

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



— small town to —
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CITY**

Rural Michigan's Political Couple

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Meeting Is June 17

Clean Snowmobile
Challenge

Michigan's Music Man—
Joshua Davis

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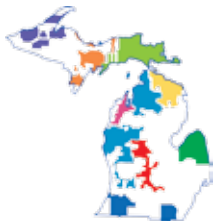
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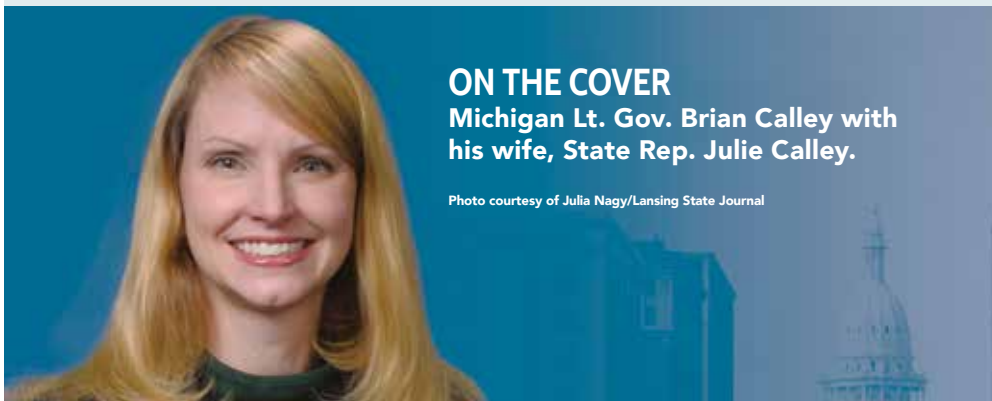
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Photo courtesy of Julia Nagy/Lansing State Journal

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Guess Our New Mystery Photo And Win
A \$50 Bill Credit!

I Remember...

We invite members to share their fondest memories.

Country Lines will pay \$50 for stories we publish.

Guidelines

1. Approximately 200 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Only one entry per household, per month
4. *Country Lines* retains reprint rights
5. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and the name of your electric co-op
6. Submit your memories online: countrylines.com



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OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation: Sept. 30, 1937
Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31
countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

Ontonagon County REA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Powering Safely During An Outage



Debbie Miles
General Manager

One of the great things about the modern American electric grid is that power almost always flows when we need it. Given our dependence on electricity, it's understandable why portable generators are popular when the power goes out and stays out for a while. But generators can cause more harm than good if not used properly. In honor of National Electrical Safety Month, recognized each May, I want to give you a few safety tips to protect yourself and our linemen who are working to restore your power.

First, never, ever plug a portable generator directly into one of your home's outlets—unless you have had a licensed electrician install a "transfer switch" in your home. If you don't have a transfer switch, power provided by the generator can "back feed" along power lines, which can electrocute a lineman working on those lines.

Also, portable generators create carbon monoxide, the odorless, colorless gas that can quickly become deadly if the generator isn't exhausted outside. Attached garages with an open door don't count—the carbon monoxide can still seep indoors and poison inhabitants. Generators must go *outside* in a *dry* area, which might mean you'll need to rig a canopy to protect it from precipitation at a safe distance from your home's windows, doors and vents. How far is a safe distance? Even 15 feet can be too close.

Other things to keep in mind: Plug appliances directly into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated extension cords, but don't overload it. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maximum load. Shut off the generator before refueling, or a fire could start—and it's a good idea to have a fully-charged fire extinguisher nearby, just in case.

Safety is a top priority at Ontonagon REA, for our employees and co-op members alike. Contact us at 906-884-4151 if you'd like to learn more about how to properly install and use a portable generator. ■

Attend Your Co-op's Annual Meeting

**Saturday, June 17
10 a.m.**

Chassell High School

See back page for details.



Notice Of 2017 Annual Meeting Of Members Of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

Date of Notice: May 18, 2017

Please be advised that, pursuant to Article II, Section 3 and Article XIV of The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association's Bylaws, the Annual Meeting of the Members of The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is hereby called by the Secretary of the Association.

