

# MICHIGAN Country Lines



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Energy  
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**Michigan Country Lines**, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Okemos, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

**Subscriptions** are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Cloverland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors. Subscriptions are \$6 per year.

**Postmaster:** send address changes to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

**Letters to the editor** should be sent to the same address. Phone 517-351-6322. **E-mail:** [knudtson@countrylines.com](mailto:knudtson@countrylines.com).

Association officers are **Brian Burns**, PIE&G, chairman; **Ken Swope**, Midwest Energy, 1st vice chairman; **Tony Anderson**, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and **Steve Boeckman**, Great Lakes Energy, past chairman. **Michael Peters** is president and CEO.

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MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVES  
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### COVER \*

"Dawn of Creation," by world-famous sculptor Tuck Langland, is one of 12 sculptures by various artists that are spread throughout Dowagiac. *Photo—Dogwood Fine Arts Festival*

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# Our Reliability Work Is Getting Noticed

**W**e see a trend in the way Great Lakes Energy members view their electric service that indicates we're doing a better job of looking out for you.

Our annual member survey reveals that the number of members who give their electric service high marks is growing. In 2006, 75 percent of our members rated reliability of service as "excellent" or "above average." That figure has steadily climbed to nearly 85 percent in 2009.

That's certainly good news. It means all the hard work and large investments that helped us meet our annual reliability improvement goals for the last four years are making a big difference in the quality of service you enjoy.

Our surveys are conducted by professionals at Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City. We use the results to assess our members' attitudes and awareness levels of the services we provide, including past experiences and the importance of certain service characteristics.

Signs of this trend are evident in member letters and comments we receive. The windstorm last fall prompted this

note from a member near Williamsburg:  
▶ "I'm usually pretty quick to complain about the service. I didn't realize how bad

*the wind blew earlier this week until I read about it in the Record Eagle. During the windstorm, I didn't even have a momentary interruption. I want to thank you and all your employees who put together a sound and well-maintained electric system."*

Here are more comments from members who attended our information luncheons last year:

▶ "We've seen a marked improvement in reliability in the last three years."

▶ "During the last big storm, people in

*town were out all day and we were back on in four hours."*

▶ "You're doing something right because the lights stay on now."

▶ "You're upgrading your system and that's good to see."



Steve Boeckman  
Great Lakes Energy  
President/CEO

Our surveys also show that courteous employees and cost-of-service are two other service characteristics that are very important to you.

In the last four years, nearly 90 percent of members surveyed rated the employees as "excellent" or "above average" in providing courteous service. A good

example is an e-mail message we received from a member who was grateful for our help in locating the source of high usage at his seasonal home. He wrote: "There is no way our electric company in Illinois would ever offer such great and expedient service as you have."

Only about one-half of our members rate our cost-of-service as being "excellent" or "above average." That's partly because reliability comes at a big cost, particularly when you set your goals high.

Although we're pleased by our progress, much more work needs to be done before we're satisfied with our reliability record.

We want our electric service to be at the same high level as the co-ops with the most reliable electric service in the nation. That

will take time and more large investments in distribution system improvements.

Meeting your expectations on cost-of-service involves more than just keeping rates as low as possible. We will continue to keep you informed on what it costs to run an electric cooperative and how your money is being invested to provide you with the value you expect. Please read the article on page 25, which gives you a better idea of what it costs to provide reliable electric service.

“In 2009, nearly 85 percent of Great Lakes Energy members rated reliability of service as ‘excellent’ or ‘above average.’”

## Interested In Seeking A Board Seat?

**N**ominating petitions are available for Great Lakes Energy members who would like to seek election to the cooperative's board of directors.

To get their names on the ballot, qualifying member-owners of the electric cooperative who maintain a primary residence within its service area must file a nominating petition with the co-op secretary.

Two board positions, both for three years, will need to be filled. The terms of directors Robert Thurow of Scottville and Richard Walsworth of Mears expire this year. Members will receive their mail-in ballots in the July/August 2010 issue of *Michigan Country Lines*. Winners will be announced Aug. 25 at the GLE annual business meeting.

Petitions must be signed by not less than 50 active GLE members. Cosigners of a joint membership count as one signature. For the signature to be valid, complete informa-

tion about the member must be provided. Incomplete petitions will not be counted. All petitions shall be signed no more than 90 days prior to submission to the cooperative (see related story, right, on petition-signing guidelines).

Signed petitions returned by mail or in person must be received in the co-op's Boyne City office no earlier than Thursday, May 27, 2010, and no later than Friday, June 11, 2010.

Petitions can be mailed to: Secretary of the Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy, P.O. Box 70, 1323 Boyne Ave., Boyne City, MI 49712. They also can be dropped off at the Boyne City office during normal business hours, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Petition forms are available by contacting the co-op's Boyne City office, 888-485-2537, ext. 1331.

## Free Energy Seminar

Register now!

