

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



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WORLD STAGE

Plus!

Employee Spotlight

Brownstone Inn Keeps Thriving

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See page 4 for contact information.

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Negaunee's Lucy Hill is the only full-length natural luge track in the United States. United States athletes train here before traveling to competitions in Europe.

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Once used to describe the three devastating waves that led to the sinking of the Edmond Fitzgerald, Three Sisters is also the name for three tight turns and the most technical part of the Negaunee Lucy Hill luge track. Find Three Sisters Luge Pizza recipe submitted by featured guest chefs from the U.P. Luge Club at micookitchen.com, and see the full story on page 14.



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countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

Ontonagon County REA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Electricity Remains A Good Value



Debbie Miles
General Manager

In today's world, you won't find many items that cost less than \$5. Yes, you can purchase a gallon of milk, a gallon of gas or a Big Mac® meal from McDonald's. But did you know that an average day's worth of electricity costs less than \$5?

Even in our country's shifting energy climate, electricity remains a good value. In fact, electricity has the lowest cost per day of any of the items listed above. And not all of those items are necessary for daily life!

As the General Manager of Ontonagon County REA, I urge you to think about your daily necessities (electricity and gasoline, to name a couple), and then think about the cost of the special treats we allow ourselves to purchase on a weekly basis (maybe even on a daily basis for some!). We don't often question the cost of a Big Mac® meal—it costs about \$1 more to buy a Big Mac® meal than it does to purchase a day's worth of power. And yet, we frequently become upset if our electricity rates rise.

It makes sense; we have become increasingly reliant upon electricity. Electricity has, for many of us, gone from a luxury commodity to a necessity and an expectation. We expect the lights to come on when we flip the switch, and we expect our power to stay on during the best *and* worst conditions. How else would we keep our food fresh, our homes cool in the summer or warm in the winter? It is easy to cut a hamburger out of your spending routine here and there to save a few dollars. But we cannot simply cut electricity out of our budgets if times get tough or we decide that we want to scale back our spending to save.

Perhaps that is why it is so upsetting to us when our rates increase, even if only in small increments. It is nearly impossible for us to think about what our lives would be like if we did not have electricity. If at times it doesn't seem that electricity is affordable, remember—even as the demand for electricity grows—annual cost increases remain low, especially when compared to other consumer goods such as medical care, education, gasoline and, yes, even Big Macs®, electricity is still a great bargain. As the General Manager of Ontonagon REA, your local electric cooperative, I am committed to making sure that you and your family always have safe, reliable and affordable electric service in your home.

So the next time you crave a Big Mac®, remember your electric bill, and think about what a great deal you're getting for your dollar! ■

Meet Ontonagon County REA Employee Fay Hauswirth

Ontonagon REA is staffed by people who live and work in your community. They are a staff comprised of a dedicated team of employees that works for you, the members, striving to provide you with reliable and cost-effective power every day. We recently sat down with Customer Service Representative Fay Hauswirth to learn more about her and what her job entails.

Q: Please tell us about your background.

A: I was born in Hancock and moved to Ontonagon when I was a baby. I graduated from high school here. My parents owned the Ontonagon Herald newspaper for many years, and that is where I began working when I was 11 years. My first jobs were stapling raffle books together and cleaning the office. Eventually, I did proofreading, which proved to be beneficial when I had to write college papers. I went to college later in life and graduated with a four-year degree in administration at the age of 47. During that time, I also worked full time and, as a single mother, raised three children now ages 28, 25 and 24.

Q: What other kinds of jobs have you done during your lifetime?

A: I feel like I've done everything! I've waitressed, cooked, worked at a gas station, cleaned motels and worked at the paper mill. I am quite proficient with a chainsaw from working in the woods doing trail maintenance for the USFS under the YACC program. I also did fish shocking for the YACC.

Q: How did you end up working at Ontonagon County REA?

A: I found the job in the listings at Michigan Works and applied. I was hired, and I started working for Ontonagon REA in July 2014.

Q: What is the best part of your job?