The purpose of the Annual Meeting is to seat the new directors, pass upon reports covering the previous fiscal year, and transact any other business as may properly come before the meeting.

The Annual Meeting of the Members of The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association shall occur at Chassell, Michigan, promptly at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 17, 2017.

Ontonagon County Rural
Electrification Association



Randy Myhren, Secretary

Ontonagon County REA/Dec. 31, 2016 & 2015 Financial Statement Balance Sheets

Assets	2016	2015
UTILITY PLANT:		
Electric plant in service	\$26,404,303	\$ 23,272,325
Construction work in progress	2,308,514	2,078,742
	28,712,817	25,351,067
Less—Accumulated depreciation	(8,655,461)	(7,998,347)
Net utility plant	20,057,356	17,352,720
INVESTMENTS & OTHER ASSETS		
Investments	836,145	758,720
Total investments and other assets	836,145	758,720
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	133,388	401,372
Accounts receivable (less accumulated provision for uncollectibles of \$40,000 in 2011 & \$15,805 in 2010)	519,266	725,588
Accounts receivable—other	65,717	75,953
Materials and supplies	236,663	219,974
Prepayments	18,982	53,044
Total current assets	974,016	1,515,931
Deferred Charges	235,452	662,035
TOTAL ASSETS	\$22,102,969	\$20,289,406
Member's Equities and Liabilities		
EQUITIES:		
Memberships	\$22,990	\$23,005
Patronage capital	4,499,206	3,952,741
Other equities	32,497	32,497
Total equities	4,554,693	4,008,243
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES:		
Rural Utilities Service (RUS) mortgage notes	5,101,375	5,241,610
National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUFCFC) supplemental mortgage notes	188,876	206,431
CoBank, ACB mortgage note	9,056,943	9,387,566
	\$14,347,194	\$14,835,607
Less current portion	(506,000)	(488,000)
	\$13,841,194	\$14,347,607
Post-retirement benefit obligation	132,400	427,524
Total long-term liabilities	\$13,973,594	\$14,775,131
CURRENT LIABILITIES:		
Current maturities of long-term liabilities	506,000	488,000
Line of Credit notes payable	1,750,000	-
Accounts payable	724,781	564,448
Customer deposits	14,350	13,600
Other current liabilities	344,705	311,531
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	3,339,836	1,377,579
Deferred credits	234,846	128,453
TOTAL EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES	22,102,969	20,289,406
Statement of Revenue & Expenses Ending Dec. 31, 2016 & 2015		
OPERATING REVENUES	\$6,057,861	\$6,313,543
OPERATING EXPENSES:		
Cost of purchased power	2,405,587	2,663,214
Distribution—Operations	311,963	397,838
Distribution—Maintenance	621,396	518,293
Consumer accounts	180,047	223,489
Customer service and informational	112,550	84,981
Sales Expense	-	-
Administrative and general	423,152	517,803
Depreciation	742,452	704,777
Taxes	246,178	218,088
Other deduction	21,447	-
Total operating expense	\$5,064,772	\$5,328,483
Operating margins before interest expense	\$993,089	\$985,060
Interest expense	697,772	673,754
Operating margins (loss) after interest expense	\$295,317	\$311,306
NON-OPERATING MARGINS:		
Interest and investment income	48,776	42,767
Other nonoperating income (expense)	89,598	94,263
	\$138,374	\$137,030
Capital credits	112,774	123,668
NET (LOSS) MARGINS	\$546,465	\$572,004



Choosing The Right Air Conditioner For Your Home

Do you have a central air conditioner (AC) in your home that is at least 15 years old that still works but is not very efficient? Replacing an inefficient air conditioner with a more efficient model could reduce your electric bill. A new AC unit is 20 to 40 percent more efficient than one from the 1990s—and ENERGY STAR®-certified systems are even more efficient.

How much money you save by replacing your current AC unit depends on how often your AC runs and your electric rate. The best way to determine possible savings is to have an in-home assessment conducted by a qualified heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) professional or a certified energy auditor. Electric co-ops are often interested in reducing peak summer loads and sometimes offer information, rebates or a list of qualified professionals.