You're invited to attend a free energy seminar on Saturday, May 1, at 10 a.m. at our Great Lakes Energy office in Newaygo.

Hear presentations on **GEOTHERMAL** and **AIR-SOURCE HEAT PUMPS**, Marathon® electric **WATER HEATERS**, and **more**. Local heating and cooling companies and Great Lakes Energy staff members will be on hand to answer your questions relating to electric heat and electric water heaters.

Receive the latest update on energy optimization (EO) programs that offer incentives to help you save energy and money. They include rebates for the purchase of CFLs (compact fluorescent lightbulbs), furnaces with ECM blower motors, electric water heaters, and more. In addition, information on new EO programs regarding appliance recycling and online audits will be provided.

Learn about other incentive programs offered by Great Lakes Energy, too.

**Space is limited, please register by calling 1-888-485-2537, ext. 8472.**

Door prizes will be awarded. Winners will receive energy-saving gifts.

## Make Your Petition Signature Count

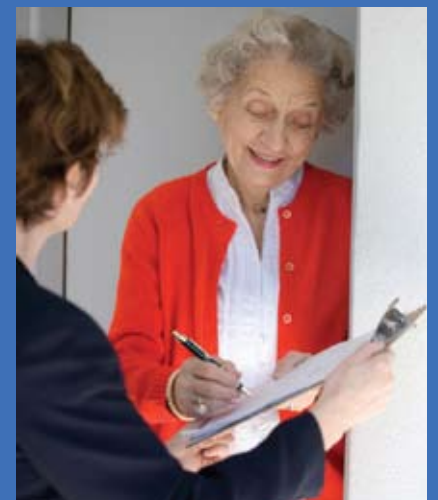
Great Lakes Energy members seeking election to the cooperative's board of directors will be circulating nominating petitions this spring and could be asking for your signature.

Qualifying candidates must obtain valid signatures from at least 50 Great Lakes Energy members to get their names on the ballot. Make sure your signature counts by following these simple guidelines:

1. Provide all the information requested on the petition. In addition to signing and printing your name, include your complete mailing address, account number and the date. The information allows us to verify that you are a member of our consumer-owned electric cooperative.
2. Keep a current bill handy so your Great Lakes Energy account number is readily available.
3. Only one adult in the household should sign the petition. Should a husband and wife both inadvertently sign the same petition, only one signature will be valid.
4. Print the information clearly.

Your cooperative follows the one member-one vote principle, which also applies to signatures on nominating petitions. This philosophy allows all member-owners of a consumer-owned business to enjoy equal voting rights. Whether the co-op member is one resident or a large business that employs many, each is entitled to one vote as a member and owner of their co-op.

More information on this year's director election will appear in the July/August 2010 issue of *Michigan Country Lines*. The election will be held by mail-in ballots that members will receive in their July/August issue.



## FCC Pushes Faster Internet

If you're not using high-speed internet because it's unavailable or slow, would you like to do something about it? The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has unveiled a pair of tools to help.

Both are available on the FCC's broadband.gov website. One tool is the Consumer Broadband Test. When you click the box that reads, "I want to test my connection quality," a short questionnaire pops up. It asks where you're accessing the internet, including the street address and whether it's a home, a business, or on a mobile device.

Then the test begins. At the *Country Lines* office in Okemos, it took 55 seconds to determine that our Comcast cable has a download speed of 13,709 kilobits per second.

Compare that to just 56 kilobits per second for dial-up internet service.

For those without high-speed service, there is what the FCC calls the "Broadband Dead Zone Report." Click the "I do not have broadband at home" button, and a short questionnaire asks for the home address and whether there would be interest in purchasing broadband service.

"Transparency empowers consumers, promotes innovation and investment, and encourages competition," says Julius Genachowski, FCC chairman. He said the tools "will arm users with real-time information about their broadband connection and the agency with useful data about service across the country."

—Michael W. Kahn, NRECA

## A "Glorious Mess"

In your column (Mike Peters/March), "We need your help to avoid A Glorious Mess," you concluded that we can help by telling our delegation that we don't support unelected bureaucrats taking the lead in regulating CO<sub>2</sub>. While I don't disagree with your point, I think it would have been better if you urged the membership to also ask our delegation to get busy, work together and accomplish meaningful change that will avoid the need for knowledgeable bureaucrats to even seek ways of implementing reduction in greenhouse gases on their own. After all, it is the failure of some in Congress to act that is resulting in others looking to take the lead.

Tom Fleming, Suttons Bay

Your comment, A "Glorious Mess," regarding the regulation of carbon dioxide, states that: "...we do know that if EPA does move ahead on their own, the regulations will be more onerous and more costly than if Congress were to act." However, EPA has not addressed in detail regulation of carbon dioxide or moved ahead on their own yet, and Congress has not yet acted. You also state: "...we don't know which direction Congress will ultimately take." Therefore, we, or you, cannot conclude that if EPA does move ahead on their own, the regulations will be more onerous and more costly than if Congress were to act.

