

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

## Casting A Line

*With Kevin VanDam*

**Plus!**

OFFICIAL MAIL-IN BALLOT:  
Last Page Of Cover Wrap

BALLOT RETURN ENVELOPE:  
Inside Magazine Center

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ANNUAL REPORT INSIDE

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## IN YOUR WORDS

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question:

**If you had to be trapped in a TV show for a month, which would you choose?**

Thank you for all the responses. Here are some of your answers...

**Hands down 'Andy of Mayberry' HAPPY, SAD, FUNNY, LOVE, just a lot of good old life lessons in this good old TV show.**

**The original 'Batman' series with Adam West. He never loses a fight, has an awesome car, and the ultimate man cave.**

**The 'Waltons' TV show.**

Our new Question of the Month is:

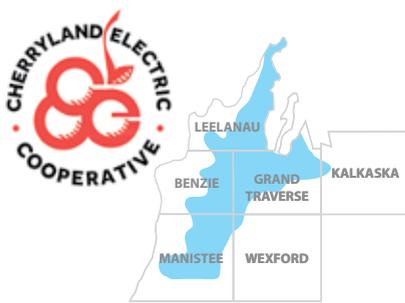
**If you could ask your future self one question, what would it be?**

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by June 1.

### ON THE COVER\*

Kevin VanDam, often called simply, "KVD," is a professional bass fisherman from Kalamazoo, MI. In the world of professional bass fishing, KVD is at the pinnacle, and arguably the best in the world.

*\*Some co-op editions have a different cover. Photo-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.*



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# Co-op News

## Cherryland Office Closed Memorial Day

The Cherryland office will be closed Monday, May 30, in observance of Memorial Day. Enjoy time with family and friends while remembering those who gave their lives to protect our country.

## Cherryland Cares Awards Grants to Seven Area Nonprofits

At their first-quarter board meeting, the Cherryland Cares board awarded grants to Acme Christian Thrift Store, American Red Cross of Northern Michigan, Child and Family Services of Northwestern Michigan, Leelanau Christian Neighbors, Legal Services of Northern Michigan, Northwest Michigan Supportive Housing, and SEEDS. Cherryland Cares awarded \$19,650 to these Grand Traverse area nonprofit agencies.

The Cherryland Cares board is comprised of five volunteer Cherryland Electric Co-op members. The funds distributed by Cherryland Cares is a result of members electing to round up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar.

If you are an area nonprofit agency seeking financial help, second quarter grant applications are due Friday, June 10. For more information, please call Shannon Mattson at 231-486-9234 or email smattson@cherrylandelectric.coop.

## Youth Leadership Summit Participants Announced

Congratulations to members Madison Hertel, Ian Berry, Matthew Palmer and Elliott Sitkins, who were selected to participate in this year’s Youth Leadership Summit. They took part in a three-day retreat in April designed to help develop strong leadership habits and civic engagement skills. Also, each participant will be considered to represent Cherryland on the week-long national Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in Washington, D.C., in June.

## ‘Bowl for Kids’ Sake’ Returns May 9-11 at Incredible Mo’s

Join us for ‘80s style fun at this year’s Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan Bowl for Kids’ Sake event. Cherryland is proud to sponsor the year’s largest fundraising event for the Bigs program. The event takes place on May 9, 10 and 11 at 6 p.m. at Incredible Mo’s in Grawn. To find out how to donate and join the fun, go to BigsUpNorth.com and click on the “Events” page.

## Cherryland Joins 15th Annual Ideas for Life Senior Expo

Cherryland will be one of more than 100 exhibitors at the Ideas for Life Senior Expo at the Grand Traverse County Civic Center on Wednesday, May 18, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Bay Area Senior Advocates event features a variety of local and statewide services aimed at providing solutions for the changes families will experience with aging parents and/or spouses. ■



## Your Vote, Affordability Matter



**Tony Anderson**  
General Manager

**O**n Feb. 9, 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court placed a stay on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Clean Power Plan (CPP) from that date through the completion of any Supreme Court appeal process. This stay was an unprecedented action in response to a petition by

the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and 39 electric co-ops.

