

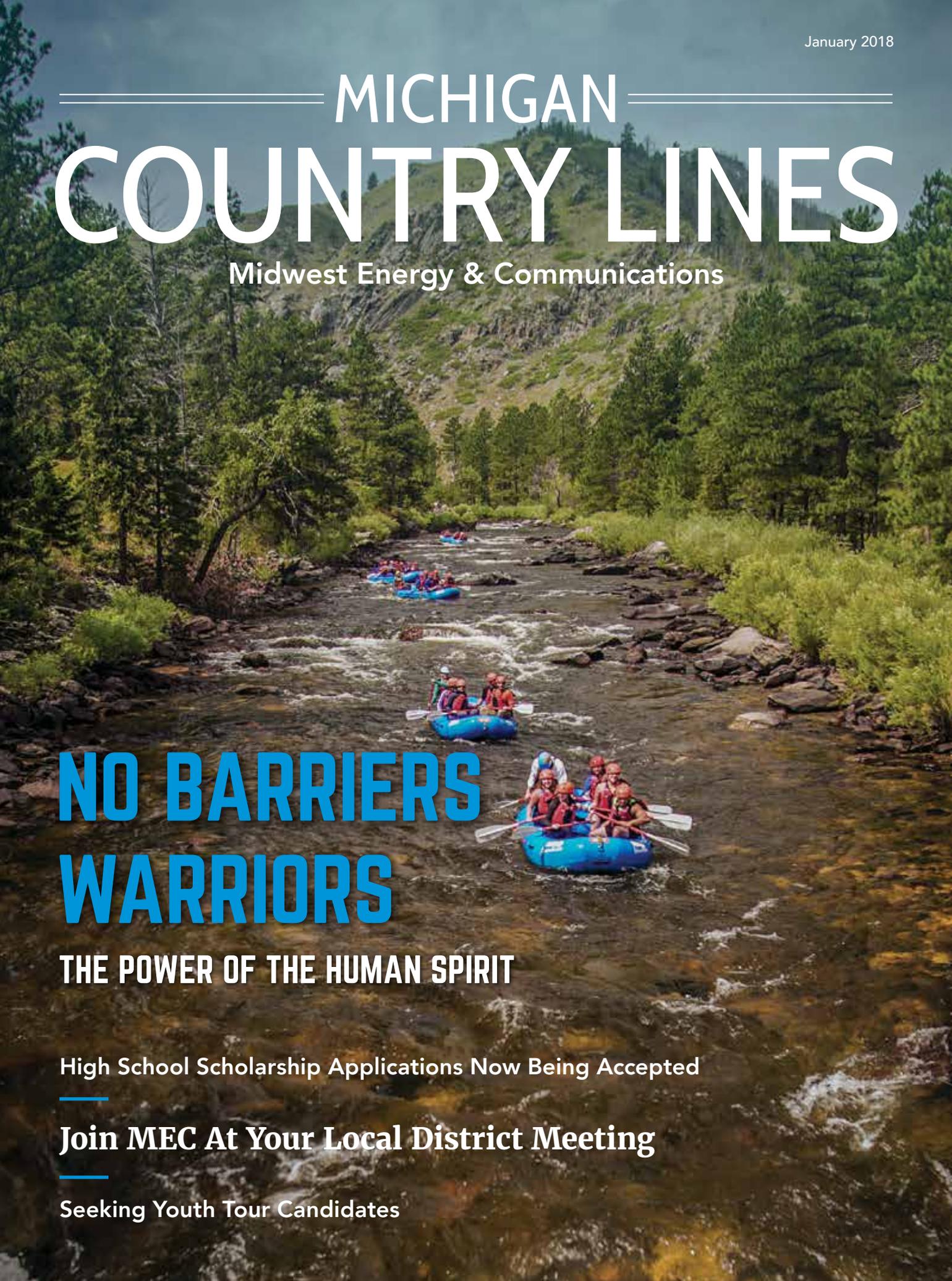
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# MICHIGAN

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# COUNTRY LINES

Midwest Energy & Communications



## NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

**THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

High School Scholarship Applications Now Being Accepted

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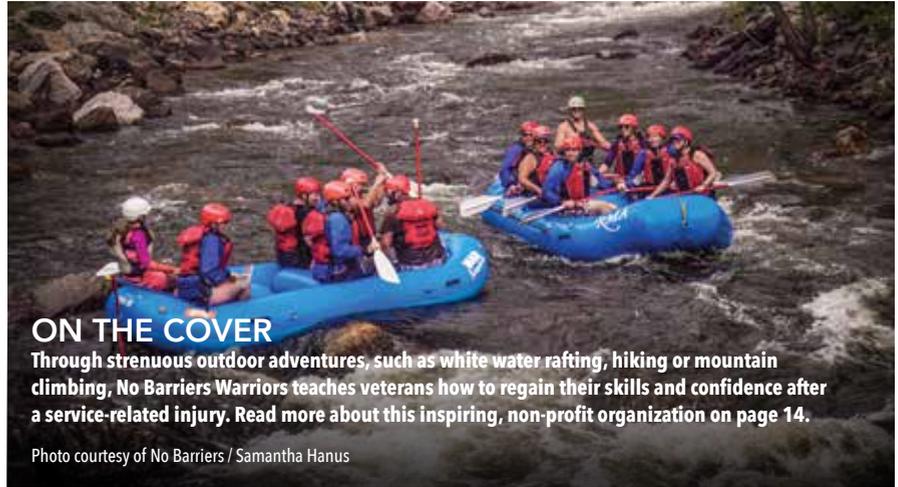
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January 2018 // Vol. 38, No. 1



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Through strenuous outdoor adventures, such as white water rafting, hiking or mountain climbing, No Barriers Warriors teaches veterans how to regain their skills and confidence after a service-related injury. Read more about this inspiring, non-profit organization on page 14.