The EPA is an agency charged to protect human health and the environment by writing and enforcing regulations based on laws passed by Congress. Greenhouse gases, which include carbon dioxide, threaten the public health and welfare of the American people. Therefore, until Congress passes new laws changing or clarifying EPA's regulatory role regarding greenhouse gases, the EPA should step forward to



© iStockphoto.com/Damian Gada

regulate carbon dioxide.

The EPA has performed well over the last 30 years as a regulatory agency to reduce air pollutants in a manner which has not been overly costly to the American economy. As such, the EPA has gained the experience needed to address complicated issues associated with environmental problems. That experience should be utilized, not ignored. And the EPA should not be assumed to be "more onerous and more costly" in its regulatory efforts before the EPA and other governmental entities have addressed the issues in detail.

Daniel Tuharsky, Redford

*Mike Peters replies: You have raised a good point. My comment was based on a comparison of the House-passed bill and several proposals being considered in the Senate with what some believe regulation under the Clean Air Act (CAA) could lead to—including [observations of] one of the author's of the CAA, Congressman. John Dingell. I have read enough about CAA regulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) to lead me to believe that regulation without clear Congressional direction is not a good path. Our position has been to support measures that will lead to regulation that is "fair, affordable, and achievable."*

*There were provisions in the House bill that we did not support (allocation of emissions based on sales, as they were not fair to Michigan and other Midwest states) and we thought the early emission reduction targets were overly aggressive (not achievable). We also supported clear preemption language so that we don't end up with multiple*

**Stay Clear!**  
A downed power line may not be a dead line. It could cause serious injury or death.

If someone is injured by contact with a power line, call 911 and keep others away until help arrives.

If a power line falls across or near your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives. If you must exit, jump clear so that no part of your body is touching the car when you land. **KEEP BOTH FEET TOGETHER**, and shuffle or hop at least 30 feet away from the vehicle.

**Michigan's Electric Cooperatives**

layers of regulation. When Congress acts they should preempt states from adopting different standards, and they should make it clear that EPA is to regulate GHGs under the legislation as passed and not under the Clean Air Act or the Clean Water Act.

Having one standard implemented by the EPA will lead to the most workable regulatory scheme for GHGs possible. However, that being said, you are correct that we don't know for certain what EPA will do, and since Congress has not acted we can't compare the two paths.

## How Country Lines Began

It might be of interest to readers to know more about the early efforts (Ramblings, January) to get a regular flow of information to the member-owners of Michigan's electric co-ops. The decision was made in 1978 to establish the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) and employ a full-time administrator to manage and operate the new organization. I was selected for the job and we began full-time operation in January, 1979.

In the work plans and budget for 1980, I advocated the start-up of a publication to be mailed to all of the cooperatives' members, then numbering approximately 200,000, and preferably on a monthly basis. The MECA Board of Directors voted in favor of a bimonthly publication, if and when we had enough co-ops subscribing to reach a minimum circulation of 100,000.

We achieved that and made plans for a tabloid publication to be known as *Michigan Country Lines*. A big step forward was made when we asked a popular *Lansing State Journal* columnist, Jim Hough, to write a human interest column for our magazine. Being from the U.P., he knew something of the plight of rural folks catching up with their city cousins in the conveniences of modern living. When he said, "Yes, I'll do it," I knew we had a winner who would vastly boost reader interest in our publication.

Thanks, Jim, for joining our *Country Lines* team and treating us to so many entertaining stories and personal experiences. We wish you and Darl

the very best in retirement.

*Ray Kuhl, former MECA CEO  
and executive editor*

## Energy Vampires

Could you give some sources for the whole house indoor meter, please? The article (Feb. 2010) said when, in an experiment, people were required to check their meters, electrical use went down significantly. Even afterwards, when it was no longer required, people still checked it and lowered their electrical use. If true, I hope this is something the co-ops might consider in the future as a standard fitting for every home. (Give yourselves a 15-year 'heads up' if you want, but think about it.)

*Beth Clemensen, via email*

*One meter is TED, available at theenergydetective.com, ranging in price from \$119 to \$455. We'll have more in May.—ed.*

## Tweeting

I just finished reading the column regarding tweeting [Ramblings, March]. I thoroughly enjoyed it and 'yes,' this baby boomer was shaking her head. I refuse to sign up on Facebook, or Twitter. I don't need one more thing to absorb me on this computer. I keep telling myself to hold off until I retire, when I have more time. I didn't want to get into this texting thing, either; however, I finally realized it is the best way to get a response from my kids.


I do feel there is a time and place to do this. It is called 'respect of others,' whether you are in a meeting, with friends, or even driving. We use to laugh about my father-in-law who refused to use a microwave, and he retired from GM when computers were taking over after 35 years. He was amazed at how times had changed.

