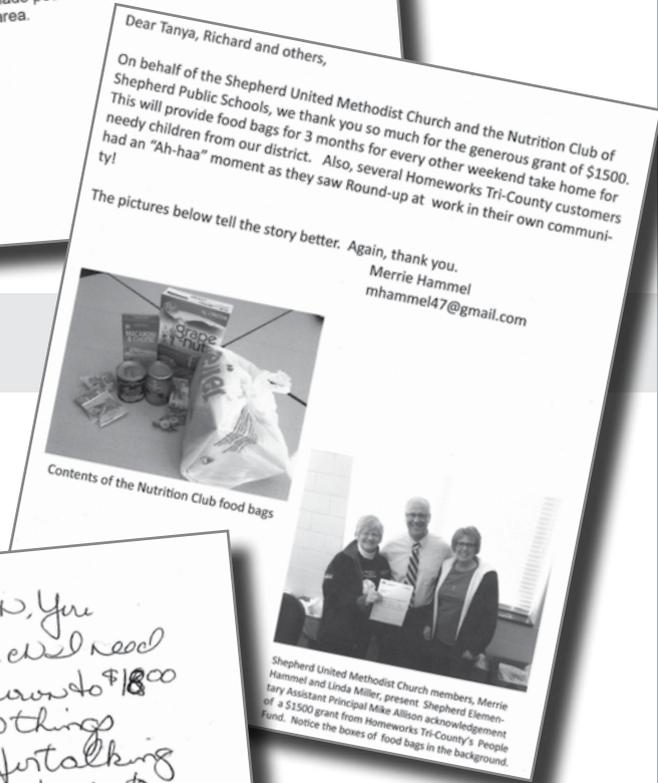
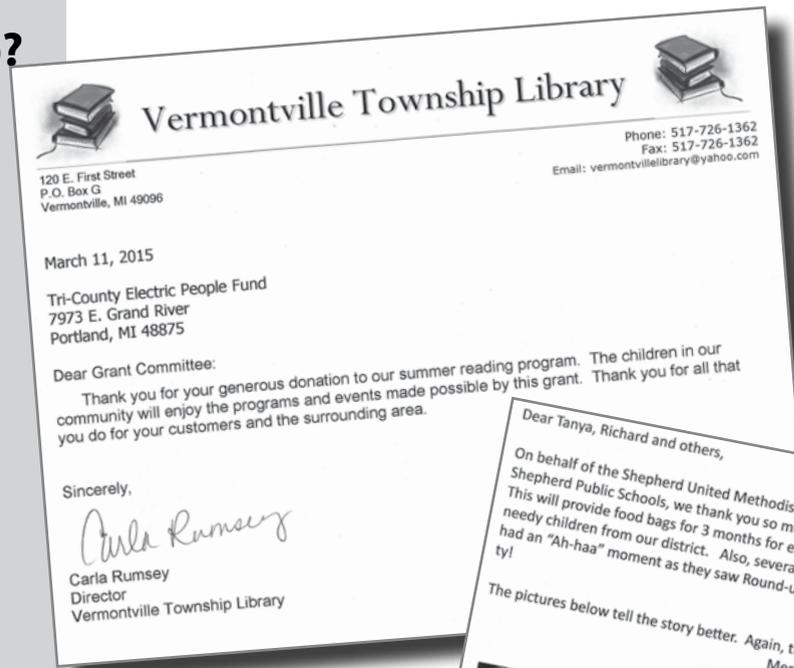
Other Special Needs

3.2%

Programs for Seniors

2.5%

Assistance for Disabled



Your Tri-County Electric People Fund Board of Directors

District 1 • Richard Palermo, Chair
Eaton, Ingham, Jackson counties

District 2 • Jerry Supina, Secretary
Barry and Ionia counties

District 3 • Peg Brown
Most of Clinton County

District 4 • Lisa Johnson
Most of Montcalm County

District 5 • Peggy Pirhonen, Vice-Chair
Gratiot and Saginaw counties,

plus parts of Clinton and Montcalm counties

District 6 • Richard Donley
Clare and Isabella counties

District 7 • Jerrilynn Strong
Mecosta and Osceola counties

MICHIGAN COUNTRY JUNKIES

Art
on
Ice



Plus!

Meet Peg Brown

Save The Date For
District Meetings

Keeping The Lights On



**Act now to receive a
30% Federal tax credit**

7 Series
*Ultimate comfort
and efficiency*



Time is running out to take advantage of a 30% tax credit for geothermal

You may not realize it, but right beneath your feet is an almost unlimited reservoir of stored solar energy. A WaterFurnace geothermal system taps into this free and renewable resource to provide savings of up to 70% on heating, cooling, and hot water—with a comfort you have to experience to believe. Right now you can save thousands on installation thanks to a 30% federal tax credit. But hurry, the credit is only available through the end of 2016. Contact your local WaterFurnace dealer today to learn more!

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

Bad Axe

B & D Htg
(989) 269-5280
bdheating.com

Berrien Springs

WaterFurnace
Michiana
(269) 473-5667
[gogreenmich
geothermal.com](http://gogreenmich
geothermal.com)

Big Rapids

Stratz Htg & Clg, Inc.
(231) 796-3717
stratzgeocomfort.com

Caro

AllTemp
Comfort, Inc.
(866) 844-HEAT (4328)
geo4less.com

Carsonville

Certified Temperature
Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Clifford

Orton Refrig & Htg
(989) 761-7691
sanduskygeothermal.com

DeWitt

S & J Htg & Clg
(517) 669-3705
[geothermalservices
ofmichigan.com](http://geothermalservices
ofmichigan.com)

Grand Rapids

Total Comfort
Resource, LLC
(616) 406-3182
totalcomfortresource.com

Hart/Ludington

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
adamsheatingcooling.com

Indian River

M & M Plmb & Htg
(231) 238-7201
mm-plumbing.com

Jackson/Adrian

Comfort 1
Htg & A/C
(517) 764-1500
[comfort1.net/
geothermal](http://comfort1.net/
geothermal)

Kalkaska

Kalkaska Plmb & Htg
(231) 258-3588
kalkaskageothermal.net

Mt Pleasant

Walton Htg & Clg
(989) 774-1566
waltonheating.com

Muskegon

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
[adamsheating
cooling.com](http://adamsheating
cooling.com)

Kiessel Geothermal

Htg & Clg
(231) 747-7509
kiesselsgeo.com

Portland

ESI Htg & Clg
(517) 647-6906
esiheating.com

Sunfield

Mark Woodman
Plmb & Htg
(517) 886-1138
mwphonline.com

Traverse City

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000
watergeofurnace.com

D & W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215
dwgeothermal.com



waterfurnace.com/Credit

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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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

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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.