Photo courtesy of No Barriers / Samantha Hanus

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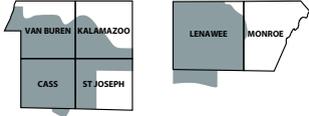
## *I Remember...*

We invite members to share their fondest memories.

### 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](http://countrylines.com) or email to [cdorr@meca.coop](mailto:cdorr@meca.coop)

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# Rural Transformation Continues In 2018

**Robert Hance**, President/CEO

If time flies when you're having fun, then 2017 was a literal blur for the MEC family.

We started the year with a new mission statement, focusing our efforts on delivering first-in-class innovations and solutions where others won't. With that as our compass, we plowed forward into what became the most transformational year in the life of this cooperative and our members. People are not only staying in the rural space because of the opportunities we've created; they're actually choosing the rural space.

In August we opened our new headquarters on Decatur Road. The building itself is a state-of-the-art model for energy and operational efficiency. We designed it with room to grow as we continue living out our mission and incorporated many features to make it an educational platform for anyone interested in energy and smart home automation.

With the grand opening came the launch of our new name and brand, Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC). The name change itself was small, but it represents our giant commitment to deliver first-in-class communications solutions to the rural space, where others haven't and won't. While we're firmly rooted in electric distribution and have a thriving long-term propane business, energy is only part of our story as we are now a full-service energy and communications company.

Resting on our laurels is not part of the plan as we move into 2018. We've entered year four of our five-year southwest Michigan fiber internet deployment. Now 6,000 subscribers strong, we intend to build another 400 miles of service and connect another 2,500 members this year. As we continue construction, we're also starting to take a longer-term look at next steps, including plans for our members in southeast Michigan and our approach for bringing service to those outside our electric service territory.

We're also pursuing ways to put our investment in fiber communications across our electric grid to work for you. We dipped our toes in the water late last year with distribution automation and will continue to grow and develop meaningful applications to give you the best levels of reliability, safety, and convenience that we can.

This summer we will break ground on our community solar project. We're now selling subscriptions to our SpartanSolar project and plan to go live this fall. Community solar will provide you with an easy and convenient way to invest in renewable energy production without your own installation and maintenance costs.

We're not slowing down; in fact, I believe we're just getting started. Your MEC team remains ever-committed to providing the very best in service delivery, reliability, and customer care and solutions. Together our future is bright.

## Join Us For Dining & Dialog About Your Cooperative

Last year, 2017, was a transformational year in the life of your cooperative, and we're not slowing down. We have some big plans in place to continue improving your service experience, while also bringing great new options, such as:

- Construction of a community solar array on Decatur Road, giving you an easy way to invest in renewable energy production
- Continued deployment of our southwest Michigan fiber internet service and making plans for the future
- New smart grid/home applications to improve reliability, safety and convenience
- Easier-than-ever ways to communicate, view and pay your bill, and monitor your consumption from the comfort and convenience of your home.

Ready to learn more? In March we will host five Dining & Dialog events in southwest Michigan, giving members a chance to meet face-to-face with Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC) leadership over a delicious meal to ask questions and learn more about your co-op. We'll bring two events to southeast Michigan in October. It's a casual environment for a meaningful and productive two-way conversation, and no question is off limits.



Members are invited by random selection, and invitations will be sent later this month. Attendance is limited based on the size of the venue. If you are interested in attending one of the meetings, please sign up at [teammidwest.com](http://teammidwest.com) or contact Nicole Barfell at 269-445-1112. We will add you to our preferred waiting list and contact you if we have openings at any of the meetings.

Can't make it but still want to participate? We will stream two of our events over Facebook Live. Like our page at [Facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest) and watch for information.

## Supporting Today's Students, Tomorrow's Leaders

Every year, MEC helps four high school seniors enter a new chapter of their lives with a \$1,000 college scholarship.

High school seniors whose families receive monthly service from MEC at their primary residence are invited to apply for one scholarship now. Scholarship applications must be submitted by March 19, and awards will be announced in April. Selection for the scholarship is based on academic performance, extra-curricular activities, community

involvement and/or employment, and honors and awards. A minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a four-point scale is required, and an official transcript must be submitted for final approval. Every applicant must also submit a short video essay: Tell us what your superpower is. Get creative and have fun. Your unique, funny or even quirky perspective might just put \$1,000 toward your education! Full details can be found with the online application at [teammidwest.com](http://teammidwest.com).



# Electricity Changes Everything

More than 1.6 billion people in the world remain without electricity. That's a pretty staggering statistic considering health, safety, education and economic growth all start with power. In modern times, no country has managed to substantially reduce poverty without access to electricity.