Your contractor needs to size the system to your home. A unit that is too small will not cool your home to the levels you want. If it is too large, it may not dehumidify your home sufficiently, and it will cycle on and off more frequently, which can increase wear and tear on the system and shorten its life significantly. To size the system, the contractor will look at the efficiency of the home by checking insulation levels. If you add insulation where it's most needed, you may be able to install a smaller AC unit and enjoy greater comfort and lower cooling costs. The contractor should also assess your ductwork, which is often poorly designed, leaky or inadequately insulated.

It's good to know there are several air conditioning options suited to different situations. It may or may not be practical to change to a different type of system.

Central air conditioning is one of two types: either split or packaged. A split system, which has the cold coils inside the home and an outside unit exhausting heat, is the most common. Packaged systems, which are sometimes installed because of space constraints, combine these functions into one box located outside the home.

A heat pump can provide cooling and heating in homes with or without ducts. If you are currently using propane or natural gas as your fuel source, this may be a good option.

A ductless mini-split heat pump can be an efficient way to cool up to four zones inside the home. If your existing ductwork is in bad shape or poorly designed, this could be a good solution.

Window units are much less efficient than other options, but they can still be effective for cooling a single room. It's worth paying a little more for a new ENERGY STAR-compliant unit, rather than the dusty \$80 unit from the yard sale.

Evaporative (or "swamp") coolers are an alternative in very dry climates. While they use a quarter of the energy and are less expensive to install than central air conditioning, they also require more frequent maintenance. ■

Replacing an aging air conditioner is a great way to improve comfort, cut energy costs and reduce peak energy demand.

Thunderstorm Safety Tips

When thunderstorms are rolling your way, stay safe with these helpful tips from the American Red Cross:

- Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates. Watch for signs of a storm, like darkening skies, lightning flashes or increasing wind.
 - Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are likely to occur. Many people struck by lightning are not in the area where rain is occurring.
 - If a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, take shelter in a substantial building or in a vehicle with the windows closed. Get out of mobile homes that can blow over in high winds.
 - If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be in danger from lightning. If thunder roars, go indoors! The National Weather Service recommends staying inside for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder clap.
 - Avoid electrical equipment and telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead.
 - Shutter windows and close outside doors securely. Keep away from windows.
 - Do not take a bath, shower or use plumbing.
- If you are driving, try to safely exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.
 - If you are outside and cannot reach a safe building, avoid high ground, water, tall and isolated trees, as well as metal objects such as fences and bleachers. Picnic shelters, dugouts and sheds are also NOT safe. ■



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
2. Wait three business 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 for more information

Is Your Central A/C Ready To Take The Heat?

Along with all the wonderful things summer brings comes the costly effort of keeping your home cool and comfortable. If your central A/C is due for an upgrade, or if a tune-up is enough to keep it running efficiently, the Energy Optimization program is here to help! We provide cash incentives to help make energy-saving improvements more affordable.

New Central A/C: If your central A/C system is more than 20 years old, it's time to upgrade! Install a new ENERGY STAR® central A/C and save up to 20 percent in cooling costs annually. Or, opt for a central air-source heat pump or mini/multi-split air-source heat pump system to save even more. **Energy Optimization program cash incentive: \$150–500.**

A/C Tune-up: Ensure your central A/C runs as efficiently as possible by scheduling a tune-up. A tune-up can help reduce energy usage,

prevent costly breakdowns, and will allow you and your family to enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air. **Energy Optimization program cash incentive: \$50. ■**

COMBO CASH INCENTIVES NOW AVAILABLE!

Save even more when you purchase a combination of qualifying energy-saving equipment:

Cash Incentive	Equipment	Bonus Incentive	Maximum Total Incentive
HVAC Combo Bonus	New qualifying ECM blower motor AND new central A/C unit, air-source heat pump, or ground-source heat pump system at the same time.	\$100	\$800
Smart HVAC Combo Bonus	New qualifying ECM blower motor AND new central A/C unit, air-source heat pump, or ground-source heat pump system AND a WiFi-enabled or smart thermostat at the same time.	\$150	\$950

Visit michigan-energy.org or call 877.296.4319 for additional energy-saving information and rebates.