The stay is unprecedented in that the U.S. Supreme Court has never granted a stay prior to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals issuing a decision on the regulation being contested. Even if NRECA and electric co-ops lose at the D.C. Circuit, the CPP is stayed until the Supreme Court decides on the appeal. Thus, a window of final resolution is somewhere between June 2017 and June 2018.

The legal counsel at NRECA believe that granting a stay in this case greatly increases the chances that the CPP will be tossed out by the courts due to serious questions about its legality. The 5-4 vote was an indication that at least five of the justices have serious concerns about the rule.

Personally, I consider this ruling a small vindication for affordability. The electric cooperatives opposed the rule from the beginning on the basis that the emission targets were simply too costly to achieve, and the EPA had exceeded its authority by ignoring costs.

Justice Antonin Scalia was one of the five votes. His untimely passing does raise questions around

whether or not this ruling will ultimately be upheld. When a new justice will be appointed and by which party is, of course, impossible to predict. However, it does bring to light the *HIGH* importance of participating in the present election process. Whether you are a Democrat or a Republican, it is time to get in the game, pay attention, take a stand, and vote.

This ruling is far from a victory for coal plants. There are many existing EPA regulations in place today. As a result of these previous rules and the mere fact that we have an aging fleet of coal plants in Michigan, our state will be losing as much as 5,000 megawatts of coal-fired generation by 2020.

Today, inside our state borders, there are only two generating plants of note under construction. Wolverine Power Cooperative's natural gas peaking plant in Gaylord and the Holland Board of Public Works' combined cycle gas plant total just 565 megawatts of new generation. Michigan has a long way to go before 2020.

During a "hot" (to say the least) political season, the U.S. Supreme Court tossed out a lifeline of common sense. The cost to the end-user does need to be considered. As someone who has defended affordability for a career, I did take a quiet moment to simply say, "Thank you."

Once again, please consider making your voice and your vote heard in this election process. As crazy as the system seems, there is no better system in the world. But, it only works if you participate. ■

# Clean Power Plan Update



**Craig Borr, CEO**  
Michigan Electric  
Cooperative  
Association

**A**s a result of a Feb. 9 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, the State of Michigan has stopped efforts on its development of a plan to meet the demands of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP). The CPP is a federal regulatory action that requires states to reduce carbon emissions from power plants by approximately 30 percent by 2030.

## What Does This Mean?

The Supreme Court's "stay" of the CPP means that it has no legal effect while the courts are reviewing the carbon reduction rules to determine whether they are lawful. During this time, the EPA cannot enforce any of the CPP deadlines or requirements. While the granting of a "stay" does not guarantee victory for opponents of the plan, it greatly increases the odds of the courts ultimately determining that the CPP is unlawful.

For the past several months, Michigan's electric cooperatives were engaged with the State of Michigan in developing an implementation plan that would have, prior to the Supreme Court ruling, had Michigan on a trajectory of submitting an initial carbon reduction plan to the EPA this fall. Those development efforts have now been suspended.

The Court's ruling means that "certainty" for our state and its electric utilities may not be forthcoming until sometime in 2018—a rather ominous sign, given the fact that several of Michigan's old and dirty coal-fired power plants will be retired in the next three to five years by companies like Detroit Edison, the Michigan South Central Power Agency, and the Lansing

Board of Water & Light. At present, just two cleaner, natural gas-fired power plants are under construction in our state—one in Holland by the City of Holland and one near Gaylord by Wolverine Power Cooperative.

This recent court action is a keen reminder of the statement uttered by former U.S. Rep. John Dingell, the architect of the current U.S. Clean Air Act, when commenting about the EPA's regulation of carbon via rulemaking rather than legislation enacted by Congress. Dingell said that the EPA's regulation of carbon would be "a glorious mess." Sadly, I believe Mr. Dingell was right. It's the job of the U.S. Congress to regulate carbon emissions, not a federal regulatory agency led by political appointees.

## Michigan Co-ops Well Positioned With Renewable Energy

The other ironic twist is that Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, are very well positioned to potentially benefit from new carbon rules. As our state's unquestioned leaders in renewable energy, the State of Michigan and the cooperatives could be "economic winners" from implementation of the current CPP.

This is due to the fact that by 2017 Michigan's electric co-ops will serve nearly 1,000 megawatts of electrical load and have nearly 400 megawatts of renewable energy in our power supply basket to serve that load. My math says that puts Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, at nearly 40 percent renewables, with the state standard currently at 10 percent.