In 1970 I was a military wife, and my first child was born in Japan. It cost \$29 a

## How to Clean Up a Broken Compact Fluorescent Lightbulb (CFL)



- 1 Ventilate the room. 
- 2 Scoop up powder and glass fragments using stiff paper or cardboard. Seal in a plastic bag. 
- 3 Use duct tape to pick up any fragments or powder. 
- 4 Immediately place all materials used to clean up and the plastic bag in an outdoor trash container. Remember to wash your hands. 
- 5 Discard any clothing or bedding that comes in direct contact with broken glass or powder from inside the bulb. Washing tainted items may cause mercury fragments in clothing to contaminate the machine and/or pollute sewage. 

To learn more about CFLs and why you should be careful when cleaning up a broken bulb, visit [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov). 

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation Institute, YASLY

minute to call home. We put money aside to pay for that minute to be able to call my parents about the birth of their first granddaughter. I couldn't even talk, I cried the whole minute just hearing their voices! Now I am the one saying, 'Times sure have changed!' Thanks for the great story! It really inspired me.

*Deanna Alexander, via email*

**Calling all readers!**

## Help us create stories and features that match your interests!

**Favorite Michigan-made product.** We'll build stories around your favorite Michigan-made products, whether past or present. Send us no more than 100 words describing your favorite product made in the state and why you have a passion for it. Think Vernor's Ginger Ale, Life Savers, Stroh's beer, American Spoon Foods' cherry butter, a 1952 Ford pickup. Just remember, it must be, or have been, made in Michigan. And if you have a photo (not from a computer printer) of you or someone close to you with the product, send it along. Send now and throughout the year.

**The iconic all-time favorite *Country Lines* recipes.** *Country Lines* has published reader recipes for 30 years, and over that time readers have clipped and copied them—from Swedish meatballs to chocolate oatmeal cake—and stuck them in folders, notebooks and card tins in the best kitchens in the state. Pull out that food-spattered clipping, copy it and send it in, along with an explanation of why you like it. We'll run them in a special tribute to our 30th anniversary in November. Deadline is Oct. 1.

Send your entries for favorite Michigan-made product and *Country Lines* recipe to: *Country Lines* Editor, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864, or email [knudtson@countrylines.com](mailto:knudtson@countrylines.com).

## Don't Be Shocked This Spring

Great Lakes Energy wants you to enjoy the outdoors safely, especially near power lines. Here are five ways to remain safe:

- ▶ When placing a ladder on the ground, make sure the distance to the nearest overhead power line is at least twice the length of the ladder.

- ▶ If you're trimming trees, look up first and make sure a power line isn't near. If a branch touches a power line, the whole tree can become energized, endangering you.

- ▶ Know where underground power lines are located before starting a digging project. Remember to call MISS DIG (800-482-7171) at least 48 hours before you tackle any outdoor projects that require digging.

- ▶ Instruct your kids to fly kites in open areas where there are no power lines. If a kite gets tangled in a power line, tell them to let it go and never touch any part of it, including the tail or string. An adult should call GLE to remove the hazard.

- ▶ If you see a fallen power line, assume it's energized and don't touch it or allow anyone to go near it. Call GLE at 888-485-2537 to report it.

## Visit GLE At The Home Shows

Visit the Great Lakes Energy display that will appear in two upcoming home shows.

Stop by to see our Marathon® electric water heater, our Convectair® electric space heaters that can be used as a whole-house heating option, and try our Energy Bike.

Our representatives will also be on hand to answer your questions about new Energy Optimization programs that can save you money and all our other products and services!

### Newaygo Home & Garden Show

April 17  
Newaygo Middle School

### West Michigan Home & Garden Show

April 30, May 1-2  
Mason County Fairgrounds, Ludington

## Safety Shows Start

Great Lakes Energy is looking out for the safety of your family with our Hotline Safety Shows that begin in April.

The portable hotline display demonstrates the power of electricity on the power line (7,200 volts) and in the home (120 volts). Viewers witness the damaging and sometimes startling results of electrical contact with common items. A kite string, fishing pole, TV antenna, shoe, and even a hot dog masquerading as a human finger are used to illustrate the dangers of electrical contact.

More than 84,500 people have watched the demonstration since 1999. This year, retired GLE lineworkers Wayne Bumstead and Bob Kittel will host these informative sessions.

For more details or to schedule a Hotline Safety Show for your group, email [safety@glenergy.com](mailto:safety@glenergy.com) or call 888-485-2537, ext. 8227.

## Lunch On Us!

Great Lakes Energy members invited to attend informational member luncheons in 2010 get more than just a free lunch.

These members are provided with information about reliability improvements, GLE products and services, rates, legislative issues, and special energy-saving programs.

The luncheons last about 90 minutes, and drawings for door prizes are held at the end.