Cover photo by Dre Photography

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IN YOUR WORDS

Question Of The Month—We Asked, You Answered.

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question: What is the best compliment you have ever received? Thank you for all the responses. Here are some of your answers:

Something that I would have abhorred as a teenager but treasure now —“You remind me of your mom.”

The best compliment I ever received was, “You’re as pretty as a keeper rainbow trout on the end of the line on opening day.” James and I have been best friends for 40 years and married for over 38 years.

You are a good listener.

Our new Question of the Month is:

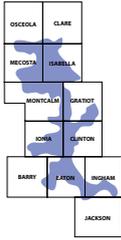
If you could be any age for a week, what age would that be?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by April 1.



A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
WWW.VOTE.COOP

Don't forget to vote in the presidential primary on March 8. Visit vote.coop for more information.



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue
Blanchard MI 49310
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue
Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232

Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333
(24 hours for emergency calls)

Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

High Speed Internet

1-800-668-8413

homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

Board of Directors

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lpohl@homeworks.org

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khansen@homeworks.org

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cevens@homeworks.org

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Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC



Find us on Facebook.

facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Spare Change Adds Up To \$2 Million



Mark Kappler
General Manager

One of the great things about electric cooperatives is how we work together.

A great example is our mutual aid system. We get help from our sister co-ops when we have many outages after a storm, and in turn we send crews to help out when we're needed elsewhere. We sent linemen up north to Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op in Oneway after we finished repairs this past Christmas, for instance, and we've been able to call on Great Lakes Energy, Cherryland Electric, and Midwest Energy, among others, for crews and equipment during past storms.

There are other good ideas that get shared when we work together. Many of our most popular programs were developed from one co-op starting a program, then allowing others to build on it for their own member-owners. The list includes our online outage map, our use of Facebook to host conversations with you, and our participation in Partners For Power, helping to electrify a village in Guatemala last fall.

Another one of these good ideas is Operation Round Up, in which members can round up their monthly energy bills to the next dollar. This "spare change" is donated to a not-for-profit foundation that in turn makes grants to families and organizations in need, right here in mid-Michigan.

We call our foundation the Tri-County Electric People Fund. A few months ago, after 22 years of making grants, the People Fund topped the \$2 million milestone. That includes 560 grants to families in our 13-county service area, plus 775 grants to organizations that help even more families. You can read more in the Annual Report that wraps this month's issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

If you participate, you've helped keep families in their homes, provided clothes and snacks for schoolchildren, and kept local fire and ambulance departments up-to-date. You've stocked the shelves of area food banks, sent books to young readers, and repaired a senior center parking lot. It's all been done with your spare change, averaging about 50 cents a month.

Thank you for 22 years, and \$2 million-plus, of support for our communities. We hope there are many, many more to come. We know there will be more good ideas to share. ■

Peg Brown Joins People Fund Board

Peg Brown, of Eagle, was appointed in December to the District 3 seat on the Tri-County Electric People Fund board. She will serve the remainder of the current term, through September 2018, following the retirement of Mary Ellen Heffron in late 2015.

“Peg is an active community volunteer who will bring a valuable perspective to the board as they review grant applications,” said HomeWorks Tri-County District 3 director Luke Pohl, who nominated her for the board seat.

She graduated from Western Michigan University with a home economics education major/family life education minor, then earned a Master of Education degree in guidance and counseling from Wayne State University.

“I was a home economics teacher, then became a school food service director,” she says. “Then I joined the Michigan Department of Education as a consultant in the school meals program.” She later coordinated food and nutrition programs, and a food distribution program, for the state.

“I retired several years ago and became a real active mom, with my daughter in the 6th grade and my son in the 8th grade. Then I joined the sandwich generation, caring for my aging parents.”

She was an active volunteer while caring for her family, as the empty nest gave her more time to serve. Her activities include parental volunteering at St. Michael School and in the Grand Ledge school system, and serving on the Diocese of Lansing Board of Education. She is a trustee of the McLaren Greater Lansing Foundation and president of the McLaren Greater Lansing Volunteers, and a member of the St. Michael Parish Worship Commission, as well as president of Blue Star Mothers Chapter 99.



Peg Brown, of Eagle, has joined the People Fund board of directors. She has experience with food and nutrition programs and counseling, plus years of volunteering and leadership, to help the board review grant applications.

“Mary Ellen approached me first about the People Fund board,” Brown says. “I’ve been aware of the People Fund as a member of HomeWorks Tri-County, and she knows I’ve always been in a helping, service-oriented profession.

“I’m looking forward to this. I’ve reviewed grants in my professional work, and I enjoy finding the facts in the story,” she says. ■

Save the Date For Your District Membership Meeting:



Join us at your local district meeting for a light supper, cooperative update, and a chance to win prizes, as this family did last year at Lake Odessa! Watch your mail for your invitation; bring the registration card with you to vote in any elections and to enter our prize drawings.

- May 16 – District 5 (Election)** Fulton Middle School Gym
- May 17 – District 1 (Election)** . . . St. Mary’s Church Hall, Charlotte
- May 18 – District 6** Beal City High School
- May 19 – District 3** Eagle Park Hall
- May 23 – District 7 (Election)** St. Michael’s School, Remus
- May 24 – District 4 (New Location)** Montabella Jr-Sr High Cafeteria
- May 25 – District 2** St. Edward’s Church Hall, Lake Odessa

Each meeting starts with a light supper, followed by a business meeting at 6 p.m.

Watch your mailbox in late April for information, a map, and your registration card.



Like us on Facebook to keep up with these events!

Down Home Comfort

Using the earth for heating and cooling makes sense.

By Ted Clutter, The Geothermal Exchange Organization

There's a movement afoot, but don't worry—the ground isn't shaking. It is quietly heating and cooling tens of thousands of homes and commercial buildings across Michigan with ground-source—or geothermal—heat pumps.