A: I really enjoy interacting with all of the customers on a day to day basis. People are interesting, and everyone has a different background and history. Through the daily phone calls from customers, I feel like I have gotten to know many of our members. Sometimes I wish I could meet them so that I could put a friendly face with a name.

Q: Any memorable experiences?

A: It isn't one experience but a combination of many. I find it rewarding to be able to help those



customers that are experiencing difficulties and being able to work with them and put them in touch with local agencies that can provide them with assistance. This is especially true when a member has had service disconnected, and I can get it restored. And this is particularly rewarding and meaningful when I know there are children in the home.

Q: What about hobbies? What do you like to do when you're not working?

A: I enjoy collecting beach glass, playing cards and board games and doing puzzles. I also like to spend time with family and friends. When I get the chance, I go camping in the summer. ■

You can find Fay behind the front counter at the local REA office in Ontonagon. Next time you are in be sure to introduce yourself so she can put a name with your friendly face.

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2016–2017 Season

Program: Home Heating Credit

Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
1	\$13,070	4	\$26,756
2	17,642	5	31,299
3	22,185	6	35,842

Add \$4,571 for each exemption over 6.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the **2016** tax year if you meet the income guidelines listed at left or you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs. Additional exemptions are available for seniors, disabled claimants, or claimants with 5% or more of their income from unemployment compensation.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. **Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (517-636-4486, or michigan.gov/treasury).** The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury *no later than* **Sept. 30 each year.**

Program: Earned Income Credit

Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept., Internal Revenue Service irs.gov/EITC
Michigan Dept. of Treasury
michigan.gov/treasury

The **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income, working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EITC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EITC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year **2016** equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. Visit the website or see the MI 2016 tax booklet for details.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program

Contact: Local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) michigan.gov/mdhhs

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): michigan.gov/mdhhs You do not have to be a DHHS client to apply for help with a past due bill, shutoff notice or the need for deliverable fuel through the SER. This program, available Nov. 1–May 31, provides most of its utility assistance during this crisis season. However, limited assistance is available outside the crisis season.

If you receive a DHHS cash grant, you may vendor part of it towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 855-275-6424.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization

Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (200% of poverty guidelines) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation. Contact your local Community Action Agency for details. Visit mcaaa.org to find one in your area.

Program: United Way

Contact: Call 2-1-1 or UWmich.org/2-1-1

2-1-1 is a free phone service operating 24 hours daily to provide information about help that may be available in a particular area with utilities and other needs. Learn more at UWmich.org/2-1-1.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection

Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for details.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty

Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You must still pay, but contact your utility company and they will help you set up a payment plan.

Program: Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program

Contact: MI Veterans Trust Fund

The Trust Fund provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families facing a financial emergency or hardship including the need for energy assistance.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund at 517-284-5299 or michiganveterans.com

Program: MI Energy Assistance Program

Contact: Utility or 2-1-1 in late November

Agency assistance through Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP), includes services that will enable participants to become self-sufficient, including assisting participants in paying their energy bills on time, budgeting for and contributing to their ability to provide for energy expenses, and being energy efficient. Shut-off protection is provided Nov. 1–April 15 for all residential customers.

Safety During Hunting Season

By Tim Velder



Be aware of what's behind that big buck or it might cost big bucks.

Your electric co-op's time and money are spent every year repairing equipment and power lines that have been struck by a stray bullet. As a not-for-profit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this expense.

This doesn't even include the inconvenience, damages, and hazards to members down the line that require power for medical equipment or other needs, while a lineman does some hunting of his own looking at spans of line trying to locate the problem.

Hunters and other gun-owners should be cautious not to shoot near or toward power lines, power poles, and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Sometimes the damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months and is only discovered when an unexplained outage occurs.

Landowners are also encouraged to take note of nonmembers who are hunting on their property and remind them to be aware of power lines.

Shooting near overhead power lines or insulators can result in severe injury or death.

The main safety points to remember are:

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and wildfire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at, or near, birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole besides utility equipment can pose an obstruction—and a serious hazard—to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations.
- Avoid the use of lofting poles near overhead power lines. Remember, electricity can jump across a considerable distance. ■

Easy Ways To Save Energy This Winter

Between cold weather, the holidays and spending more time indoors, energy use and costs can rise for many Michigan residents. However, by taking a few simple actions, the following small adjustments can result in big savings!