Cool off and save energy this summer!

Beat the heat without breaking the bank! Upgrade to a high-efficiency cooling system or tune up your existing system to save energy and money. Receive cash back from the Energy Optimization program for:

- New central A/C (\$150-\$500)
- Central or mini/multi-split air-source heat pump (\$150-\$500)
- Central A/C tune-up (\$50)

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.

Jump in

Planes, Trains & Automobiles



While visiting the Huron River on the Baraga/Marquette County line in the Upper Peninsula came a group of old Fords pattering along the sandy road. They posed for some photos among the red pines and sand dunes, then took off again. Talk about being in the right place at the right time! *By Nathan Miller, Chassell*

Submit A Photo & Win A Bill Credit!

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: **The Art of Nature** due **May 20** for the July/August issue and **Birds and Feathers** due **July 20** for the Sept. issue.

To submit photos, and for details and instructions, go to <http://bit.ly/countrylines>

We look forward to seeing your best photos!



In the Upper Peninsula school is NOT closed on a snowy day such as this. *By Karen Dault*



Our preschool class enjoyed learning about trains and the letter T! The electric train is a hit every year! *By Kati Ek*

BREAKFAST AND BRUNCH

These sweet and savory breakfast or brunch ideas are sure to please.

Orange Cranberry-Carrot Muffins

Luise Bolleber, Cherryland

- 1/3 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- Juice and zest from 1 orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 cups finely shredded carrots
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries, coarsely chopped

Heat oven to 350 F and place paper cups in a muffin tin. Whisk sugar and butter together in a medium bowl until blended. Beat in eggs, orange juice and vanilla. Combine the flour, orange zest (peel), baking soda, baking powder and salt in a separate bowl. Add to creamed mixture just until combined. Fold in carrots and cranberries. Fill muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

▶ Watch a video on this recipe at <https://goo.gl/HN697I>

Photos—831 Creative





Peggy's Stolen Stuffed French Toast

Jessica Waite, Great Lakes Energy Cooperative

- 1 loaf Italian bread
- 1 stick butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 8 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup maple syrup

Preheat oven to 375 F. Tear half of bread loaf into ¼" cubes and place in bottom of 13×9 greased pan. Cube cream cheese and place evenly throughout. Top with the remaining loaf in ¼" cubes. In a separate bowl combine remaining ingredients. Pour over bread mixture. Pat down with a spatula, so bread is soaked. Cover with tinfoil and let sit overnight. Bake for 45 minutes covered. Serve immediately with extra maple syrup.



All-In-One Breakfast Bake

Mary Ellen Seguin-Adomat,
Cherryland Electric Cooperative

- 1 pound plain pork sausage
- 6 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 6 slices bread, torn into pieces
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms

Preheat oven to 350 F. Butter a 13×9 glass baking dish. Brown sausage and drain on paper towels; set aside. In a large bowl, beat eggs, then add milk and beat again. Stir in remaining ingredients, including sausage. Pour into baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes. This can be prepared the night before and refrigerated; pop it in the oven in the morning.



Submit your favorite recipe for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit and have your recipe featured in *Country Lines*:

• "All About Apples" due July 5

Go to micoopkitchen.com for more information and to register.

Raspberry Pie (pictured above)

Rep. Julie Calley

If you're as busy as Rep. Julie Calley, you'll appreciate this simple, but scrumptious, pie recipe that's a favorite in the Calley home.

- 1 pie crust, store bought or homemade
- 1 3.4-ounce package vanilla instant pudding
- 2 cups milk
- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 3-ounce package raspberry Jell-O
- 1 cup boiling water
- 9 ounces fresh raspberries
- ¼ cup chopped nuts (optional)

Prepare and bake pie shell for open face pie. Let the pie shell cool. Combine pudding, milk, cream cheese and almond extract. Beat for 2 minutes. Pour into pie shell and chill until firm. Mix Jell-O with boiling water and chill until partially set. Gently stir in the raspberries and nuts. Pour over vanilla filling and chill until set.