Electric co-ops know a thing or two about bringing electricity to people who don't have it. After all, it was the co-ops who brought electricity to rural America over 75 years ago when no one else would.

In partnership with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International Program, Michigan's electric cooperatives sent 10 linemen to Buena Vista, Guatemala, in 2015. The linemen worked side-by-side with local residents to bring electricity to the remote, mountainous village. When work was completed, the community celebrated together as electric lights came on for the very first time. This moment marked the beginning of new opportunities and a new future for the 54 families that call Buena Vista home.

NRECA International Program Manager Ingrid Hunsicker recently visited Buena Vista to see how life has changed with electricity. Hunsicker reported that lights in the schoolyard and classrooms provide the children with a safe, bright place to learn. Processing corn is now easier and more efficient with electric corn mill grinders. Residents have access to better communication with radios and televisions, she noted.

And, thanks to a new refrigerator, the local convenience store is able to offer cold drinks and meats.

This is just the beginning. The good people of Buena Vista now have the opportunity to grow and flourish in a way that was never before thought possible.

## Up Next: Bolivia

In 2018, Michigan co-ops will send 15 linemen to bring electricity to remote parts of Bolivia. The North Beni Electrification Project will electrify six communities located on the road between Riberalta and Guayaranerin in northern Bolivia. Due to the length of this project, several groups of co-op volunteers from different states will be needed to complete the entire project construction. Michigan linemen will be working to electrify the first two communities of Santa Malia and El Hondo. The climate there is hot and humid as it's one of the wettest regions in Bolivia. While planning is now underway, the construction trip will take place in the fall of 2018.

Visit [partnersforpower.org](http://partnersforpower.org) to learn more.



ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
**YOUTH TOUR**



# YOUTH TOUR 2018

Michigan Co-ops Inspire Tomorrow's Leaders Today  
**June 10–15, 2018**

Youth Tour teaches students of Michigan about their past—and helps equip them with the skills they need to be Michigan's next generation of energy-minded leaders. This is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid leadership travel opportunity for high school sophomores and juniors (going into their junior or senior year this summer) and is sponsored by Michigan's electric cooperatives. From the battlefields of Gettysburg to the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C., the program explores the leadership lessons of our nation's history and will immerse students in the cooperative spirit.

Youth Tour offers a unique opportunity to build leadership and public speaking skills, enhance students' knowledge of the cooperative form of business, and build life-long friendships with other student-leaders from across the country.

**Youth Tour applications accepted  
between now and Feb. 28.**

## Trip Highlights Include:

- Visit the Gettysburg Civil War battlefields
- See Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star Spangled Banner"
- Explore the Washington, D.C. monuments and memorials
- Attend a world-class theater performance
- Explore the museums of the Smithsonian Institution
- Pay respects at Arlington National Cemetery
- Meet with Michigan Senators and Congressmen
- And much, much more

Visit [CooperativeYouthTour.com](http://CooperativeYouthTour.com) to learn more  
and for an online application.

# Energy Savings Opportunities For Agribusinesses

Are you tired of high energy bills eating up your budget? Upgrade outdated lighting and equipment to reduce energy waste and start saving money! And, with the help of Midwest Energy & Communications' Energy Optimization program, you can receive cash incentives to offset the upfront cost of improvements.

A few energy-saving opportunities currently available include:

**Farm Energy Audit:** To get started, consider a comprehensive audit to assess your farm's current energy usage. The audit will help identify where and how to implement practical, energy-saving alternatives to outdated, inefficient equipment.

The Energy Optimization program has partnered with the Michigan Farm Energy Program (in conjunction with Michigan State University Extension) to offer a \$500 incentive toward the cost of a farm energy audit.

**Incentives For Energy-Efficient Products And Equipment:** Receive cash back when you purchase and install energy-efficient measures, such as:

- Low-energy livestock waterers
- Fans and controls
- Milk-handling equipment
- Variable speed pumps and controllers
- Dairy refrigeration tune-ups
- Irrigation system upgrades
- LED grow lights and poultry lights
- Long-day lighting systems

**Incentives For Custom Projects:** Have an energy efficiency project in mind, but don't see it on our list? The Energy Optimization program will work with you to provide incentives for innovative and unique energy efficiency projects designed to meet specific needs. Contact us to discuss your ideas!

These are just a few of the energy-saving offers currently available for Michigan agribusinesses. View all farm services incentives at [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or call 877-296-4319 for details.



## Reduce your energy use and save!

**FREE** agribusiness energy assessments available.

Call now for best availability.

Rebates available for custom and prescriptive energy saving projects.

**ONLINE:** [michigan-energy.org](http://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](http://michigan-energy.org).



James Wiseman, owner of Swiss Valley.

# Let It SNOW

By Amy Pales

In 1968, James Wiseman left his life as an elementary school principal in Big Rapids and embarked on what would become the journey of a lifetime. With his then-wife and new baby in tow, they arrived in Jones to become the new owners of Little Switzerland, a small ski resort in southwest Michigan.

Despite having no previous skiing experience, Wiseman bravely jumped in, changing the name to Swiss Valley. "We knew people could make a living in recreation, and we needed to support our growing family. So we took a chance," said Wiseman.