Geothermal heat pumps are renowned by both the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency as our most efficient and environmentally friendly heating and cooling technology for homes, businesses and institutional spaces of all sizes. Indeed, by tapping the free

renewable energy of the ground, geothermal heat pumps (GHPs) can save consumers up to 70 percent on their monthly energy bills.

Geothermal Benefits

Geothermal heating and cooling saves energy and reduces fossil fuel use, either on-site or at power plants. Geothermal heat pumps reap huge savings on ratepayer energy bills because they use less electricity than conventional equipment.

Geothermal heat pumps are a comfortable, "green energy" solution and an easy way to act locally, while thinking globally about the environment. Indeed, they shrink the average carbon footprint of a typical American home by nearly 50 percent. Best of all, geothermal heat pumps are "Made in the USA" by an innovative industry that is creating jobs all across America.

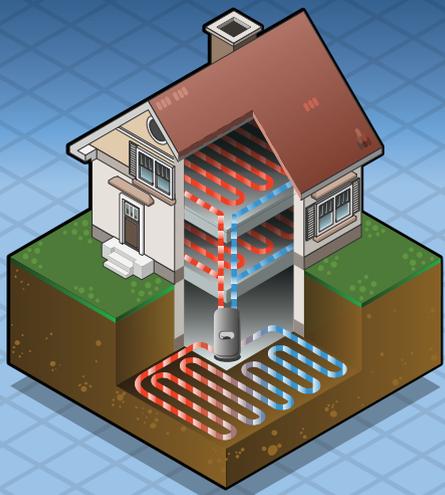
Geothermal Incentives

The federal government offers a 30 percent tax break for homeowners who install a GHP (10 percent for commercial jobs). Those credits expire at the end of 2016, but the Geothermal Exchange Organization (GEO) is working with Congress to extend them through 2022. For the time being, you can still take advantage of the credits if your project is in service before the end of the year.

And be sure to check with your electric co-op about any rebates they might offer for a geothermal system. Your trusted local geothermal heat pump contractor will be able to help you with that information.

For more information and member contractors in your area, visit the Geothermal Exchange website, geoexchange.org. ■

Please note this article focuses on one type of system, there are other types of energy-saving heat pumps, such as pond loop or air-to-air types. Discuss options with a trusted heat pump contractor.



How Geothermal Heat Pumps Work

Geothermal heat pumps use a series of plastic pipes—called ground loops—buried beneath the surface where temperatures are a constant 50° throughout the year (depending on where you live). The fusion-sealed pipes are connected to geothermal heating and cooling equipment inside the home or building.

Water circulating through the system carries heat to and from the ground, depending on the season. During the summer months, unwanted heat indoors is transferred outside to the ground for cooling by the earth. The cool water flows through the GHP system to provide air conditioning.



Staying Safe In A Car Accident With A Utility Pole

Winter wonderlands are beautiful, but they can be a driving nightmare. Snow, slush, ice and wind make driving more stressful and hazardous. If you are in an accident involving a utility pole, your vehicle may be charged with electricity. If this is the case and you step out of the car, you will become the electricity's path to the ground and could be electrocuted.

While downed lines sometimes reveal they are "live" by arcing and sparking with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs that they are live, but they are just as lethal.

Stay in the car if you are in an accident with a power pole. Warn those who try to help that they must stay far away from the vehicle. Call 911 for help, and wait until a utility professional tells you it is safe to leave the car.

The exception to this rule is if your car is on fire. In that case, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Then "bunny hop" away with your feet together to safety. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body. ■



ENERGY STAR: Your Best Defense Against Energy Waste

Looking for new ways to save energy, but not sure where to start? Team up with the Energy Optimization program and take your outdated, energy-wasting lightbulbs, appliances, and electronics out of the game. The Energy Optimization program helps you upgrade your home by providing rebates toward the purchase of highly-efficient ENERGY STAR products. Read on to discover more about ENERGY STAR and how much you can expect to save.

What is ENERGY STAR?

Established as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ENERGY STAR is a trusted brand for quality products that use significantly less energy than required by minimum federal standards. The ENERGY STAR label can be found on hundreds of items, including lightbulbs, electronics, major appliances, and even certified homes and buildings.

ENERGY STAR products provide the same features you're used to, but can use up to 75 percent less energy than

standard models. In order for a product to bear the ENERGY STAR label, it must:

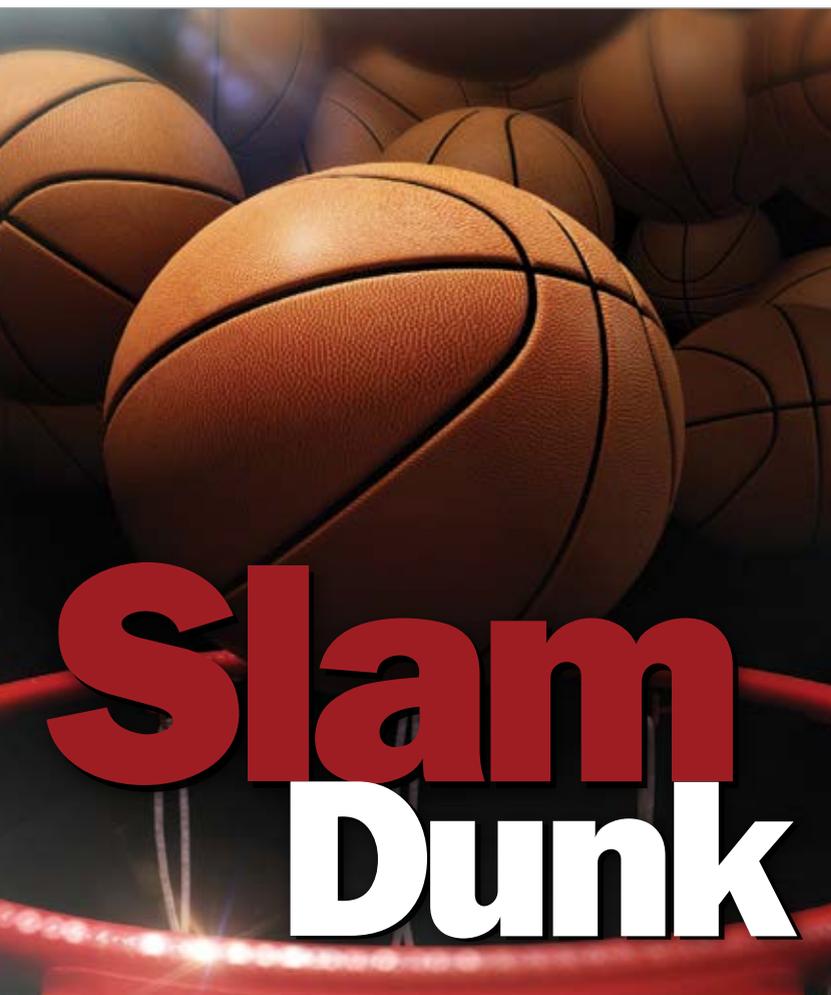
- Contribute significant energy savings.
- Deliver features and performance that customers demand.
- Back up energy savings claims with testing.