Invitations are mailed to randomly-selected members in all nine of GLE's service areas: Boyne City, Petoskey, Waters, Kalkaska, Reed City, Newaygo, Scottville, Hart, and Wayland. The first two luncheons take place in April in Boyne Falls and Petoskey.

Watch for an invitation. Space is limited, so please RSVP quickly to let us know how many we can expect for lunch.

Take this opportunity, as a member and owner, to find out more about your co-op. Join us!

## We're Getting a New Look

Our website, [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com), is getting a facelift this month. Check it out later in the month to see the changes. You'll find lots of great information about Great Lakes Energy, and you can access your electric account, pay your bill, check power outages, learn about rebate programs, and more!

Visit [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com)—we think you'll like the look.

## Your Child Could Win!

Hey kids, there's still time to enter the annual Great Lakes Energy coloring contest.

Visit our web site, [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com), to download the coloring sheet and contest rules. Or, visit one of our offices to pick up your coloring sheet today. Age groups are: 4 and under, 5-7 years old, and 8-10 years old.

One grand prize—a deluxe set of art supplies, valued at \$25—will be awarded in each age group. Plus, one second and one third place winner in each age group will receive new crayons and markers, valued at \$10.

Entries must be received by *April 23*.



# Absolute Zero

I have a “Far Side” cartoon framed next to the thermostat in my house. I’ve had the cartoon since it was published by Gary Larson in 1989. The picture is of several guys in lab coats holding test tubes and the caption reads: “A team of scientists at the Helsinki low-temp lab reduces a temp to the lowest ever reached, 2 billionths of a degree above absolute zero—or the temperature at which a father will allow his children to turn up the thermostat.”

I find the cartoon rather funny. My kids never have. And, my wife knows she actually controls the temperature in the house, regardless of what I may think.

But over the years I’ve done what I could to keep the house at least slightly above absolute zero, yet keep the electric and gas bills to reasonable levels. I’ve replaced the old dial thermostat with a digital set-back

thermostat, and I have it set back fairly aggressively for the time between midnight and 6 a.m. They’re all asleep, anyway, so no one is complaining about how cold it is.

Every light that could have a CFL has one. I’ve caulked about everything imaginable that could or should be caulked. I’ve added insulation in the attic, although I may add more over one part of the house that still seems a bit chilly. I’ve installed ceiling fans in almost every room.

We have a whole-house fan that works great most days of the year before it gets really hot and humid. We replaced all the windows about five years ago. We had insulation blown into the walls two



**Michael Peters** is president and CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His email address is [mpeters@countrylines.com](mailto:mpeters@countrylines.com).

years ago when federal tax credits became available.

Whenever we have had to replace an appliance—and over the last 14 years it’s been most of them—we have replaced them with Energy Star®-rated appliances. I’ve wrapped the water heater with insulation and added pipe wrap to the hot water line. I know my heating ducts leak, and sealing those up is on the list of “things to do.” And, I really want to switch my furnace and air conditioning

to an air-to-air heat pump. It’s just a matter of time.

I know there are more measures we can take to reduce our energy bills, but I see this as a process, especially in an older house.

Your electric co-op has many suggestions to help you reduce your energy bills, as well. Whether it’s an online energy audit, rebates for Energy Star appliances, or paying a bounty and picking up your extra freezer or that refrigerator in the garage, your cooperative can help you reduce your energy bills.

I am really happy to see that the refrigerator pick-up program is finally rolling out statewide over the next several months. My column in the 2009 issue showed a picture of an old green refrigerator along with the announcement that we wanted *your* old refrigerator. Unfortunately, getting the program up and running across every cooperative’s service area has proved more difficult than we first thought. I think I received more emails—asking *me* when *I* could come pick up an old refrigerator—than for any other comment I’ve written.



**We’re coming to get ‘em!**  
“The refrigerator pick-up program is finally rolling out statewide over the next several months... I think I received more emails—asking *me* when *I* could come pick up an old refrigerator—than for any other comment I’ve written.”

**To learn more about your cooperative’s energy optimization programs, go to [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org)**

# Dowagiac: Small Town With Big City Flair

The home of the popular Dogwood Fine Arts Festival is a fine place to visit anytime. **Rita C. Henehan**



Will Clafin, a storyteller at the Dogwood Fine Arts Festival.

Photo - Dowagiac Dogwood Festival

**W**hat do bestselling authors Kurt Vonnegut, Norman Mailer, John Updike, Ann Patchett, Joyce Carol Oates, William Styron and Sara Paretsky have in common with nationally known artists like Dale Threlkeld and Winifred Godfrey, world-renowned sculptors Richard Hunt and Tuck Langland, and musicians such as Arlo Guthrie and Chanticleer?

They have all come to Dowagiac, a south-western Michigan town of about 6,000, to participate in its renowned Dogwood Fine Arts Festival, which started back in 1993.