Now with almost 50 years in the business, Wiseman, his children and grandchildren have made this corner of the world a place of fond memories for generations of skiers and snowboarders.

What started out as a small operation with only seven rope tows and no snowmaking has evolved into a sophisticated system that can move 9,800 skiers each hour.

"Your desire will create the ability," is a phrase coined by Wiseman and a philosophy that drove his success all these years. Whether it was installing roughly 10,000 feet of pipe for snowmaking or counting the earth mover loads that moved 1.5 million cubic yards of dirt to build an additional 225 vertical feet, Wiseman and his family did nearly everything themselves.

"My dad learned as he went. In fact, all of our vacations were to other ski resorts to see how they were doing things, and my dad would often offer up himself as free labor to help with

projects," said Jamie Wiseman Stafne, one of Wiseman's three daughters. "As long as it was daylight, he was working. All year long."

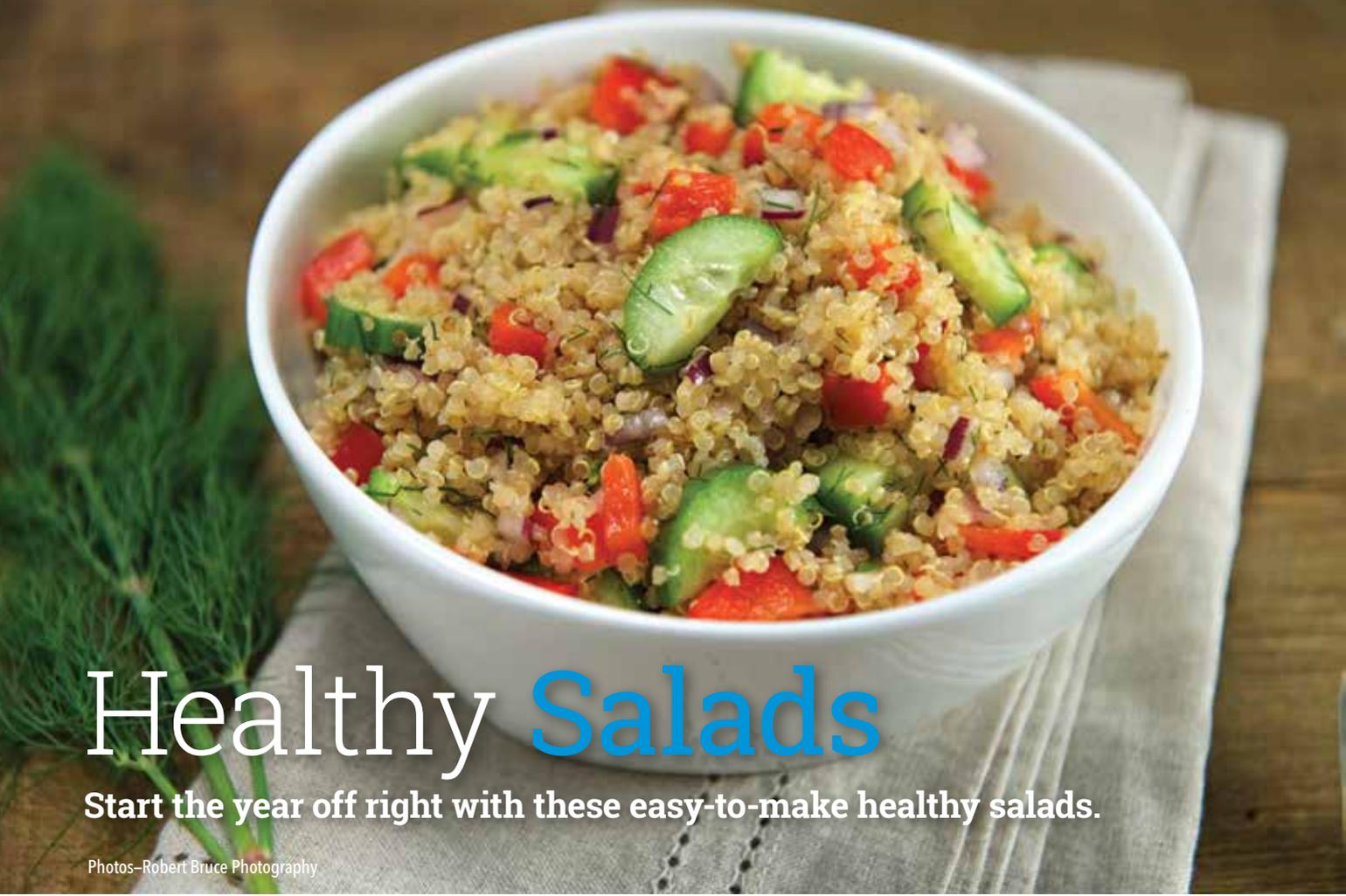
Wiseman's unparalleled work ethic isn't slowing down. At the age of 80, he still works 60-80 hours each week helping others become lifelong lovers of the sport. It continues to be a family affair too. Two of his three daughters work at the resort full time, while the third helps on the weekends. This season, six of the nine grandchildren are working there as well.