View all rebates at michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for details. ■

Below are just a few ENERGY STAR products eligible for Energy Optimization program rebates:

Product	Efficiency comparison (vs. a new standard model)*	Energy Optimization program rebate**
Clothes washer	Uses 35% less water and energy	\$100
Computer	Uses 60% less energy	\$50
Dehumidifier	Uses 15% less energy	\$75
Dishwasher	Uses 5% less energy and 15% less water	\$75
Chest Freezer	Uses at least 10% less energy	\$50
Refrigerator	Uses 9% less energy	\$50
Television	Uses at least 25% less energy	\$50-100
Room air conditioner	Uses 15% less energy	\$50

*All data according to energystar.gov. **Rebate amounts are subject to change.



Slam Dunk

The ball's in your court.

Your game plan for 2016: Start saving energy. Get off the bench and score big when you purchase ENERGY STAR® lighting and appliances! The Energy Optimization program provides rebates on bulbs, smart power strips, ceiling fans, dishwashers, TVs, and more.

ENERGY TIP: For the fastest way to receive your rebate, use our new online application.

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org
PHONE: 877.296.4319



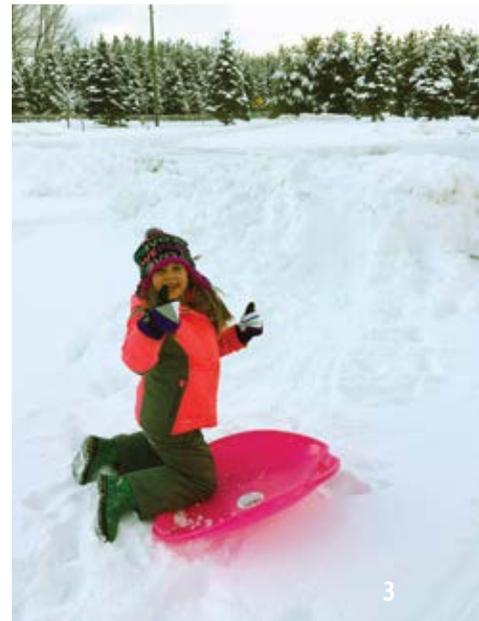
Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.



1



2



3



4

Capture Your Favorite Moments And Share

- 1 From Sarah Cross of Edmore comes this photo: "My 18-month-old daughter, Summer Rae, snowboarding at Boyne Mountain last winter."
- 2 Susan Mills of Dewitt shared this photo of pets Millie, Harley and Hissy out for a stroll.
- 3 Jaimee Cotter of Weidman sent in this action shot of "sledding fun at our home, with my daughter Rylee, six years old."
- 4 Laura Sage of Stanton took this image of "Casper, our labradoodle dog, playing in the snow on an afternoon walk at Clifford Lake."

See more amazing photos at facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Submit Your Photo!

Contributors whose photos we publish in 2016 will be entered into a drawing and *Country Lines* will choose two winners for a bill credit of up to \$100 each on their December electric bill, due in January 2017!

Upcoming Snap Shot Contests

"Saluting Our Armed Forces," Deadline: **March 15** (May issue)

"Fishing," Deadline: **April 15** (June issue)

"All About Michigan," Deadline: **May 16** (July-August issue)

Go to homeworks.org/content/snapshots to submit your high resolution digital photos and see additional themes. It's fast and easy. To send by mail: Include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, and details about your photo. Mail to Attn: *Country Lines* Snap Shots, 7973 E. Grand River, Portland, MI 48875. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos.

PERFECT PASTA!

Try these inspiring pasta recipes full of flavorful ingredients!



Pasta Bacon Toss

Joy Frazee, Portland

- 1 lb. bacon, cut up
- 4 c. chicken broth
- 2-14.5-oz. cans Italian-style diced tomatoes
- 1 med. onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced (or more, if desired)
- ½ t. crushed red pepper flakes, optional
- 16 oz. box uncooked linguine pasta
- 4 ozs. cream cheese
- 5 ozs. parmesan cheese, shredded

Cut bacon into 1-inch pieces and fry; remove from skillet. Put approximately 1 T. of bacon grease in a pot. Add minced garlic and pepper flakes; cook for 10–20 seconds. Add onion; cook 2–3 minutes or until onion is tender. Add broth, diced tomatoes and about a handful of fried bacon pieces, reserving the rest for later. Add uncooked pasta, simmer for 9–10 minutes stirring occasionally, covered, or until pasta is cooked. Mix in the cream cheese until blended well with the pasta and the sauce is thickened. Serve and top with some bacon and shredded Parmesan. This is great for two nights; for the second night, top the remaining pasta with mozzarella and/or Parmesan cheese and bake at 350° until heated through and cheese is melted. Top with cooked bacon.

Greek-Style Scampi (pictured)

Patrick Simmer, Dewitt

- 6 oz. uncooked angel hair pasta
- 1 t. olive oil
- ½ c. chopped green bell pepper
- 2 t. bottled minced garlic
- 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes with basil, garlic, oregano; undrained
- ⅛ t. black pepper
- 1 lb. peeled & deveined medium uncooked shrimp
- ⅛ t. ground red pepper
- 6 T. crumbled feta cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt. Drain pasta and keep warm. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add green bell pepper to pan; sauté 1 minute. Add garlic and tomatoes; cook 1 minute. Add black pepper and shrimp; cover and cook 3 minutes or until shrimp is done (don't overcook). Stir in red pepper; remove from heat. Place 1 c. pasta on each of four plates. Top each serving with 1 c. shrimp mixture and 1 ½ T. feta cheese.