That's called leadership. ■



# For Safe Digging, Call Miss DIG

**M**ISS DIG has been the first step in utility damage prevention and excavation safety in Michigan for over 45 years. MISS DIG is a nonprofit organization funded by utility owners and municipalities, and serves as a single point of contact for those performing excavation anywhere in the state.

MISS DIG is available around the clock, 365 days a year, so whether it's the excavation of a new housing development, or something as simple as installing a new mailbox, contacting MISS DIG is a fast and free way to start your project.

Contact MISS DIG by dialing 811, or online via [missdig.org](http://missdig.org), three business days prior to beginning work. You will be asked questions regarding your project such as, location, date, work being performed, and more. That information will be passed on to utility owners in the area who will locate and mark the underground lines on your work site or yard. They will also provide information



on how they've handled your request through MISS DIG's Positive Response program. After three days have passed and the marks are laid, you are free to begin with your project, provided you respect the marks and work carefully around them. If a question about your request or the marks comes up, MISS DIG is ready to assist.

So be smart, be safe, and know what's below. Contact MISS DIG before you dig.

For more information about MISS DIG or utility damage prevention, please visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org). ■

## ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

**For your safety and for the protection of underground utility lines, always follow these steps before starting any digging project.**

1. Contact MISS DIG at 811 or [missdig.org](http://missdig.org)
2. Wait 3 days for utility owners to mark their lines
3. Respect the marks
4. Dig with care



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**  
visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org) for more information

# Cherryland's Carol Krumlauf Finds Long-Lost Members

**A**t Cherryland, we do not operate like other utilities. If we have money left over after purchasing equipment, fueling up the trucks, and setting poles, we pay it back to you. As a member, you get a piece of the pie.

Since the beginning, Cherryland has allocated margins back to our members. When the time came, we retired that money from previous years to those members in the form of capital credits. This process of allocating and retiring capital credits continues to this day.

As a member, we know your life changes. You get a new job, you get tired of the snow, you move away. Years later, when it comes time for us to give you those capital credits, you could be gone.

This scenario is not uncommon. Over the past five years, an average of 10 percent of capital credits have gone unclaimed. That's more than \$1.3 million! How do we go about getting this money back to our former members? How would you get your piece of the pie?

Cherryland's Carol Krumlauf is the head of the "Unclaimed Capital Credit Project." She is tasked with finding and returning capital credits to those who were previously unreachable. If there is patronage capital with your name on it, she makes sure it gets in your hands.

As you might imagine, Carol's task is anything but simple. She begins by sifting through our database to find any information on the former member, whether it's a birthdate, an old address, a previous employer, or other details. She then takes the information and inputs it into a program



Billing Supervisor Carol Krumlauf

that searches public records to help find the individual.

Once the person is located, Carol sends a letter of verification to assure that the correct person was found. Assuming it's a match, the individual is sent his or her piece of the pie. If the individual is found but is deceased, Carol performs another search for the next of kin.

Since 2013, Carol's efforts have produced a return of \$550,000 in unclaimed capital credits to former members. And, the number of former members with unclaimed capital credits continues to dwindle. All in all, this process takes a lot of time and effort, but it's important to Carol, and to Cherryland. "We are

a cooperative. It's what makes us different," Carol says. "It's saying 'thank you' to our members for being a part of our cooperative family, even if it's in the past." ■

**We could be looking for someone you know!**

At [CherrylandElectric.coop](http://CherrylandElectric.coop) we keep a list of former members who have unclaimed capital credits. If you see someone you know on the list, please contact us.

# Saluting Our Armed Forces Photo Contest Winners



## Photos With The Highest Facebook Votes!

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the winning photo (and some great runners-up) from our photo contest. Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

### Enter Your Photos And Win!

Every month *Country Lines* will be announcing a new theme. All you have to do is submit your best shot and encourage your friends to vote! The photo receiving the most votes on our Facebook contest will be printed in an upcoming issue of *Country Lines* along with some of our other favorites. If your photo is printed in *Country Lines* during 2016, you will be entered to win a credit of up to \$200 on your December 2016 bill.