Read the full story about the Calleys on page 14 and visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and others.



CLEAN SNOWMOBILE CHALLENGE

By Yvonne Whitman

The Clean Snowmobile Challenge is a collegiate design competition of the Society of Automotive Engineers. Michigan Technological University has hosted the annual event each March for the past 15 years at the Keweenaw Research Center, just north of Houghton. Engineering students from participating schools throughout the United States and Canada take a stock snowmobile and reengineer it. Their aim: to reduce emissions and noise and increase fuel efficiency while preserving the riding excitement demanded by snowmobile enthusiasts.

The event began in 1999 and, for the first three years, was held in and around Yellowstone National Park, sparked by discussions of excluding recreational snowmobile access from the park. The snowmobile industry responded by working with the Environmental Protection Agency to develop standards that require snowmobiles to be clean and quiet. Laws were passed in 2006 that define emissions and noise standards for snowmobiles. With these laws and more strict regulations

required for snowmobiles in national parks like Yellowstone and Grand Teton, the educational opportunity now had a real-world connection. Creating environmentally-friendly sleds is of the utmost importance to the students. "It's highly important not to just snowmobilers, but on all vehicles to make them cleaner and to help the environment," said James Gerdes, a student competitor from Madison, Wis.

Teams work all year and invest thousands of dollars in their snowmobile, so the competition is fierce. During the six-day competition, their modified snowmobiles compete in a variety of events including emissions, noise, fuel economy/endurance, acceleration, handling, static display, cold start and design. "Not only does this event help develop students to become better leaders, better communicators and better engineers, but it also promotes snowmobiling and keeps the sport alive by protecting the environment," said William Bryant, internal combustion and clean snowmobile captain of the University of Wisconsin—Platteville team.



The 2017 competition proved to be even more challenging than usual due to very adverse weather conditions. Students had to battle ice, wind gusts greater than 50 miles per hour and single digit temperatures. According to Event Coordinator Jay Meldrum, "The weather in the Keweenaw was consistently lousy during the Clean Snowmobile Challenge, but we adjusted and made it through the evaluation of the 24 teams representing 16 different universities and declared winners. Since this is an education program first, everyone was a winner. Thanks to all the local sponsors and volunteers who help make this event possible for 15 years running. Thanks to OCREA for keeping the lights on throughout the wind storms."

This event highlights the ingenuity of students working collaboratively as teams to bring environmentally conscious ideas to fruition. These ideas will allow future generations of outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy a hobby inherent to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. ■

Next year's event is slated for March 5–10, 2018. Visit mtu.edu/snowmobile/ to learn more.



Photos courtesy of Michigan Technological University

"It's highly important not to just snowmobilers, but on all vehicles to make them cleaner and to help the environment."
—James Gerdes

— small town to — CAPITAL CITY

Rural Michigan's Political Couple

By Emily Haines Lloyd



Rep. Julie Calley with her husband, Lt. Gov. Brian Calley and children Collin, Reagan and Karagan.

Down a country road in Ionia County, not too far from where she grew up on a sesquicentennial farm, Julie Calley lives a fairly normal life. Julie is a wife, mother of three and devoted public servant. Of course, she's also married to the lieutenant governor of Michigan, Brian Calley, but her career takes her to Lansing as the representative for the 87th District in the state's House of Representatives.

The pair are a rare commodity in Lansing, with Brian serving his final two years as the lieutenant governor of Michigan while Julie began a two-year term in January. She now holds the seat that her great-grandfather Herbert Powell, grandfather Stanley Powell and her husband have all held. Both Calleys also have served as Ionia County commissioners.

One wouldn't think of small-town Portland as a hub of Michigan politics, but for Representative Julie Calley, it's sort of the family business.