Pasta Salad

Becky Beard, Portland

- 1 lb. tri-color spiral pasta
- ¼ c. red or green pepper, chopped
- ¼ c. green olives
- ½ c. cucumber, chopped
- ¾ c. cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half
- ½ c. feta cheese
- ¼ c. red onions, chopped
- ¼ c. pepperoni slices, cut in quarters
- 1 c. Zesty Italian dressing (or more if needed, to taste)

Cook the pasta according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cool water. Mix with remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Refrigerate until chilled.

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all our readers who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Quick and Easy" recipes by **April 1** and "BBQ" recipes by **May 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprint or type on one side, please): Country Lines Recipes, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

A RECIPE WINNER EVERY MONTH!

Contributors whose recipes we print each month will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay a \$50 credit on the winner's electric bill! A winner will be selected every month.



Pistachio Pesto Pasta

Christin McKamey

- 8 oz. pasta (gluten free, if desired)
- 2 c. fresh baby spinach, packed
- ½ c. shelled pistachios, roasted and unsalted
- 2 c. fresh basil leaves, packed
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ c. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 T. white wine vinegar
- 1 T. fresh lemon juice
- ½ t. ground sea salt, or to taste
- ¼ t. freshly ground black pepper

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside. In a food processor or high powered blender, add the remaining ingredients. Blend until chopped and thoroughly combined. Mix the pesto with the hot pasta and stir to combine. Serves 4. Will last in the fridge about four days.

Creamy Ranch Pasta Salad

Karen Beard, Portland

- ½ box shaped pasta
- 1 head broccoli, chopped
- 1 c. frozen peas, thawed
- ½ pkg. mini pepperoni slices
- 4 oz. Monterey Jack cheese, chopped into small pieces or shredded
- 12 small carrots, chopped
- Ranch dressing (we use the packet and make our own...tastes much better)

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and run cold water over pasta to cool it. Combine rest of ingredients, except the ranch dressing, into a bowl. Pour cooled pasta into the bowl, then stir in dressing (as much as you like).

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland, Jan. 18, your board of directors:

- Appointed Peg Brown, of Eagle, to fill the remaining term of the open District 3 seat on the Tri-County Electric People Fund board of directors.
- Elected Kimber Hansen and Mark Kappler to serve as HomeWorks' two directors on the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association board, effective in April, and Luke Pohl to serve as alternate director.
- Read and discussed Board Policy 313—"Personal Communication Devices," approving it as read.
- Elected Ed Oplinger as one of two HomeWorks representatives on the Wolverine Power Cooperative board, effective in April, when Dean Floria's term ends.
- Authorized continuing membership in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association for 2016.
- Reviewed the 2015 financial and statistical report, and changes made in 2016, for the Energy Optimization program.
- Named voting delegates to the Wolverine and MECA annual meetings in April.
- Learned there were 113 new members in December.
- Acknowledged the December-January safety report, listing employee training and several employee and public incidents. ■

People Fund Helps Families With Housing

Meeting Jan. 27, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board of directors made four grants totaling \$7,358.16, including:

- \$3,200 to St. Mary's St. Vincent De Paul Charlotte, for their rent and utility program;
- \$1,590.52 to a Mecosta County family to help with housing expenses;
- \$420 to a Montcalm County family to pay for a year of Lifeline service; and
- \$2,347.64 to a Mecosta County family, assisting with housing expenses.

To learn more about the Tri-County Electric People Fund, please see the Annual Report included with this month's issue as an outer cover.

How to Apply for a Grant

The Tri-County Electric People Fund provides grants to individuals and organizations in the co-op's service area for food, shelter, clothing, health, and other humane needs, or for programs or services that benefit a significant segment of a community.

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI. 48875, for an application form and grant guidelines, or visit homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by April 11 for the April board meeting, and by May 23 for the June board meeting. ■

Pay Your Bill 24/7



By Internet*:

- Go to homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html
- Key in Amount to Pay
- Select "Pay Now"
- Select your Payment Option
- Select "Make Payment"
- Key in Payment Information
- Select "Continue"
- Wait for Payment Confirmation (Note your confirmation number)

Average time: 1 minute, 50 sec

By Phone:

- Dial 1-877-999-3395
- Select "Make Payment" Option
- Key in Account Number, followed by #
- Listen to your Current Balance
- Key in Amount to Pay
- Key in Payment Information
- Wait for Payment Confirmation (Note your confirmation number)

Average time: 2 minutes, 45 sec

Save paper! Opt for paperless billing and use SmartHub to download a PDF file of your monthly bill. Call us at 1-800-562-8232 or log in to SmartHub to switch to this option.

**SmartHub is your online and mobile gateway to managing your HomeWorks account. The mobile app is available through Google Play or iTunes.*

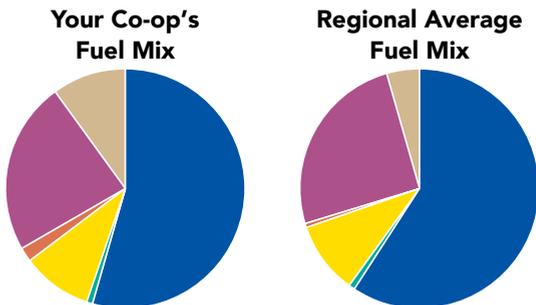
Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/15.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	53.0%	55.0%
Oil	0.5%	0.6%
Gas	16.1%	12.8%
Hydroelectric	1.3%	0.7%
Nuclear	21.6%	25.7%
Renewable Fuels	7.5%	5.2%
Biofuel	0.9%	0.7%
Biomass	0.4%	0.5%
Solar	0.1%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.1%	0.0%
Wind	5.6%	3.4%
Wood	0.4%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas; and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix, but does not include renewable energy credits (RECs) that bring the total for renewable fuels above 10%.



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.9	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,637	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.9	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0070	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/15.

HomeWorks purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc. which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Country Lines, Your Communications Partner



For over 35 years, our co-op members have received *Michigan Country Lines* because it is the most effective and economical way to share information with our members. This is our most empowering communication tool to keep members up-to-date about everything going on within their electric co-op.

Each issue contains information about our services, director elections, member meetings, and the staff and management decisions you need to know about as an owner of the co-op.