Our May theme is **"All About Michigan."** Photos can be submitted from **May 1 to May 20** to be featured in our July/August issue.

Ready to submit? Just visit [facebook.com/cherrylandelectriccoop](https://facebook.com/cherrylandelectriccoop) and click "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs. If you're not on Facebook, don't worry. You can also enter the contest at [cherrylandelectric.coop/photo-contest](http://cherrylandelectric.coop/photo-contest).

Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too!

1. **Winner!** Some of our local Coast Guard families.  
*By Morgan McFarland*
2. This patriotic little one is waiting for daddy. *By Wendy West*
3. "Army of One." *By Erika Swartz*
4. "In Memoriam." *By Aubrey Kitzmiller*
5. The Spirit of the Woods Garden Club salutes the 2015 "Tight Lines for Troops" veterans in Manistee. *By Kathleen Johnson*

# SNACKS & APPETIZERS

Party-worthy recipes for your next gathering.

## Bacon Wrapped Water Chestnuts

Connie Bowman, Manistee

- 1 c. ketchup
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 lb. bacon, cut into thirds
- 2 small cans whole water chestnuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix together ketchup and brown sugar. Wrap ½ piece of bacon around each chestnut. Place in a 9x13 pan. Pour ketchup mixture over wrapped bacon/chestnuts. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

Photos—831 Creative

## Jalapeno Popper Boats (Pictured)

Ted Herrst, Mancelona

- 25 medium, fresh jalapeño peppers\*
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 pkg. bacon bits
- 3 c. finely shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. cornmeal

Preheat oven to 400°. Spread olive oil evenly over a cookie sheet. Sprinkle cornmeal evenly over cookie sheet. Cut jalapeño peppers in half lengthwise; remove all seeds and membranes. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, bacon, Worcestershire sauce, and 2 cups cheddar cheese until smooth. Spoon 2 teaspoons of mixture into each jalapeño half, and place on the oiled cookie sheet, then roll each jalapeño lightly in cornmeal. Top with remaining cheese. Bake for 5–10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve warm. Optional: For milder peppers, after cutting, boil peppers in water for 2–5 minutes. Drain, rinse and allow to cool.

\*Wear plastic gloves while working with jalapeño peppers; DO NOT touch face, especially eyes.



## Buffalo Chicken Dip

Patsy Dalrymple, Lake Isabella

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 10 oz. can chicken breast, drained
- ¼ c. hot sauce
- ½ bottle blue cheese dressing
- 8 oz. pkg. sharp cheddar cheese, crumbled

Mix all ingredients together and place in microwave. Cook 1 minute at a time until all cheese is melted (you can also use a mini crock pot). Serve warm on crackers.



Gather Round

# The Co-op Kitchen Table

A **NEW** and **EXCLUSIVE** online cooking community for our electric co-op members.

**MI CO-OP KITCHEN** is a place to share your recipes and food ideas with lots of other like-minded members. You will also get a chance to win awesome prizes.

In every *Country Lines* issue, members can submit recipes online for a chance to win a **\$50** electric bill credit. While that's pretty cool by itself, there's more! We will print the winning recipe in *Country Lines* (complete with a professional photo of the dish), and create an instructional "how to" video for [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com).

Ready to pull up a seat?

**GREAT!** Go to [MICOOPKITCHEN.COM](http://MICOOPKITCHEN.COM) and register.

Please submit your favorite "Dessert" recipes by July 1.

Enter your recipe online at [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.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.

[micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com)





## Fast Food On The Trail

By Tom Carr

Sweet snacks are growing along the TART Trail near Traverse City.

Walkers and bikers can now reach down and grab a blueberry, an edible mushroom, and many types of fruit and berries they may have never before seen. As long as they're in season, that is.

"It's food that you can just pop in your mouth when you're riding your bike," says Jonathan Aylward, who spearheaded the effort as an Americorps VISTA project. "Maybe grab something when you're on your way to work down the trail, or harvest a few berries for a snack during the day."

So far, they've concentrated the plantings along a section of the trail north of East Cherry Bend Road, in southern Leelanau County, just northwest of Traverse City.

They're also starting with mostly native Michigan species.

"Two native plants we're really excited about are the American persimmon and the Paw Paw," Aylward says.