Deck the halls with LED holiday lights. Light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights use up to 90 percent less electricity and last up to 10 times longer than standard bulbs. Plus, they produce almost no heat and are nearly impossible to break! Save even more energy by putting your lights on a timer.

Set your furnace fan to "auto." Selecting "auto" ensures the fan will operate only when necessary, which can save several hundred dollars per year. Setting the fan to "on" causes it to run constantly and it requires more heat to maintain the desired temperature.

Find and seal air leaks. Prevent cold air from seeping in and heated air from escaping outside. The largest air leaks are typically around gaps in plumbing, chimneys, and wiring bypasses, as well as in dropped ceilings and soffits above cabinets.



Prep your home before leaving for vacation.

Unplug as many appliances as possible. Many appliances use some energy even when they are turned off. You can also safely lower your thermostat to 55 degrees and turn your water heater to the lowest setting.

Take advantage of rebates. Before ringing in the New Year, claim your Energy Optimization rebates for energy-efficient products, such as lightbulbs, TVs, refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers/dryers and more.

View current incentives at michigan-energy.org or call **877.296.4319** for details. ■



'Tis the Season

Save energy and be merry

Practice these simple tips to save energy and money this holiday season!

- Deck the halls with LED holiday lights
- Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning
- Turn down the thermostat while entertaining guests
- Use a timer to control tree and outdoor lighting
- Unplug appliances before leaving for a long weekend

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: **877.296.4319**



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

Country Roads



Enter Our Photo Contest And Win!!

Ontonagon REA members whose photos we print in *Michigan Country Lines* will be entered in a drawing. One lucky member will win a credit up to \$200 on their December 2017 energy bill!

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **Wild Weather** due **Nov. 15**—January issue and **Family** due **Jan. 15**—March issue.

To submit photos, and for details and instructions, go to

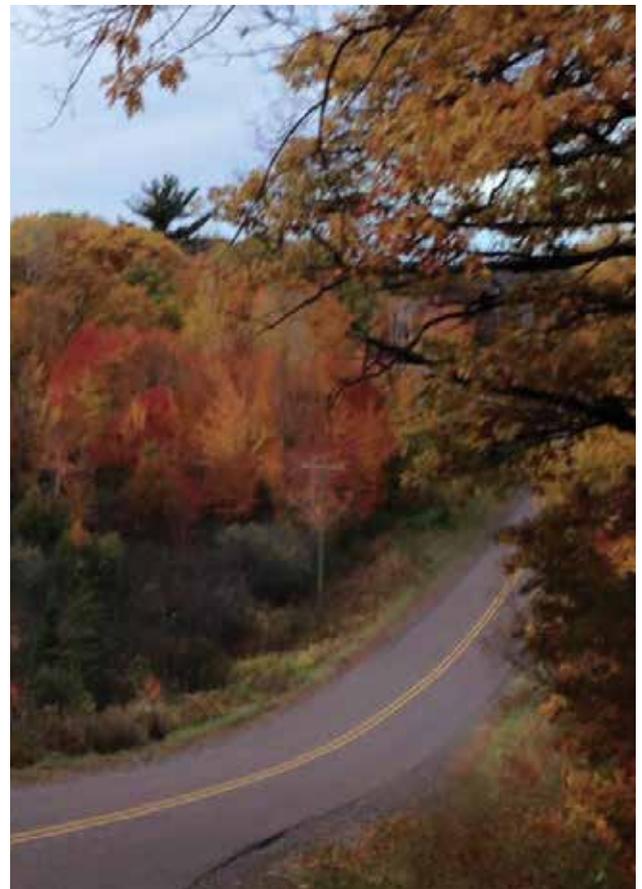
<http://bit.ly/countrylines>

We look forward to seeing your best photos!

Morning mist awaits the country road traveler in the cool autumn splendor.
By Sherry Sutherby



A beautiful country road, US-41 South of Copper Harbor.
By Andrew Hodges



The beautiful Keweenaw colors on Salo Rd. in Hancock.
By Cynthia Hodges

CASSEROLES

These cozy comfort foods can go straight from your oven to your table.