The magazine also includes legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Michigan Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its important principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members.

The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Michigan Country Lines* on your behalf at an average cost of \$3.91 per year, paid as part of your electric bill. The current magazine cost is 48 cents per copy—less than the cost of a first class stamp. *Michigan Country Lines* is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

Need Help With College Costs?

Click on homeworks.org for information on winning your share of \$4,000 in HomeWorks Touchstone Energy Scholarships offered to members.

High school seniors are eligible for one of three \$1,000 Touchstone Energy scholarships, awarded to students whose primary residence is served by HomeWorks Tri-County and based on a combination of merit and need. We also offer two adult education scholarships of \$500 each.

Scholarship applications are due March 16. Look for application forms and complete rules online at homeworks.org, call Jayne Graham at 517-647-1252, or email jgraham@homeworks.org.





Art on Ice

By Emily Haines Lloyd

When she was younger, Stephanie Miller wanted a career in education—art, to be exact. She never became an art teacher, but she most definitely became an artist and a teacher.

For over 25 years, Miller has built her life around one of her true passions—ice skating. Spending many years at ice rinks around Metro Detroit, Miller became a successful competitive skater and an impassioned stylist. Bored with the uninspired costumes available to her, she started beading her own skating outfits. Before she knew it, other skaters were begging her to help them spruce up their costumes.

"I'm the unlikely story. I got my 'degree' in skating," said Miller. "I was a skater who had an artistic eye and before I knew it, I had a career."

Accident or not, the trajectory of Miller and her partner, Luanne Williams' business is nothing short of impressive.

Once a week, Miller leaves her small town of Kingsley, just 15 miles outside Traverse City, and travels to the Detroit Skating Club, where she and Williams (from Grass Lake) take over the rink's Club Room. There, skaters wait in line to meet with the designers about upcoming competition costumes and what will make them stand out on the ice.

The two have created costumes for an impressive list of world-renowned skaters, including Olympic gold medalists Meryl Davis and Charlie White. Davis wore one of Miller's designs when the duo won their gold medal in Sochi. She has designed Davis' costumes for nearly 20 years—a testament to the trust and respect the skating community has for Miller and Williams.

"I am always on the skater's side," said Miller. "I listen to their music, to what they like or don't like



and I encourage them to listen to their gut. They are the one that has to go out and perform in this costume. They have to love it."

While many have recommended that Miller collaborate with an apparel shop to mass-produce her designs, the costume veteran can't fathom it.

"My heart is in custom, original designs," she explains. "I love having a new piece of artwork to focus on. Otherwise, I would be bored out of my mind."

When she's not creating fresh designs and meticulously adhering stones, Miller is a coach at the Traverse City Skating Club. She's become the teacher she always wanted to be—grooming a new generation of skaters and possibly even clients.

When she drives home at the end of a day of coaching, she's inspired by any number of things, a billboard or the pure aqua blue of Traverse Bay. Before she knows it, there's a new idea for a costume for the artist/teacher who always seems to be working.

"I see something like the water in the bay and all I can think is how great that color will look on the ice." ■

Above: Wearing costumes designed by Miller, are Frances Rossiter (left), 12, a national skater from MI, and Anna Rossiter, 11, a top regional skater who started at age 3.

Photos—Dre Photography





Crews perform preventive maintenance on a circuit between Remus and Barryton.

Keeping Your Lights On

It's impossible to eliminate all power outages, but HomeWorks Tri-County works hard to reduce the severity of an outage so it affects fewer members, and speeds restoration so that members aren't out as long.

Chris Jensen, manager of engineering, and his team work closely with our line crews to build, inspect and maintain a reliable electric system.

How We Work To Prevent Outages

The five major categories of outage causes, based on our records from 2008-2015, are listed here.

Weather-Related

- 40.4% of incidents
- 73.4% of member-hours
- Includes: lightning, wind, trees, ice, and storms.



Ice on trees threatened our power lines during the Christmas 2013 ice storm.

"Our work plan includes continually replacing aged facilities, such as poles, wire and transformers, one to five miles at a time," says Jensen. The focus is on main "feeders" coming out of substations, and on long single-phase lines that can be converted to three-phase. "We're building the new lines with shorter spans and heavier wire to withstand wind, ice, snow and trees."

HomeWorks Tri-County has increased its investment in right-of-way clearing, as well. The easement is for 50 feet on either side of the line, but the co-op is currently clearing 15 feet on either side. Cutting away dead ash trees, even outside the right-of-way, has also been a priority.

"We're also being more proactive, watching the weather. If a storm is forecast, we activate our Emergency Response Plan to make sure we have people available and materials ready, to help shorten our response time," Jensen says.

After a major storm, there are often calls to put power lines underground. Jensen agrees underground lines are good for preventing weather events, "but they're horrible at stopping human events like dig-ins." He adds that underground lines cost more to install, and the materials don't last as long as overhead, either.

Public Incidents

- 22.4% of incidents
- 6.3% of member-hours
- Includes vehicle accidents and large equipment hitting overhead lines or poles.



A recent car-pole encounter left the guy wire bent; when crews went to replace it, they found the pole was also broken.

"Our continual public education outreach is directed at construction companies, farmers, and others who use the heavy equipment that gets bigger every year," Jensen says.

If construction takes place near power lines, we can provide warning signs, or cover up exposed lines. Our right-of-way planner will work with homeowners when they hire a tree-clearing company, if there's a chance the cut tree will endanger a power line.

"Our system was originally built to Rural Electrification Administration (now Rural Utilities Service) specs for economic construction, and we cut through a lot

of farmers' fields because they were the straightest route," Jensen adds. "Now we're moving lines out of the fields to near road rights-of-way, so we're recording more vehicle accidents."

Animals

- 19.4% of incidents
- 1.4% of member-hours



Blanchard lineman Jon Karcher built this osprey platform to coax the birds to nest away from our lines.

Birds and animals are attracted to the warmth of energized electric equipment, whether it's high on a pole or behind a substation fence.

"The original transformers had a warm spot open on the top, near the fuse," Jensen says. "We're now systematically upgrading to a different style, although it will take awhile with 19,000-plus transformers across 13 counties." The new transformers add a separate "cut out" to protect the lines, and have a plastic coating on the wire to the switch to reduce energized bare spots.