"This isn't just a job for me; it's my life," Stafne shared. "As I kid, I spent all my free time here. I made friends from all over the area, something that would have never been possible if my parents had a different profession. My kids got to grow up on the playground every kid wanted, and now I get to watch three and four generations of families of customers bond as they return year after year."

No one could foresee in 1968 what Swiss Valley would become, but one thing is for certain: James Wiseman and his family carry a passion for the resort and for building a quality experience for those who grace the slopes each year.



Hard at work making snow.



# Healthy Salads

Start the year off right with these easy-to-make healthy salads.

Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

## Quinoa Cucumber Salad (pictured)

Patricia Wyers, Cherryland Electric Cooperative

- 4 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 small cucumber, diced (local Michigan cucumber if in season, if not use English cucumber)
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill weed, minced
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt

Prepare quinoa according to the package. Cool. Mix with the rest of the ingredients. Toss to coat evenly. Keep refrigerated and use within two to three days.



## Mediterranean Pesto Chickpea Salad

Ruthann Adams, Midwest Energy

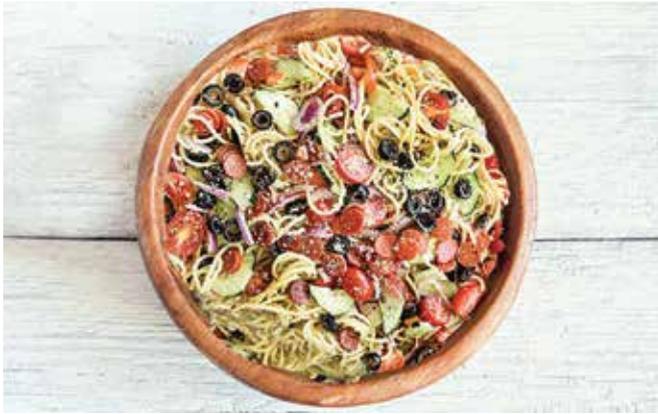
- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-ounce can black olives, drained and coarsely chopped
- 1 15-ounce can artichoke hearts, drained and coarsely chopped
- 2 roasted red bell peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped
- ⅓ to ½ cup pesto
- Salt and black pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients. Chill and enjoy.

Note: If chickpeas are mashed, this makes a tasty sandwich filling.



Watch a video of this recipe at  
<https://goo.gl/6aZzpb>



## Spaghetti Salad

Jan Goodwin, Great Lakes Energy

- 1 16-ounce package whole grain spaghetti
- 1 package mini Hormel pepperoni
- 1 16-ounce Kraft Zesty Italian dressing
- Parmesan cheese
- Perfect Pinch Salad Supreme Seasoning by McCormick
- Seasonal vegetables: tomatoes, cucumbers, green pepper or any of choice

Cook spaghetti according to the package. Drain. Cut up raw vegetables. Add to spaghetti. Add mini pepperoni. Mix in an entire bottle of Italian dressing. Top with Parmesan cheese and Perfect Pinch Salad Seasoning. Refrigerate 3 hours and serve. Can make the night before. The recipe makes a large amount for a big crowd.



## Indulgent Desserts...

due February 1

## Entertaining & Potluck...

due March 1

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

Go to [microopkitchen.com](http://microopkitchen.com) for more information and to register.

Enter to win a  
**\$50**  
energy bill  
credit!

## Featured Guest Chef

Participants in the No Barriers Warriors program spend their days hiking, rafting, skiing and mountain climbing. When they come back to base, there's nothing like a warm fondue, enjoyed around the fire, to cap off those daily adventures. Gather round, skewer up, and dip in!



## Backcountry Fondues

Recipe Courtesy of No Barriers Warriors

### Gear Required

- Two pots (one larger than the other) that will work as a double boiler
- Pot pliers/lifter to hold pots steady while stirring
- Camp stove (we used WhisperLite)
- Fuel
- A large spoon
- Skewers

### Cheddar Cheese Fondue

- 3-4 cups Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup flour
- ½ can light beer
- Garlic (optional)

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (apples, pears, etc.), vegetables, meat (summer sausage) and bread cubes

### Swiss Cheese Fondue

- 3-4 cups Swiss and Gruyere cheeses
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup white wine
- Garlic (optional)

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (apples, pears, etc.), vegetables (carrots, broccoli), meat (summer sausage) and bread cubes

### Chocolate Fondue

- 3-4 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup cream

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (bananas, strawberries) marshmallows, cubed pound cake

### Directions

It's recommended to pre-cut prior to heading to the backcountry when possible. Otherwise, add a cutting knife and cutting board to the gear list.

Place water in the larger pot and bring to boil. Place smaller pot in the larger pot and add the ingredients for whichever fondue you are making. (Note: the wine/beer helps keep the mixture smooth and prevents clumping.) Stir until ingredients are melted and smooth.

Read the full story about No Barriers Warriors on page 14, and find this recipe and others at [microopkitchen.com](http://microopkitchen.com).

# Midwest *in the* Community

At Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC), we believe that investing in our community goes beyond building electric and fiber infrastructure. We like to roll up our sleeves and help our neighbors through projects like these from last fall.



MEC employee Jon McCarty helps clean up the River Raisin watershed in Adrian.



MEC employees paint picnic tables and perform tree work at Fitch Camp in Dowagiac.