When Bobbie Jo Hartline, festival secretary, is asked how Dowagiac gets such big names to participate, she responds with a simple, “we ask them.” She further explains that they have a wish list of potential participants. “The ones we have managed to attract believe in what we are trying to do here and agree to work things out with us. Education is a big piece of the festival. The speakers and performers have to be willing to give presentations at local schools as well as at the festival.” This gives students a chance to discuss literary works with authors, jam with musicians, and work with artists.

A major aspect of Dowagiac’s philosophy is making the arts accessible to all. At one point in talking with Hartline, a fellow in bib overalls and a knit cap pokes his head in to ask her a question. After he leaves, she notes that he is one of the largest pork producers in Cass County. “He’s supplying the pork for the festival’s first culinary arts show with ‘Big Daddy’ Aaron McCargo Jr.,” she adds. “Like I say, we try to get everyone

involved.” Find details about the May 6-15 festival by calling 866-490-2847 or on the web at [dogwoodfinearts.org](http://dogwoodfinearts.org).

The festival has also given birth to a permanent display of statues called “Sculptures in the City.”

“In the mid-90s, we were approached by the Tremble-Dalton families who wanted to purchase a sculpture for the city,” explains Hartline. “Since then, our visual arts commit-



“We’re the best-kept secret in Dowagiac,” says Museum Director Steve Arseneau, pictured near a display of Round Oak heating stoves. Admission to The Museum at Southwest Michigan College is free.

tee has brought donors and sculptors together to create 10 more outdoor displays.” There’s even a brochure that leads visitors to all the sculptures, with the majority located in the downtown area.

### Other Reasons to Visit

Dowagiac’s natural resources are also a big draw. Nested in Cass County’s rolling hills, the town is surrounded by numerous inland lakes that draw many Chicago-area residents here for the summer. And with that clientele, there is a demand for shops, restaurants and entertainment.

The shopping/restaurant district is concentrated around Front Street. “We have dedicated customers who keep coming back because we provide them with service and quality,” explains Susan Kazlauskas, owner of The Marshall Shoppe, a woman’s clothing store. Her store opened in 1947 and was named in 1957 after Stella Marshall. In 1973, Martha DeShazo (Kazlauskas’ mother) bought the shop and in 1991 Kazlauskas purchased it from her mother. “I’m also excited to see a lot of younger merchants coming into town,” she says. “A number of new shops have opened up and down the street.”

Kazlauskas also mentions her next store neighbor, The Wood Fire Italian Trattoria, an upscale restaurant that brings live entertainment to the area. Leon Redbone performed this winter.

And, there are a number of other restaurants. For the more casual, try Zeke’s with its 250 beers from around the world, or for an old-fashioned treat, try Caruso’s Candy and Soda Shop.

“Our shop is like stepping into the past,” says Caruso’s co-owner, Jane Wright. The original black Italian marble soda bar, with pedestal stools, and the tin ceiling and



This bronze lion by artist Rosetta is one of several statues that are part of Dowagiac’s “Sculptures in the City” display.

glass cases full of chocolate treats attest to that. “Kids can see sodas being made at our fountain and we have hand-dipped malts in any flavor.” Wright and her sister, Julie Johnson, are the current owners of this family business.

Antonio Caruso and his wife, Emilia, bought the business in 1922 and managed it for 45 years with the help of their children, among them Julia and Theresa. In 1969, Antonio handed the reins over to Julia’s husband, William Rutherford, and in 1982, Julia’s daughter Mary Myers steered. In 2005, Theresa’s daughters, Wright and Johnson, took over.

“All our candies are handmade, one piece at a time,” says Wright. “Our bestsellers are our toffees, turtles and peanut clusters. We also ship our candies throughout the state and are

working on setting up our website for home-made candy orders.” The sisters are ensuring that their grandfather’s legacy and the art of candy-making survive in Dowagiac.

Further preserving the area’s legacy is The Museum at Southwestern Michigan College, which is two miles east of downtown on M-62. “We are Dowagiac’s best-kept secret,” says Steve Arseneau, director. “We’ve just finished a major renovation, which we started in 2006. We have four galleries with interactive displays.” The first gallery portrays the town’s history; the second displays Round Oak Stoves, the manufacturer of wood heating stoves that put Dowagiac on the map. The third is dedicated to the fun you can have in the area, and the last to locals who became famous, such as Webb Miller, the World War II journalist, and James Heddon, who is credited with inventing the fishing lure.

The museum houses an extensive collection of Round Oak stoves, including “The Katelee,” which is the Holy Grail for wood stove collectors. There’s also an interactive display showing how the different Heddon lures respond when pulled through the water.

“The idea behind the Festival is to make the arts available to everyone,” comments Bobbi Jo Hartline, secretary for the Dowagiac Dogwood Fine Arts Festival. This year’s event is May 6-15.



Photos – Rita C. Henehan



Jane Wright and her sister, Julie Johnson (not shown), are the third generation of their family to operate Caruso’s Candy and Soda Shop in downtown Dowagiac.