"We've also redesigned some pole structures to have a narrower profile, which deters raptors from building their nests," he says. In one recent instance, a member alerted the co-op to an osprey trying to nest atop a power pole; a crew was able to move the nest to a platform they built on an old pole placed nearby.

Equipment

- 16.9% of incidents
- 7.7% of member-hours
- Includes faults, decay or corrosion, overload, and moisture.



This set of insulating bells has a tiny crack (see circle) that let moisture in, leading to an arc and pole fire.

Poles are tested on a 10-year cycle, and crews do operations and maintenance inspections with the goal of looking at every piece of line at least once every five years. A lineman's experienced eyes can detect small issues that can be repaired before an outage occurs.

Jensen says the co-op recently bought an infrared camera to examine older equipment for warm spots that indicate a possible failure.

"We're also using new types of material that are less likely to fail from a lightning strike or other damage," he says.

Power Supply

- 0.9% of incidents
- 11.2% of member-hours



One way Wolverine can restore power faster is by training HomeWorks Tri-County linemen (here, Jeremy McVeigh at left and Jody Birch) to do basic switching operations.

HomeWorks Tri-County staff members meet with their counterparts at Wolverine Power Cooperative at least annually, and more often as needed, to discuss reliability issues.

Wolverine's current focus is on improving animal protection at the 27 substations that serve HomeWorks Tri-County members. Strips of plexiglas in fences, concrete footers at gates to prevent animal-sized gaps, and monthly inspections for problem areas all help to keep critters away from warm substation equipment.

"We've also added animal guards on the riser poles that come out of the subs," Jensen says. "Where they couldn't get through or under the fence, they've found a way in via our overhead lines."

Wolverine has its own work plan that includes rebuilding its substations across lower Michigan, and using more advanced technology where it can make a difference. They're upgrading transmission lines as they rebuild them, too, using taller poles, stronger wire, and wider rights-of-way. ■

Surf's Up!

While most of us prepare for a snow storm by stopping by the gas station or grocery store, one Northern Michigan native is waxing her surf board. Her surf board? Yes, and a few adventurous souls like Ella Skrocki, 21, catch waves on the Great Lakes year-round.

A student at Northern Michigan University majoring in environmental studies, Ella grew up in the small coastal town of Empire where her parents own Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak Shop. Brought up with the heart of a surfer, Ella attended surf camps in California where fellow students found the idea of surfing the Great Lakes far-fetched.

But there's nothing improbable about it, and many seasoned Great Lakes surfers prefer the winter waves because of their size and frequency. Ella caught a few 30 footers during a recent storm, describing the experience as "very rewarding." Put in perspective, the waves on Lake Superior that



sank the Edmund Fitzgerald in 1975 reached heights of up to 35 feet.

Waves big enough to sink a freighter present additional challenges including frostbite, dirtier water, and shorter wave periods (7 seconds between crests versus an average of 20 seconds on the ocean). So, why does Ella do it? "When I find the motivation to get out there during a blizzard and catch that one wave, it's so empowering!"

Sure, winter surfing can be brutal but Ella has the proper gear to stay warm and though she admits her "face will get a little numb" on occasion, a touch of grease on her cheeks takes the sting out of winter's icy chill.

If surfing the Great Lakes sounds like an activity worth exploring, Michigan's surfing community is a great place to start. A tight-knit group, they are happy to offer encouragement, tips and lessons. And while we're grumbling during the next



Jack O'Malley

winter storm warning, a small contingent of extreme sports enthusiasts will be gearing up for a wave even the most seasoned ocean surfer would be stoked to catch.

Visit Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak Shop at sbsurfindkayak.com. ■



«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **March 18** will be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 electricity bill credit from their electric co-op.

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com or send by mail to: *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Include the name on your account, address, phone number, and name of your co-op.



Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the January 2016 issue is John Stocki, a Cherryland Electric co-op member who correctly identified the photo as the Marilla Museum and Pioneer Place.



AMERICAN METAL ROOFS Customer Stories...



“It was a great experience...”

Sharon Somers is talking about her roof. Yes, her roof.

And shouldn't the purchase and installation of every new roof be a great experience? Unfortunately, for many homeowners it's not.

That's why Frank Farmer started American Metal Roofs back in 2000. After more than 10 years in the home improvement business, he knew the winning formula. If he could combine a superior product with a well-thought-out installation process and outstanding customer service, he knew that homeowners would flock to do business with him.

Fifteen years and over 3,000 roofs later, American Metal Roofs is still creating great roofing experiences all over the state of Michigan. Permanent, beautiful and guaranteed, our roofs offer you peace-of-mind not available with a temporary roofing solution. Whether in one of our showrooms, on our website or talking with one of our experts, we invite you to look into an American Metal Roof for your home.

It's a great experience.

VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS:

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Call Today! 844.638.2576 844.METAL.ROOFS

Read More Customer Stories and Watch the Video at:
AmericanMetalRoofs.com
See Dozens of Pictures • Enter to Win a Metal Roof • Request a Quote



Keep Our Expanded Crews Busy This Month-
Save \$125.00 per square on Designer Metal Shingles,
Standing Seam Metal Roofs, Pole Barn Roofs, and Agricultural Roofs!
Give us some flexibility on the installation date and we will give you an additional \$1,000 off your order.

ELEVATE YOUR FUTURE

YOU ARE A LEADER. Whether it's in the classroom

or in your community, you guide and inspire others to contribute their best efforts. Your electric cooperative has two **FREE** programs to help students like you develop strong leadership habits, explore career opportunities in the electric industry, and engage in the democratic process. Learn more about the **Youth Leadership Summit** and **Washington, D.C. Youth Tour** at miYLS.com. You are a leader. **YOU ARE THE FUTURE.**



WANT TO LEARN MORE? Watch the videos and apply online at miYLS.com.



Youth Leadership Summit
April 27-29 | SpringHill Camp, Ewart, MI



Electric Cooperative Youth Tour
June 11-16 | Washington, D.C.



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



YES

**I want to support
the People Fund!**

You can support the HomeWorks Tri-County Electric People Fund by having your monthly electric bills rounded up to the next dollar. This only costs an average of \$6 per year, but makes a MAJOR difference in the lives of people in your community.

PLEASE NOTE: if your energy bill comes to an even dollar amount every month, you're **already** opted in. Thank you for your support of the People Fund.