## Changing the Landscape Days of Service

Last October, over 140 MEC employees and contractors rolled up their sleeves to affect change across our communities with our annual Changing the Landscape Days of Service.

Southwest Michigan crews organized into 11 teams to work on planned projects at 18 sites across Cass County, including Arthur Dodd County Park, Vandalia Community Garden, Fitch Camp, Cass County Sheriff's Mounted Division Barn, Union Shriner's Club, and Beckwith Theatre. We also distributed six pallets of non-perishable food and 800 pounds of frozen meat to seven local food banks. The meat was purchased through regional 4-H programs over the summer fair season and processed to donate.



Sheli Groner, Patti Clymer (retired), and Evan Bressler assemble a shed at the Vandalia Community Garden.

In southeast Michigan, we worked with the River Raisin Watershed Council to clear and clean a section of the river. Materials purchased for the project, including non-insulated waders, chainsaws and heavy-duty brush loppers, were donated to the council for use by future volunteers.

Don McCallum (Vietnam Vet), Patty Clark (MEC), Ted Aranda (Vietnam Vet), Sara Herriman (WLEN), Jo Linda Cutler (DAV), Gerald Cool (DAV), and Jim Mooney (WLEN) help raise money for veterans during the Thank-A-Vet fundraiser.



## Veterans Day 2017

In honor and recognition of the men and women who fought for our freedoms, MEC employees participated in two Veterans Day programs last November.

On Nov. 10 we sponsored an hour of the WLEN radio Thank-A-Vet fundraiser to help raise money for the Lenawee County Veterans Dire Needs Fund. We invited Don McCallum and Ted Aranda, both Vietnam veterans, and local Disabled American Veterans officer Jo Linda Cutler to join us on the air and educate the community on veteran needs and the services that are available to them. During our sponsored hour, more than \$3,000 was raised.

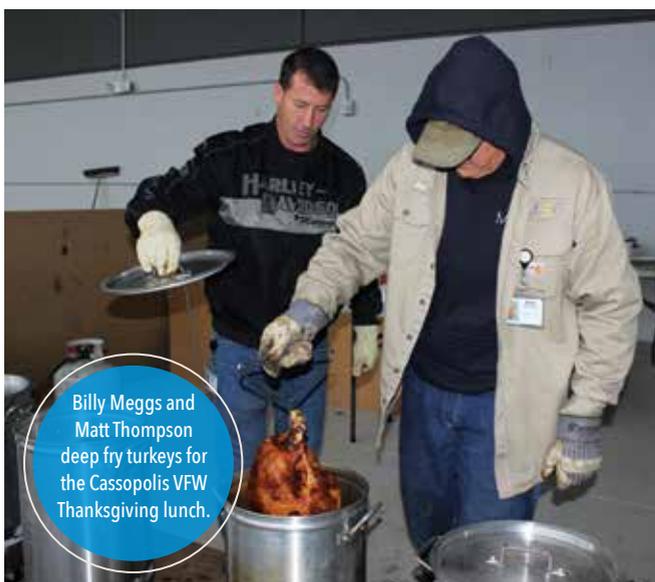
On Nov. 15 we served those who first served us a special Thanksgiving luncheon in partnership with the Cassopolis VFW's Ladies Auxiliary #10704. We purchased, prepared and served a meal to more than 150 local veterans and their guests. Crews began heating pots of oil at 7 a.m. and delivered five deep-fried and beautifully carved turkeys for the meal. Other traditional fare included three baked hams, over 40 pounds of potatoes, stuffing, two versions of sweet potatoes, green beans, corn, cranberry sauce, rolls and a slew of desserts prepared by our home MEC "chefs."

"We have been serving free lunch at the Cass VFW every Wednesday for over three years, and this was our biggest meal ever," said Nancy Triestram of the Ladies Auxiliary. "I'm happy to see Midwest taking an interest in our service members and our community; the employees did a wonderful job of cooking and serving the meals."

Anita Braden attended the lunch with her husband Jim Braden, a Navy Cold War submarine veteran. Jim is now a chaplain to veterans with Michiana Veterans Ministries. "We both appreciated your service to our veterans," Anita said.



MEC employees Cindy Rohdy (standing on left), Sara Hartsell, Amber Mark, Erin Velthouse, and Bobbi Lowe prep food at the VFW in Cassopolis.



Billy Meggs and Matt Thompson deep fry turkeys for the Cassopolis VFW Thanksgiving lunch.



# NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

## THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

By Emily Haines Lloyd

**W**hen an organization's mission is to "unleash the power of the human spirit," participants suspect that challenging circumstances combined with lofty goals are probably expected. And, indeed, that is exactly what No Barriers Warriors does. The organization engages disabled veterans in challenging outdoor adventures that include hiking, paddleboarding, rafting and, ultimately, mountain climbing. The purpose is to help disabled veterans regain their confidence in spite of a service-related disability.

"When you take individuals from varying backgrounds and various levels of experience in the outdoors, you're obviously teaching some basic skills—like how to pitch a tent or the fundamental techniques of camping," said John Toth, director of No Barriers Warriors. "But it's

important to note that our purpose is not necessarily to build a skill set—our goal is to build a mindset."