"My family has a legacy of public service," said Calley. "My mother has served at the township level for almost as long as I've been alive. She just retired last



“It boils down to making government work better for the average citizen. Politics can overcomplicate things. It has to center back on the community we’re serving—a person-centered approach.”

year as a township trustee. My grandfather and great-grandfather both served in the state legislature, so public service is definitely in my blood.”

Julie notes that one doesn’t need to have a long heritage of politics in the family in order to serve. “There are usually a number of local boards which need more interest and participation. There are numerous empty roles on the county level that sometimes have only one candidate or sometimes not even one. There is a definite need for public servants.”

It may have been that desire to serve that drew Julie and Brian together. High school sweethearts, the Calleys married as she was finishing a degree at Northwood University and Brian at Michigan State University.

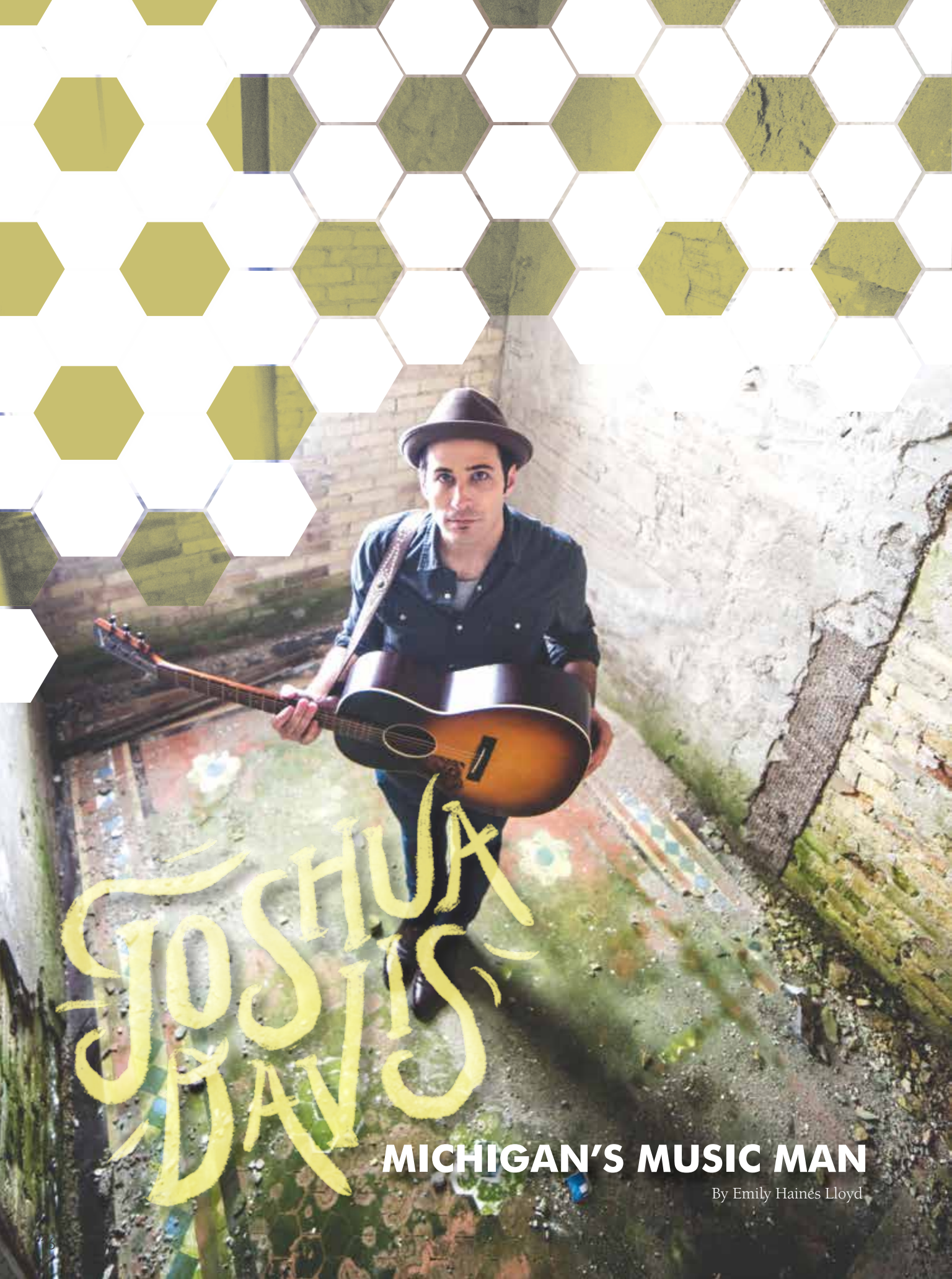
After college, the Calleys moved back to Ionia County. Julie had worked in commercial real estate while her husband made his mark in the state political scene, but Julie always stayed involved in local politics. Calley was chairwoman of the Ionia County Board of Commissioners and chairperson of the Michigan Community Service Commission. She also served two terms on the Republican State