Photos—831 Creative

Great Chicken Casserole

Mary Ellen Babcock, Thumb Electric

- 3 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 2 cups finely chopped celery
- 1 cup (4 ounces by weight) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can (4 ounces) water chestnuts, drained and chopped
- 1 can (10- $\frac{3}{4}$ ounces) cream of chicken soup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup slivered almonds
- 1 can (6 ounces) French-fried onion rings

Preheat oven to 350 F. Coat a 9×13 inch baking dish with cooking spray. In a large bowl, stir together chicken, celery, cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, water chestnuts, soup, and almonds. Spoon into prepared baking dish. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Sprinkle onion rings evenly over top and bake 5 more minutes, or until bubbly around edges. Let stand 5–10 minutes before serving. Enjoy with a nice tossed salad on the side.

Chicken and Rice Casserole

Mary Scodeller, Great Lakes Energy

- 4 chicken breasts
- 2 cups instant rice
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can onion soup
- cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350 F. Blend the three kinds of soup with 2 cups of instant rice. Pour into a casserole dish sprayed with cooking spray. Top with the chicken breasts, and cook for 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Let cool and serve.



Noodle Cream Cheese Casserole

Jeanie Henrion, Ontonagon

- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 16 ounces tomato sauce
- 8 ounce package of noodles
- 8 ounce package cream cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese



Preheat oven to 350 F. Brown ground beef in margarine. Add garlic, salt, sugar and tomato sauce. Cover and cook slowly for 15–20 minutes. Cook noodles and drain. Combine cream cheese and sour cream.

In a baking dish, layer noodles, cream cheese mixture and half of the sauce. Repeat layers. Spread cheddar cheese over the top. Bake for about 30 minutes (until heated throughout). Serve!

Uncle Ben's Chicken and Rice

Janice Harvey, Great Lakes Energy

- 6-ounce package Uncle Ben's Long Grain and Wild Rice
- 1 frying chicken or equivalent pieces
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 ½ cups water

Preheat oven to 350 F. Sprinkle rice mix on bottom of buttered 9x13 pan. Combine soup, seasoning packet from rice, and water. Place chicken on top of rice and pour soup mixture over all. Bake for 1 hour, 15 minutes.



Gather Round The Co-op Kitchen Table

Join our **EXCLUSIVE** online cooking community to submit your recipes and try recipes from other members.

Go to **MICOOPKITCHEN.COM** and register.

Please submit your favorite recipe for **"CHIP DIPS"** by **DEC. 4**, **"SOUPS & STEWS"** recipe by **JAN. 4** and **"MUFFINS & BREADS"** by **FEB. 4** for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit and have your recipe featured in *Country Lines*.

Enter your recipe online at 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

Unshakeable Devotion Keeps Brownstone Inn

Thriving For More Than 70 Years

By Yvonne Whitman



Co-owner Deb Molitor standing in the lobby in front of a historic photo montage of the Inn.

It was a typical October day when the earth began to tremble and roll. Thousands of homes on California's central coast were knocked from their foundations, cracked open or destroyed altogether. Dozens of lives were lost. The Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989 was centered near Santa Cruz, and its effects on residents would be felt far and wide, reaching all the way to the rustic U.P. town of Au Train.

The present-day owners of Au Train's legendary Brownstone Inn, Deb Molitor and Jeff Van Bremen, were among those in Santa Cruz whose lives were

forever changed. Having grown up on a farm in Michigan's Montcalm County, Deb said, "I knew that the earth takes care of you; it doesn't reach up and knock your house down around you!" Thus, the couple determined to move themselves and their children back to the stable ground of their Midwestern roots.

Jeff, a native of Ohio, worked in the custom freight industry, attending culinary school at night and on weekends. Deb held numerous degrees in special education. While still living in Michigan in the 1970s, Deb took frequent trips to visit friends in Marquette

and arriving at the Au Train Bay was always her cue to slow down and relax. The place had special meaning.