# Energy Drains

Even with advances in energy efficiency, consumers continue to use more energy. **Megan McKoy**

**O**dds are your home has a big-screen TV, a satellite or cable box, and a DVD or Blu-ray player—maybe two or three. Add an Xbox®, Wii™, PlayStation®, or other video game console, and your entertainment center's ready to go.

Indeed, most of us depend on a large number of electronic gadgets these days—and not just for entertainment. Personal computers, stereos, alarm clocks, coffee makers, battery chargers, cell phones, microwaves... the list goes on and on.

Most of the electricity used in the average home goes toward heating and air conditioning, water heating, and lighting, all of which are significantly more energy efficient than even just a decade ago. Yet our demand for new electronic devices means we continue to consume more electricity every year—a whopping 15.6 percent rise since 2000. Younger American consumers use cell phones more for playing games, listening to music, and watching TV than talking on them, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

“Despite anticipated improvements in energy efficiency, any energy savings are

likely to be overshadowed by rising demand for technology,” cautions Nobuo Tanaka, executive director for the Paris-based International Energy Agency (IEA), an autonomous body. He estimates that by 2030 consumer electronic use will climb threefold—equivalent to the combined residential electricity consumption of the United States and Japan.

However, there are ways to avoid the coming energy pile-up. For example, cell phones are now extremely energy efficient because of consumer demand for longer battery life.

“Many mobile devices are already far more efficient in their use of power than other products which run solely off a main electricity supply,” explains Tanaka. “Because extending the battery life of a mobile device is a selling point, manufacturers placed an emphasis on designing products which require very little power. This shows us what

can be achieved.”

If consumers demand that manufacturers reach the same level of efficiency with other electronics, such as gaming consoles, TVs, and even alarm clocks, IEA believes energy use in this sector could be cut in half.

Electric cooperatives are active on this front, offering home energy audits and financial assistance for weatherization, as well as educating consumers on the benefits of purchasing energy-efficient appliances. Making consumers aware of how many energy dollars small electronic devices drain from a family budget is just one more way co-ops are working to keep electric bills affordable.

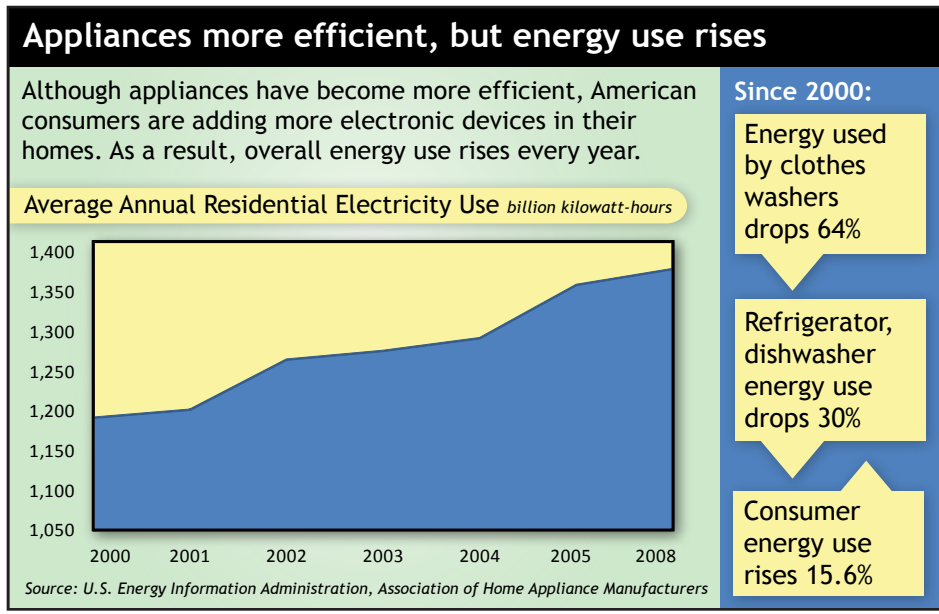
## Appliance Accountability

Computers and monitors were the first products to receive an energy efficiency rating from Energy Star®, a program launched in 1992 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Since then, more than 60 categories have been added, from dishwashers and windows to DVD players.

Energy Star-rated products deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy. Although actual energy savings depend on what's being replaced, new Energy Star appliances save significantly more energy. For example,



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switching out a clothes washer made before 2000 with a 2010 Energy Star model could save up to \$135 per year on a consumer's electric bill. Replacing a refrigerator made before 1993 could save up to \$65 annually. However, 44 percent of refrigerators that could be retired and recycled are converted into a second fridge, given away, or sold—keeping inefficient technology in American homes. That's something Michigan co-ops are trying to remedy with their appliance recycling pick-up service and rebate.

In the wake of Energy Star's success (over 2 billion Energy Star-rated products have been purchased), DOE is pushing for more items to meet efficiency standards. In January, manufacturers sent energy use data on more than 600,000 residential appliances in 15 product categories to the department.