Photos: Jonathan Aylward at the trailhead and showcasing his harvest in front of the edible trail.



Johnathan Aylward holds a jar of black raspberries while checking out a log in which mushroom spores were planted.

The American persimmon is said to be juicy and delicious when ripe, but bitter and unpleasant if picked too early. The Paw Paw shares its name with a southwestern Michigan city and grows naturally all the way from Michigan to Florida. It never really caught on because it tends to rot quickly after it ripens, so it would be difficult to ship it to supermarkets.

"It's better out of hand along the trail as a snack," he says, comparing its flavor to the mango and other tropical fruits.

There's the potato-like sunchoke along the trail. It's said to be better when cooked, but grows naturally along the trail and is marked more for educational purposes than for fast food on the trail.

Not everything the group introduced was planted in the ground. Volunteers also planted one type of edible fungus in a tree trunk. They drilled holes in the trunk and pushed in wax plugs with spores in them in hopes that delicious mushrooms will sprout this year.

Of course, the group put up signs to help most of us sort out what we can and can't eat. There are a lot of pleasant things that can grow in a Michigan forest, but there are also a lot of things that are harmful if swallowed.

Aylward notes the fruit plants are low now since they're only a couple years old. They should bush out year-by-year and yield more and more munchies all the time.

With the help of the \$10,000 the group has raised and a donation of some land near the trail, they've also started a nursery to start the plants and then transplant them in several locations along the popular 60-plus-mile trail system and other public places.

Aylward started the project after learning about Beacon Food Forest in Seattle and some urban farming sites in Detroit that have planted a supply of fresh fruits for the public to pick and enjoy. The project has included workers to help create gardens, fundraisers like a walking concert by Seth Bernard along the trail, and signs and pamphlets to raise visitors' edible plant IQ.

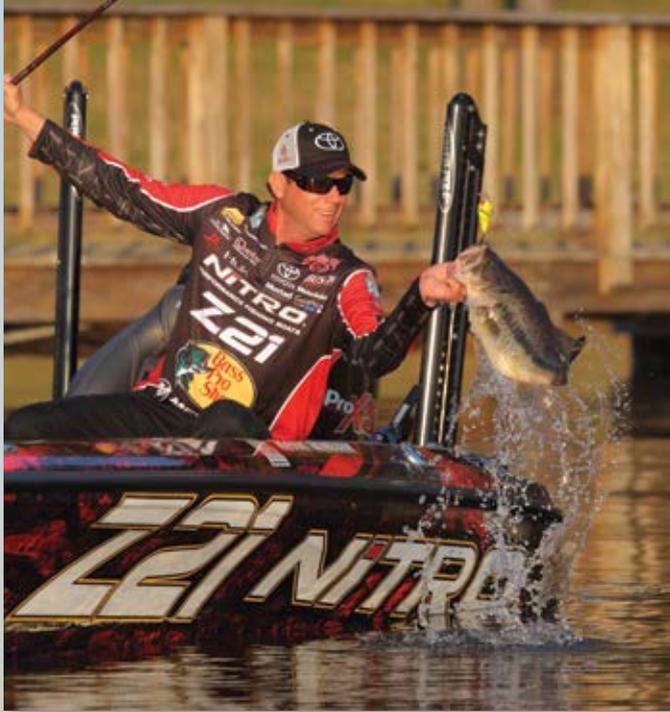
Altogether, 20 local civic and environmental groups and dozens of volunteers lent their hands to the edible trails project.

Samantha Graves, a permaculture farmer who helped with plantings, compared the project to public art. "It can really get people talking," she said.

There's also a pollinator garden incorporated near fruit plants with flora and fauna designed to attract bees and butterflies to pollinate the fruit blossoms.

Enjoy the trail while exercising and snacking. ■





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“That’s the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there’s a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite.”

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# Casting A Line

*With Kevin VanDam*

By Emily Haines Lloyd



**W**hen you're talking to Kevin VanDam you don't get the feeling you're speaking with an internationally recognized angler and arguably the best bass fisherman in the past 20 years. You just feel like you're talking to "Kevin"—the Kalamazoo guy who grew up on the lakes, streams and rivers of southwest Michigan. He sounds like a guy you went to school with, who just happens to travel 250 days a year to compete in bass tournaments and promote the sport he loves.