Following the earthquake, Deb and Jeff let it be known they were in search of new opportunities. One day she received a call from her vacationing parents telling them that Au Train's legendary Brownstone Inn was for sale. After several visits to the Inn—and a strong reminder by Deb to Jeff that "We have really BIG winters here," the couple took a leap of faith and became the fifth owners of the Brownstone.

Built in 1946 by retired Detroit police officer, Clark Haskins, the Inn was constructed of locally harvested wood and stone, as well as materials salvaged from the defunct Ford Motor plant in nearby Munising. It is believed that the interior mahogany wainscoting is scrap from a Kingsford veneer mill that used the wood to create gliders for the World War II Allied invasion at Normandy Beach. The Inn's vintage whole-log dining furniture was handcrafted by Rittenhouse of Cheboygan.

The original luster of the place wasn't quite obvious when Deb and Jeff first took possession. "It had been closed for two years. The heat didn't work; the drains didn't drain and the water didn't run." But within four short months, in December 1991, the couple moved themselves and their children into the upstairs living quarters and reopened the doors to the now legendary and historic restaurant.

The Brownstone Inn's menu draws from local ingredients, and the owners pride themselves on fresh, creative flavor combinations. The core menu Jeff created 25 years ago has remained relatively fixed. But it does include changing specials that, as Deb puts it, "allows Jeff to take care of his 'Chef ya ya's.'" Right now, for instance, we're running curry specials." And their most popular dish? Fresh-as-can-be Lake Superior Whitefish supplied by local fisheries.

After 25 years, the business is even more than a family affair. "We have staff that has worked for us since the day we opened. We are blessed to have employed people that truly have the health and welfare of the business in mind. They care for it as their own." Even more, the local community maintains a vital role in the business. "When the tourists aren't here, it's our neighbors who show up to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries," Deb reflected. "I really feel like we've been a part of so many people's lives."

The Brownstone Inn continues standing and thriving more than 70 years after Clark Haskins fled the city to build his dream from scratch. Reflecting upon

their own decision 25 years ago, Deb's sentiment probably echoes that of Brownstone founder Haskins: "We showed up at the edge of the planet and found we had everything we needed." ■



The original fireplace inside the restaurant. The mantel displays more pieces of ruby glass from Deb's collection.

"We showed up at the edge of the planet and found we had everything we needed."



Peaches, the restaurant cat, perches on a stool. Rescued from a shelter, she earns her keep by greeting guests and deterring mice. Her 'customer fan club' often drops off toys.

Photos—Thom Skelding



U.P. LUGE CLUB COMPETES ON

WORLD STAGE

By Emily Haines Lloyd

Most Michiganders have had the experience of climbing a snowy hill with a plastic or wooden sled in tow, plopping down at the top and pushing off to feel the cold, stinging air. Regardless of the bumps or wipeouts that follow, most people laugh like maniacs, stand up and brush off the snow, then climb the hill to do it all over again.

Far fewer individuals have the experience of sliding down a 280-foot hill at speeds ranging from 50–80 mph, but that’s just what’s happening in

Negaunee, MI at the Upper Peninsula Luge Club. For more than three decades, beginners with wide eyes and daredevils with years of experience have made the trek up Lucy Hill to make their way down in increments upwards of a half a mile. All of this happens on a luge—which looks similar to an old-fashioned winter sled with metal runners.

“You don’t start fast,” Coach Levi Underwood is quick to explain. “Your first time, it’s just fast enough to get down the hill, and it’s still thrilling.”

The U.P. Luge Club has been holding clinics and open sledding for the public since the mid-80s. It provides local communities and tourists an opportunity to experience something few people ever get to do. Sliding (not “lugging” as you might expect) isn’t available just anywhere, and Lucy Hill is the only natural luge track in the United States.

“Sliding, particularly on a natural track, isn’t something you find in every community,” said Tammy Wills, the current secretary of the luge club, former coach from 2010–2016 and a competitive slider herself since age 13. “Yet, this one-of-a-kind experience is in the middle of the Upper Peninsula and completely accessible and affordable.”



All that is needed are warm clothes, a hat and mittens—the U.P. Luge Club provides the rest. But this is not just for recreational sliders.