Committee. Now, as Julie is still in the early part of her two-year term in the Michigan House of Representatives, she is taking her local experience to the state level.

“It boils down to making government work better for the average citizen. Politics can overcomplicate things. It has to center back on the community we’re serving—a person-centered approach.”

Julie’s experience living in a rural setting has actually driven her work approach. While she notes that the jump from roughly 9,000 constituents to approximately 90,000 constituents is daunting, she is utilizing the same relationship-building skills she used on the local level in her new role. Her experience in small-town Michigan is an inspiration as she moves forward, building relationships in the state’s House of Representatives.


“Those who choose to live in the country tend to have a certain independence and yet reliance on one another,” Julie concluded. “So when a problem arises, it’s typical for neighbors to band together and take care of one another. Identifying a need and taking care of it—I wish we could see more of that.” ■



JOSHUA DAVIS

MICHIGAN'S MUSIC MAN

By Emily Haines Lloyd



Many people were introduced to Joshua Davis on NBC's *The Voice*, where he stunned audiences with his authentic, grassroots sound and Midwest charm. However, those who are tuned into the Michigan music scene have known Davis for ages, both as a solo artist and member of the popular band, Steppin' In It. Fans close to home weren't at all surprised by his popularity on the show or that he made it all the way to the show's finals.

Born in Marquette and raised on the east side of the state, Davis comes from deep roots in both music and humility.

"My parents lived off the grid—in the woods, no running water, no electricity. Real pioneer-type stuff," Davis said. "They took me to folk music festivals as a kid and all of that really had an effect on me."

Davis describes folk music as "music by and for the people," and that legacy has definitely impacted his career and his lifestyle.

"There was a point where my wife and I knew we either wanted to move to a larger city or find a place in the country," explained Davis. "Eventually we chose a home in Leelanau County. We'd been coming up here for years—playing music, vacationing, camping—it's remarkable—all the beauty, fresh water and community we have here."

Community is another popular theme with Davis, who is a member of Earthworks Music, a collective group of independent artists who use music to raise awareness, mentor youth, build community and celebrate local culture. While Davis is involved with many community efforts that range from social and hardship causes to environmental work, he notes that fine arts education for kids is especially close to his heart.

"Obviously, I love music and I think it's important to pass on the history and power of music to kids," said Davis.

Davis has taught classes at Interlochen, the prestigious music school in northern Michigan. He has taught songwriting and instrumental classes to children, as well as adults, through the school's College of Creative Arts program.

"Interlochen is an incredible place," said Davis. "There's such a unique energy there and so much talent and enthusiasm; it's hard not to be inspired by the students."

Davis has settled back into life in the Mitten State after the rush of additional attention created by *The Voice*. While Los Angeles provided an opportunity of a lifetime, this husband, father, activist, teacher and, of course, musician has returned home to Michigan where there's nothing like real life to inspire new music.

After *The Voice*, Davis got right back to the studio, cutting a seven-inch vinyl with two tracks "Always Gonna Be Here For You" and "Let Me In." These tracks are included on his most recent album, *The Way Back Home*, released in February 2017.