"Fishing has always been a part of my life. I have a memory of going ice fishing with my dad and I was maybe three years old," VanDam recalls. "So, even when I started competing at the professional level, it took me a long time to think of this as my career. It was just always something I did."

It could be this single-minded and humble mindset that made VanDam the multiple championship winner in professional bass fishing. If you know the sport—you know VanDam. If you thought anglers worked with protractors—let's catch you up. The Bassmaster Classic is the most coveted bass fishing title. In his 263 Bassmaster Classic events—VanDam has won 20, finished second 13 times and landed in the top 10 a remarkable 100 times. He was also the very first Outdoorsman of the Year ESPY award winner, at the ESPN awards in 2002. Not that you can get him to muse on his accolades. VanDam is more likely to brag on his home state when asked why he still lives in the area where he grew up.

"Michigan is home," VanDam says. "I love the four seasons, and my family loves being outdoors. In the summer, you'll find us on the lake boating or fishing. In the winter, I love taking my sons hunting. There's so much diversity in the landscape. Michigan has so much to offer. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

When asked to give up some of his favorite fishing spots in Michigan, VanDam chuckles.

"That's the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there's a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite," he answers. "But I really think the best fishing anywhere is Lake St. Clair on the east side of the state. It's my favorite



tournament location. Having said that—there's nothing like heading up to Traverse City and casting a line."

As VanDam continues his 2016 season of tournaments, sports shows, promotions and product design meetings—you get the feeling his thoughts are always in Michigan—secretly thinking about that next day on the lake with his wife and sons, lazily casting a line without the pressure of a championship title, just a guy named "Kevin" hanging out and having fun. ■

Photos-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.



# Not Just A Ballpark

By Rob Marsh

When planning your summer in northern Michigan, enjoying a Traverse City Beach Bums game should definitely be at the top of your list. A visit to Wuerfel Park has become as engrained in this area's summer fun as swimming in Grand Traverse Bay or walking along the Sleeping Bear Dunes.

The Beach Bums and their owner, John Wuerfel, are walking a little taller this year. After a stellar 2015 season, the Beach Bums took home the Frontier League championship. Undoubtedly, this is a huge win for loyal fans and an incentive for first-time visitors to the area.

But baseball is arguably just a small portion of the Wuerfel Park experience. From contests between innings to the antics of mascots Suntan and Sunburn, Beach Bums games are the stage to a variety of entertainment for families and baseball fans alike. "When people come to a minor league ballpark, they come for the entertainment. Oh, and a baseball game, too," Wuerfel chuckles.

How do you keep the fun going when the season ends? What about the other 317 days per year when the ballpark is left unoccupied?

The Beach Bums' home turf has begun a transition from a baseball facility, to an entertainment venue,



Suntan and Sunburn entertain the crowds.



John Wuerfel celebrating the 2015 Frontier League Championship.

as well. The hope is to attract a larger audience to the park and extend its year-round appeal.

Wuerfel admits they were slow to bring festivals and other events to their park. Simply, he says, "We didn't know how." But with the vision and help of their son, Jason, vice president and director of baseball operations, Wuerfel has scheduled a variety of events this year, including a Winter Beverage Expo, Celtic Festival, and a Country Music, BBQ & Bourbon Festival.

One of the biggest developments is the partnership between Wuerfel Park and Short's Brewing Company, of Bellaire, and construction of the Short's Biergarten. "Short's Brewing Company is super to work with," says Wuerfel. "And we are excited about the future possibilities with these guys." They are currently planning to add a small stage to the Biergarten that will showcase a variety of musical acts.

These events are just the start. Wuerfel foresees more concerts, races, car shows and festivals at Wuerfel Park over the coming years. With the many upcoming events in the near future, Wuerfel suggests that residents keep their calendars open—because visits to Wuerfel Park won't end with the last swing of a bat. ■



## Business Matters

By Rachel Johnson

**A**bout five years ago, my husband started a small manufacturing company. At the time, he made a commitment to selling American-made products that are fabricated from American-made raw materials.

It is increasingly hard for him to find American manufacturers that are making raw input products like steel, nylon, and even plastic bags. And, those that exist struggle to remain cost competitive.