To get started rounding up, simply tear out and mail the postcard at the top of this page. There's nothing to fill out, and no postage to pay.

You may also opt in or out of this **voluntary** program at any time by enclosing a note with your bill payment or by calling HomeWorks at 1-877-466-3957, option 1.

NEW! Please consider our Opt Up program, in which you designate a specific amount to contribute each month through a line item on your energy bill. Call us at 1-877-466-3957, option 1, to let us know you'd like to Opt Up, and your designated amount.

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FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 1 PORTLAND MI

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

HOMEWORKS Tri-County Electric
Cooperative

7973 E Grand River Ave
Portland MI 48875-9988



Statement of Activities

UNAUDITED - for 12 months ending 12/31/2015

Revenue	
Round-Up Contributions	\$ 64,094.39
Tri-County Contribution	\$ 25,102.62
Other Contributions	\$ 3,130.80
Interest Income	\$ 224.64
Total Revenue	\$ 92,552.45
Expenses	
Grants Paid in 2015	\$ 99,599.29
Program Expenses (paid by TCEC)	\$ 25,102.62
Bank Fees	\$ 50.00
Total Expenses	\$ 124,751.91
Change in Net Assets	\$ (32,199.46)
Net Assets, Beginning of Year (as of 1/1/15)	\$ 154,716.00
Net Assets, End of Year (as of 12/31/15)	\$ 122,516.54

Notes:
1. The 2015 financial statements have not been audited as of this printing. However, the Tri-County Electric People Fund's books are audited annually by a certified public accounting firm, EideBailly, L.L.P., of Fargo, ND.
2. Program expenses include copying, postage, mileage and meal expenses for the volunteer directors, and audit, insurance and other fees required for operation.

Grants Made January 1993 - December 2015

District	Families		Organizations		Total	
	Grants	Total \$	Grants	Total \$	Grants	Total \$
1	25	\$ 29,303.36	226	\$ 400,856.13	251	\$ 430,159.49
2	50	\$ 64,465.51	139	\$ 170,242.68	189	\$ 234,708.19
3	13	\$ 15,896.59	60	\$ 83,002.91	73	\$ 98,899.50
4	168	\$ 199,920.83	126	\$ 167,889.09	294	\$ 367,809.92
5	22	\$ 39,713.88	30	\$ 44,936.02	52	\$ 84,649.90
6	106	\$ 121,687.99	92	\$ 163,410.56	198	\$ 284,798.55
7	176	\$ 220,320.55	135	\$ 299,223.75	311	\$ 519,544.30
			2	\$ 6,000.00	2	\$ 6,000.00
Total	560	\$ 691,308.71	775	\$ 1,335,261.14	1,370	\$ 2,026,569.85



**Tri-County Electric
Cooperative**

homeworks.org

YES, I want to support the People Fund

2015 Grants Approved by the People Fund

Grant Recipient	How The Funds Are Used	Amount
11 Isabella County families	Housing expenses	\$ 16,128.75
12 Montcalm County families	Housing & medical expenses	\$ 14,770.18
3 Ionia County families	Housing expenses	\$ 5,073.00
4 Mecosta County families	Housing & medical expenses	\$ 3,578.43
2 Clinton County families	Housing expenses	\$ 2,939.27
1 Eaton County family	Housing expenses	\$ 1,097.68
1 Clare County family	Housing expenses	\$ 949.93
2 Ingham County families	Housing expenses	\$ 847.95
Adult Handicap Program, Charlotte	Handicap bowling program	\$ 250.00
Barryton Area Mobile Food Pantry	Food truck deliveries	\$ 1,650.00
Briggs Public Library, St. Johns	New computer stations	\$ 1,840.00
CASA-Voice for Clinton County's Children	Training & assistance for foster care	\$ 3,000.00
Clinton County Senior Center	Nutritional food and personal care items	\$ 2,000.00
Community Christian Action Group, Eaton Rapids	Food pantry items	\$ 1,200.00
Cornerstone Worship Center, Vestaburg	Food pantry items	\$ 1,000.00
Eagle Village, Hersey	AED units & first aid kits	\$ 2,757.76
Friends of the Red Mill, Portland	Help with construction costs for community building	\$ 1,000.00
God's Helping Hands, Remus	Christmas food box program	\$ 6,000.00
Grand Ledge Emergency Assistance (GLEAP)	Emergency needs items	\$ 3,000.00
Gratiot-Isabella RESD	Dolly Parton Imagination Library program	\$ 1,200.00
Helping Hands of Eaton County	Personal care items	\$ 1,250.00
Hope's Pantry, Stanton	Food pantry items	\$ 1,000.00
Housing Services of Mid-Michigan, Charlotte	Housing assistance	\$ 3,000.00
Ionia Community Library	Children's program	\$ 426.00
Ionia County YMCA	Child swim safety program	\$ 1,000.00
Lakeview Ministerial Association (2 grants)	Food pantry items	\$ 3,500.00
M-46 Tabernacle Food Pantry, Riverdale	Food pantry items	\$ 1,000.00
Mecosta County Senior Center	Parking lot repairs	\$ 1,000.00
Montabella Ministerial Association	Food & personal items assistance	\$ 1,000.00
Montcalm County Great Start	Dolly Parton Imagination Library program	\$ 1,000.00
Mt. Pleasant Discovery Museum	Painting Time program supplies	\$ 500.00
Positive Solutions Informed Choices, Ionia	Practical fatherhood course	\$ 1,000.00
Pregnancy Services of Ionia County	Infant car seats	\$ 780.00
Project Starburst, Big Rapids	Personal care items	\$ 1,200.00
Redline Paraclete Ministries, St. Johns	Food pantry expenses	\$ 1,000.00
Remus Area Historical Society	Pavilion restoration	\$ 1,500.00
Richland Township Library	Library books	\$ 1,000.00
Shepherd United Methodist Church	Nutrition Club program	\$ 1,500.00
Springport Food Pantry	Food pantry items	\$ 500.00
St. Mary's Society SVDP, Charlotte	Utility and rent assistance	\$ 3,000.00
St. Michael Conference SVDP, Grand Ledge	Housing & Utility program	\$ 3,000.00
Vermontville Township Library	Weekly family programs	\$ 750.00
Yes Center, Grand Ledge	After school program	\$ 500.00