No Barriers Warriors was inspired by the tenth anniversary of blind adventurer Erik Weihenmayer's historic climb of Mount Everest. Weihenmayer, founder of No Barriers USA, joined his Everest teammates to lead a group of disabled soldiers to the summit of Lobuche, a 20,100-foot-peak in the Himalayas. The endeavor was captured on film and eventually became the documentary "High Ground."

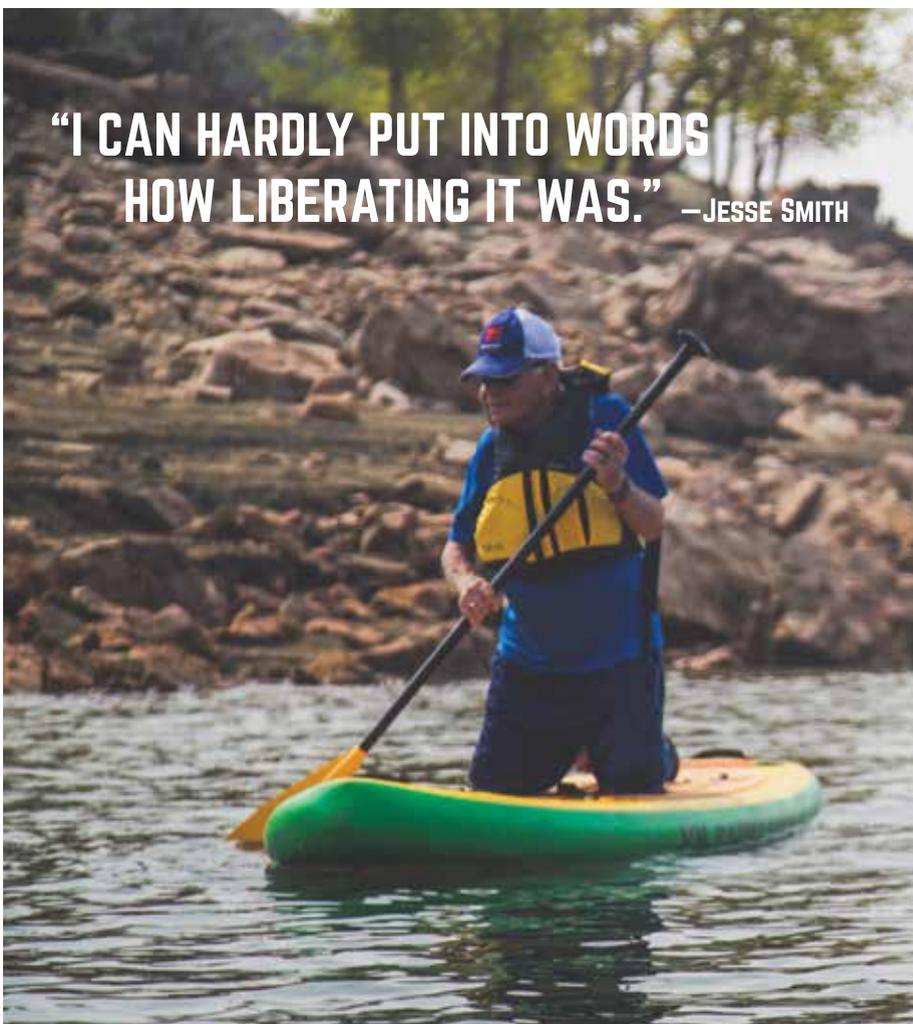
In 2012, No Barriers USA officially began incorporating its programming to include injured soldiers from all branches of the military, as well as survivors of the fallen. Today they are known as No Barriers Warriors (NBW). These individuals participate in mentally, physically, and emotionally

challenging activities, personal reflection, and group interactions designed to remind them that what's within them is stronger than what is in front of them.

Veterans from across the country have been helped through NBW's unique curriculum and no-pay policy, meaning all veterans who attend the program do so at absolutely no cost. This is another way that NBW wants to eliminate barriers, even when it comes to funding.

"When our veterans are given this opportunity, we see how their lives are changed—sometimes even saved," said Toth. "We set very high and lofty goals for our participants. When I see them accomplish those goals, I'm not surprised. I'm inspired."

Veterans are able to participate in the one-of-a-kind program through the



**“I CAN HARDLY PUT INTO WORDS  
HOW LIBERATING IT WAS.” —JESSE SMITH**

generosity of various organizations that donate to NBW. In November 2016, CoBank, a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses, rural infrastructure providers and Farm Credit Associations, announced a program that allowed its customer to nominate up to 50 rural veterans to participate in a No Barriers expedition. This corporate sponsorship allowed three Michigan co-op members and veterans to attend No Barriers Warriors adventures in 2017, Jesse Smith (Midwest Energy & Communications), Michael Valkner (Cherryland) and Christopher Irving (Great Lakes Energy). “America’s rural communities are home to millions of men and women who have sacrificed for their country through military service, many of whom are facing some sort of disability,” said Tom Halverson, CoBank CEO. “The No Barriers program provides these veterans with an opportunity to challenge their own limitations—both real and perceived—and to create a network of support that can last a lifetime.”

Smith, a mostly-retired therapist, took the opportunity to attend a NBW adventure in Colorado in September and has already recommended the program to his friends and clients.