The U.P. Luge Club is a feeder club for the luge natural track competitive circuit. As the only natural track in the U.S., young sliders who show both promise and determination are often taken to Europe to compete—where a natural track is both prominent and very competitive.

The U.P. Luge Club President, Fred Anderson, first started sliding when he took his Boy Scout Troop to luge at Lucy Hill.

“I was hooked, and I wasn’t the only one,” Anderson explains. “Years later, two scouts from that first trip went on to compete at the Olympics. Wendall Suckow and Chris Thorpe became very successful sliders—Thorpe going on to become the first American to medal in luge at the Olympics. And they both came through this club.”

Remembering his experiences at Lucy Hill, Underwood, who competed for years in Europe and on the Olympic development team, came back to coach.

“I had so many great teachers, Tammy included, who showed me how an athlete could be humble enough to coach,” said Underwood. “And I wanted to give back to this sport that gave so much to me.”

The joy seen on the faces at the U.P. Luge Club comes from all sorts: individuals who have fallen in love with this unexpected sport; novices who are taking their first slide down a track; adrenaline junkies looking for another hit; and that inner child who remembers the freedom and excitement that comes from climbing up a hill, sitting on a sled and just letting go. ■



Three Sisters Luge Pizza

Submitted by guest chefs from the U.P. Luge Club.

Once used to describe the three devastating waves that led to the sinking of the Edmond Fitzgerald, Three Sisters is also the name for three tight turns and the most technical part of the Negaunee luge track.

This “three-turn” pizza is a favorite with club members and goes down as fast as a luge.

Ingredients

- 1 French Bread, sliced lengthwise
- ½ cup sweet onion, diced
- 3 ounces ham, diced
- 2 ounces pepperoni
- 4 ounces cudighi, cooked
- ½ cup green pepper
- ½ cup red pepper
- ½ cup sliced tomato
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- 14 ounces pizza sauce

Instructions

Preheat oven to 450 F. Brown the 4 ounces of cudighi. Cut the French bread lengthwise and toast for 4 minutes at 450 F. Spread pizza sauce on both pieces of toasted French bread.

Then add the following ingredients to the French bread in thirds:

Turn one /Step one

First third—ham, green peppers, onions

Turn two /Step two

Second third—pepperoni, red peppers, onions

Turn three /Step three

Last third—cudighi, tomatoes, onions

Bake for 6–8 minutes and enjoy.



ALL HAIL THE FAMOUS CLYDESDALES

By Yvonne Whitman
Photos courtesy of Kevin Zini

After a lifetime of seeing them on television, excited fans of all generations were thrilled with the arrival of the world-renowned Budweiser Clydesdales at the 49th U.P. Championship Rodeo in Iron River this past July. The excitement over a visit from this iconic and legendary team of horses is not unique to the U.P. "There's a lot of history and tradition that travels with the horses, and they are beloved throughout not only the United States but the world," according to Chief Handler Rudy Helmuth. "They just seem to bring goodwill wherever they go." And they go everywhere, receiving thousands of appearance requests every year from all over the world. Although the St. Louis-based team is on the road 300 days annually, they appear at only 100 coveted events. Landing the Clydesdales is no small feat for anyone.

Two of the handlers getting Captain ready for the Rodeo Parade. Each collar and harness weighs approximately 130 pounds. The harness is handcrafted with solid brass, patent leather and stitched with linen thread.

Local Anheuser-Busch wholesalers comprise the bulk of requests. Credit for the Clydesdales appearing in Iron River goes chiefly to Kingsford-based Four Seasons Beer Distributing, who footed approximately \$20,000 in appearance fees. But it takes more than money to host such visiting celebrity horses. According to Rodeo board member Julie Becker, "We started working on this last November. It's been a lot of work, but it has been worth it to get the royalty of the horse world here."

A visit from the Budweiser Clydesdales requires a great deal of highly-detailed logistical effort, too. Stables, food delivery, security and hotel accommodations for the handlers all require impeccable attention. According to Chief Handler Helmuth, "Each 2,000-pound horse consumes about 15-20 pounds of grain and 40 pounds of hay per day. And on a hot day, each horse will drink about 40 gallons of water." For the Iron River visit, 10 pallets of special feed were shipped a few days before their arrival.