Disability 101: A Lesson in Respect

By Jack O'Malley, WTCM 103.5 FM Traverse City and host of Jack's Journal on 9 & 10 News

"Well, Jack," said the doctor, examining my foot while studying X-rays of my heel. "If that tendon tears, it's going to be a bear to fix. You need foot surgery." Not one to argue, I took his advice.

In the days prior to surgery, I prepared for my recovery: two to four weeks off my feet, hobbling unsteadily on crutches and learning how to steer my scooter, followed by a week or two walking with a cane.

"Easy enough," I thought. With a foot brace, prescriptions and disability parking permit in hand, I was feeling confident!

After a relatively pain-and-incident-free first few weeks, I had mastered the dance—juggling my brief case, foot brace, scooter and crutches, jostling them in and out of the car, all while balancing on one leg. Lugging everything through a near freezing parking deck at least twice per day, I quickly tired of the hassle. But the end was near! Soon the doc would give me the all-clear, and it would be just me, my brief case, and my intricately-carved, walnut-stained Beechwood walking cane, which was an accessory I hoped would offer an air of distinction (unlike my scooter).

But then, a complication—a complication setting my recovery back at least two weeks. And then another setback.

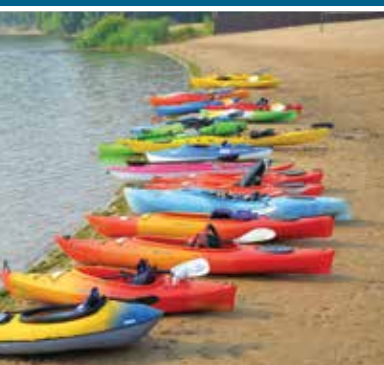
In mid-December, with mobility still dependent on the knee scooter and crutches, my wife and I attended a music program in search of some much-needed holiday cheer. Entering an auditorium brimming with families, grandparents and students, we noticed all handicapped-accessible rows were full, many seats occupied by young children. While obvious I couldn't use the stairs, no one moved. Dismayed, I found a folding chair by the entrance while my wife took a seat elsewhere in the auditorium.

Initially frustrated at being separated from my wife, I paused. Since surgery, folks had repeatedly grabbed doors, held elevators and carried bags for me. While some were oblivious, the vast majority of those I "bumped" into kindly offered assistance. Plus, I had a light at the end of the tunnel. I would recover. Eventually.



Yet this situation forced me to ask a tough question. What about those people suffering permanent disabilities, many of whom regularly experience these types of situations? What about people discouraged from going out because of limited parking and seating, who feel uncomfortable asking for help, overburdened with medical equipment, and just overwhelmed with the situation in general?

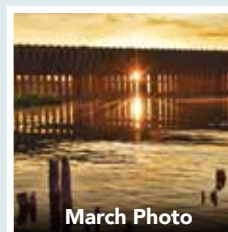
Though I'm still not 100 percent, doctors assure me I'll make a full recovery. In the meantime, my respect and appreciation for those with a permanent physical or cognitive disability has only deepened. My hope now is to encourage others to think twice when in public. Save those reserved parking spaces and seating sections for those people and families who could really use it. Open a door, offer a seat, and give a smile to someone who genuinely needs it. I know I will. ■



«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by June 10 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 March 2017 issue is Walter Seavoy, an Ontonagon County REA member, who correctly identified the photo as the Lower Harbor Ore Dock in downtown Marquette, Mich. Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



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Ontonagon County REA 2017 Annual Meeting

June 17 • 10 a.m. • Chassell High School



The board of directors and employees of your electric co-op invite you to join them at the 2017 annual meeting (see notice, page 5, and right for details). This is a chance to visit with your neighbors and friends from throughout our five-county service area and participate in your co-op's affairs.

At the meeting, newly elected directors from District 3—Ewen/Trout Creek and District 7—Boston/Lake Linden will be seated.

Meeting Highlights:

- Updates on co-op affairs by co-op president and general manager
- Director election results
- Newly elected directors from District 3—Ewen/Trout Creek and District 7—Boston/Lake Linden will be seated
- Update on your co-op's financial health
- Drawing for cash prizes
- Continental breakfast and lunch will be served