From healthcare costs to the skilled trades gap to burdensome tax codes, it's hard to be a small business. For capital and labor intensive manufacturing companies, it's even more challenging.

The challenges our local businesses face don't just impact local businesses. Rural economies, in particular, are vulnerable to changes in the health of their business community.

I grew up in a small town in western Iowa. We had one major employer, the largest family-owned ice cream and frozen treat manufacturer in the United States. When they cut jobs, the entire community suffered. Had they closed their doors, the community would have closed down with them.

The lifeblood of many small towns is their local business community. That's important. It matters. And, rural communities need to fight for that.

Here at Cherryland, we are trying to support small businesses and local manufacturers, as well. We do so through programs like our economic development loan program. Since 2008, this USDA-funded, Cherryland-administered loan program has helped 22 local companies expand their businesses through almost \$2.2 million in zero-interest loans. These expansions created more than 300 jobs right here in our community.

Just as importantly, we support our local businesses by fighting to keep their electricity affordable and reliable. Sometimes the fight is internal as we try to squeeze the maximum impact out of every penny and keep our costs low. Other times, the conflict is external, as we advocate against policies and regulations that might drive up power costs or threaten system reliability.



**Rachel Johnson**  
Member Relations  
Manager

Here in the Grand Traverse region, we are lucky to have several major employers, a thriving small business sector, and healthy agriculture and tourism industries. We owe it to these small business owners and economy builders to show them our support and not take their local economic impact for granted. ■

# Hug A Lineman

By Jack O'Malley

The lights flicker once, twice. You wait for it. Boom! A crack of lightning illuminates the night sky as thunder simultaneously rolls over your neighborhood, taking the power with it. Most of us start scrambling for flashlights, candles and the battery operated radio. But across town, a lineman grabs his gear in preparation for what could be a long night of restoring electricity.

I recently visited with a line crew from Cherryland Electric Cooperative. Dustin Ockert, a journeyman lineman, talked about those days and nights when the power goes out. "Leaving my family at home with no power can be stressful. They're home in the dark without me and I'm out working to get the lights back on." However, it's work that Dustin finds enjoyable, despite its risks.

Every day, Dustin and his crew face a number of occupational hazards, including high-voltage contact, confined spaces, and challenging weather conditions, often while working at great heights. Deceptively simple-looking, power lines are connected by a complex arrangement of small parts that crews learn to manipulate while wearing heavy protective gloves. Handling up to 7,200 volts of electricity at any given moment, losing concentration for even a second could result in serious injury. When asked what wind speed would prevent him from taking the bucket up, Dustin confidently replied, "That hasn't happened yet!"

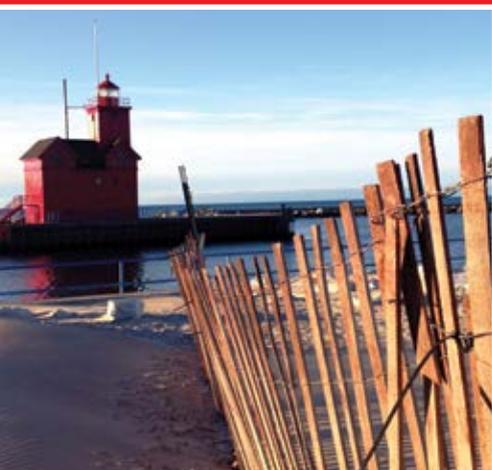


Fortunately for Dustin and his crew, most days are quiet and filled with routine maintenance work and installations. Safety remains the crew's first priority, even on normal days. But all concerns for family and safety aside, Dustin loves his job. During an outage, "The world is dark when we get where we're going and by the time we leave, the lights are back on. That's the glory of our job."

If you're like me you take your power for granted, forgetting the men and women who work in the dark, rain, wind and snow, ensuring that we can turn the lights on each morning. So take a minute, thank your local linemen, and do as Dustin suggests the next time you see his crew pulling up, "Stand back and watch what happens!" ■



Jack O'Malley



## «« Where In Michigan Is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **June 18** will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 bill credit from their electric co-op. We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at [countrylines.com](http://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 March 2016 issue is Norman Schultz, a Great Lakes Energy co-op member who correctly identified the photo as the Back Forty Ranch at the Double JJ Resort in Rothbury, MI.

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