No chances can be taken with animals and equipment in whom so much is invested. The individual horses chosen to be a member of this elite team travel in appropriate comfort and style. The horses, handlers, equipment, famous red, white and gold beer wagon, as well as "Clyde the Dalmatian," a dog, criss-cross the world in three air-conditioned 50-foot tractor-trailers. Cameras are connected to monitors in the cabs, enabling the drivers to keep ever-watchful eyes on their precious cargo. Air-cushioned suspension and thick rubber flooring add to the comfort of the trailers. And, the teams never travel more than eight hours per day, stopping at night at farms and stables so the Clydesdales can rest after a day of rigorous travel.



The horses proudly make their way down the rodeo parade route.



The three-year-old Dalmatian that travels with the team is named Clyde. Dalmatians have traveled with the Clydesdale hitch teams since the 1950s. Traditionally known as coach dogs because they ran between the wheels of carriages and were companions to the horses, they now they perch atop the wagon, proudly seated next to the driver.

Clydesdale horses were first introduced to the U.S. in the mid-1800s when Canadians of Scottish descent brought them across the border to be used as draft horses. Today, the Clydesdale is used primarily for breeding and show. The Budweiser Clydesdales are carefully selected from a 300-plus-acre breeding farm located near Boonville, Mo. To qualify to be a member of one of the three Budweiser traveling hitch teams, a Clydesdale must meet certain requirements: Each horse must be a gelding of at least four years of age; it must stand 72 inches high at the shoulder when fully mature and should weigh between 1,800 and 2,300 pounds; the horse must also have a bay coat, four white legs, a white blaze and a black mane and tail.

The handlers chosen to drive the team and wagon must themselves undergo a lengthy qualifying and training process before assuming the prestigious role of 'Budweiser Clydesdale Hitch Driver.' Helmuth came on board with some previous hands-on training. "I grew up with draft horses on a farm in Iowa where we used the horses for farming. That set me up for the job that I have now. It's been an incredible job not only because of what I get to do, but because of the people I meet."

When asked how they are received as they travel the highways of America, Helmuth replies, "There is always a lot of excitement. Even when just stopping for fuel, we open the doors so that people can see the famous Budweiser Clydesdales."

Yes, American royalty, indeed. ■

Every Vote Counts

By Jack O'Malley

A busy year celebrating Olympians and honoring lost legends like Gordie Howe and David Bowie, 2016 will conclude with one of the most highly debated presidential elections in history. As we prepare ourselves for a new leader, I urge you to do one of two things.

1. Vote
2. Encourage someone you know to vote.

"I don't like the candidates." "My vote doesn't make a difference." "I'm busy." These may be reasonable explanations for the nearly half of Americans who choose not to vote during a presidential election year. To those who understand voting to be a great American privilege, they might sound more like excuses releasing our neighbors of any personal responsibility for the future of our nation.

"Voting is a right, not a duty," non-voters argue. "I have just as much right to exercise my right NOT to vote!" True. American people voluntarily fight (and sometimes die) for you to keep your right to vote—whether used or not. It's a right extended to every American citizen regardless of sex, race or economic standing. It's a right exercised in peace.

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court described voting like this: No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined. *Wesberry v. Sanders*, 376 U.S. 1 (U.S. 1964).

Vital for the democratic process to work, your vote not only counts, but it also serves as a united voice to elected officials regardless of party. Your vote says, "Here I am, I'm paying attention!"



Jack O'Malley

Whether you choose to exercise your right to vote or not, Abraham Lincoln described it best when he said, "Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

Hope to see you at the polls. ■

I Remember...

We invite members to share their fondest memories.

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Guidelines

1. Approximately 200 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Only one entry per household, per month
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5. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and the name of your electric co-op
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«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by Nov. 30 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit. 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 the name of your co-op.

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the September 2016 issue is Karen Wienke, a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay. Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



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I grew up in the U.P. so I know firsthand what a Michigan winter can do.

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