“I can hardly put into words how liberating it was, at nearly 80 [years old], to go and do the things I did,” said Smith. “I would tell anyone who is even considering it, to not be afraid and just go for the adventure.”

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**Are you a veteran interested in being nominated for the 2018 No Barriers program? If so, please go to [countrylines.com/nobarriers](http://countrylines.com/nobarriers) by Feb. 28 and complete the form to express your interest. Your co-op will follow-up with more detailed information.**

Photos courtesy of No Barriers /Samantha Hanus.

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<p><i>*Members receive a \$.00412 savings per kWh on comfort meter usage.</i></p>		



## Calling All High School Sophomores And Juniors:

# Youth Tour Applications Now Being Accepted

In June, more than 1,800 high school students representing rural America will converge upon Washington, D.C. for a tour of our nation's capital, and we're looking for up to two students to represent Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC).

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association Youth Tour is June 9–14. High school sophomore and junior co-op members from our service area are invited to apply for this once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid opportunity. Michigan delegates will meet for orientation in Portland, then board a motor coach bound for Washington, D.C., stopping en route to tour the Civil War battlegrounds in Gettysburg, Pa., and participate in a flag ceremony at Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Md.—birthplace of the "The Star-Spangled Banner." They will then tour various monuments and memorials, witness the time-honored changing of the guard ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, and visit with Michigan senators and congressmen on Capital Hill.

We will select four candidates to participate in a full-day, hands-on educational experience at our Cassopolis headquarters (date TBD). You'll learn about MEC, meet with different team members to learn about careers in the industry, and see first-hand what it means to be part of an electric cooperative. After getting to know you, we'll select up to two candidates to represent us during the summer Youth Tour.

Youth Tour is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and the trip will impact you for years to come. Learn more at [cooperativemyouthtour.com](http://cooperativemyouthtour.com).

**Interested? Fill out the online application at [cooperativemyouthtour.com](http://cooperativemyouthtour.com) by Feb. 28.**

## Notice To Members of Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC)

### Case No. U-18276 2018–2019 Energy Waste Reduction Plan

2008 PA 295, as amended, requires all Michigan member-regulated electric cooperatives file with the Michigan Public Service Commission (the "MPSC") an Energy Waste Reduction ("EWR") Plan. Pursuant to this requirement, MEC submitted its 2018–2019 EWR Plan as part of a collaborative plan with 12 other utilities in cooperation with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association and Michigan Municipal Electric Association to continue to offer several existing energy efficiency programs (the "Programs") designed to help members and customers use energy more efficiently and to achieve targeted energy savings. MEC proposes to implement its 2018–2019 EWR Plan and does not intend to change the existing approved surcharge for the Programs. A copy of MEC's 2018–2019 EWR Plan as filed with the MPSC is available by request at any of Midwest's offices.

Enter to win a  
**\$50**  
energy bill  
credit!



## Where In *Michigan* Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo above by January 15 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit. 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 the name of your co-op.

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the November/December 2017 issue is Christa Carbone, a HomeWorks Tri-County Cooperative member, who correctly identified the photo as Seul Choix Point Lighthouse near Manistique in Gulliver, Mich.

Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



November/December Photo



## Jack's Journal: Michigan's Main Street

By Jack O'Malley

Each year motorists drive over 95 billion miles on Michigan roadways, many of them on the state's longest route-numbered highway. Its full name is Interstate 75. We locals just call it 75. It has also picked up a nickname, some calling it Michigan's Main Street. In fact, Michigan's Main Street covers 395 miles through the state's upper and lower peninsulas.

Michigan's Main Street begins in Michigan's oldest city, Sault Saint Marie. Travelers headed south will pass Castle Rock, one of the upper peninsula's most iconic tourist attractions. After climbing the 196-foot limestone stack, travelers should leave time to visit Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox, Babe. They're always ready for a picture or two! Continuing south, I-75 crosses the mighty Mackinac Bridge to Michigan's Lower Peninsula. From there, things get really interesting!

History lovers may enjoy an afternoon touring Mackinac City's colonial Fort Michilimackinac, while travelers on the hunt for souvenirs might prefer an excursion to the legendary Sea Shell City. With the famous "man-eating clam" located at the iconic shop, it's a trip back to 1960s tourism for sure.

Continuing south, Michigan's Main Street passes through Indian River, home to the world's largest crucifix, and Houghton Lake, the state's largest inland lake. Locals love to point out the lake is "so big you can see it from space." Pinconning has the honor of being the cheese capital of Michigan, and Birch Run is home to the largest outlet mall in the Midwest.

Rolling rural hills eventually give way to the state's urban setting. Motorists maintaining a southern course will pass Comerica Park, Little Caesar's Arena and Ford Field in downtown Detroit, as well as the Marathon Petroleum Refinery with its giant butane sphere painted like a basketball. The highway's Michigan journey ends in Monroe County, hometown to General George Armstrong Custer, who was a celebrated civil war veteran.

Interstate 75 continues for another 1,390 miles, finally ending in Miami, Florida. But that's not our 75. Our 75 is just like our people—diverse, entertaining and reliable. With so much to see in our great state, where will Michigan's Main Street take you?



# SUN

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