### Silent Energy Drains

Oddly enough, many electronic devices draw power while waiting to be used. Very likely, your big-screen TV, DVD player, and stereo burn kilowatt-hours even when turned off. According to IEA, this standby or "vampire" load accounts for more than 5 percent of residential electricity demand.

Although the amount of standby power used by individual appliances may be small—often between 0.5 watts and 10 watts—a typical home may have 20 appliances on standby at any given time. For the last decade, IEA has encouraged appliance manufacturers around the globe to cut this wasted power to no more than 1 watt. The Energy Star program takes this measurement into account when certifying many appliances.

### Cash for Appliances

Thinking about replacing an old refrigerator or washing machine? This spring the last of the state-specific "Cash for Appliances" programs, mandated by the federal stimulus bill, went into effect. These programs provide rebates ranging from \$50 to \$250 as an incentive for Americans to switch from energy-guzzling, outdated appliances to new Energy Star-rated alternatives.

In February, Michigan was allocated \$8.8 million for this program, and as of March 22, there was \$5,276,805 in rebate funds remaining. When the funds are gone, the offer ends. For Michigan-specific details on how you can take advantage of this offer, visit [energysavers.gov/rebates](http://energysavers.gov/rebates) or [mirebates.com](http://mirebates.com).

*Megan McKoy writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.*

## Do Tankless Water Heaters Live Up to the Hype?

**A**n unlimited supply of hot water sounds like a sweet deal to many homeowners. So do reduced water heating costs, instantaneous hot water on demand, and more space in utility closets.

These are all promises made by companies selling tankless water heaters. But does the technology really deliver?

Unlike traditional electric resistance or gas-fired water heaters, tankless models do not store hot water—they heat water only as it's consumed. Heating elements within a tankless water heater are activated when a hot water faucet or valve is opened.

### 'Unlimited' Hot Water?

An unlimited supply of hot water sounds great, but even the largest whole-house unit may not supply enough hot water for simultaneous, multiple uses.

For example, such a unit may be able to supply only two showers simultaneously or perhaps one shower, a dishwasher, and a sink. If users demand too much water, temperatures will drop. As a result, a tankless system probably won't meet the needs of a large family.

### Hidden Costs

Tankless water heaters do not require a lot of space, but they do require an upgrade in electrical service. This is something most home improvement stores often don't mention, and a chief reason electric co-ops generally don't recommend these appliances. This means consumers who want to replace an existing conventional water heater with a tankless unit or add one as part of a home-remodeling project will incur additional costs.

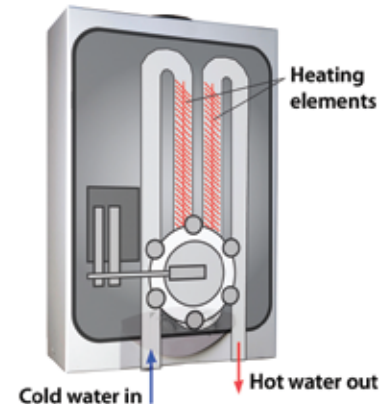
For example, a traditional tank water heater with 4,500-watt elements operates on #10 wire and a 30-amp circuit breaker. One whole-house tankless model boasts four 7,000-watt elements for a total electrical load of 28,000 watts, requiring wire and a circuit breaker that will handle at least 120 amps.

If a tankless water heater is installed in an existing home without upgrading the electrical service, low voltage or sudden voltage drops are likely. This will cause dimming lights, blinking lights, and other problems.

The extra load also requires a larger and more expensive meter loop and main breaker panel for the house. In some cases, consumers also must pay for new wiring between the

### A tankless water heater at work

Unlike a traditional water heater, a wall-mounted tankless model does not store hot water. It heats water only as it is used with heating elements inside the water heater that are activated when a hot water faucet or valve is opened. Consumers can generally save more on energy costs by using traditional water heaters (with a tank) efficiently.



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

distribution transformer and electric meter. Check first with a licensed electrician or your electric co-op to determine if you would need to improve your electric connections.

While gas-fired tankless water heaters generally do not need basic service upgrades, the same considerations must be made when determining how many hot water faucets will be turned on at any given time and how far the heater is from sinks and showers.

### Other Options

Consumers looking for an efficient water heater should consider a heavily insulated electric resistance tank unit. These appliances are often the most cost-effective option over the long term. And because of their hot water storage capabilities, many electric co-ops employ electric resistance water heaters as a key component of load management programs that shave power costs during times of peak demand—a proven way to help keep electric bills affordable.

The Oak Ridge National Laboratory also suggests using simple and low-cost efficiency measures such as tank insulation, temperature setback, timers, heat traps and low-flow showerheads. All of these are more practical and provide a greater return on investment than putting in a tankless water heater.

—NRECA Cooperative Research Network

# Dress Up Your Home—and Cut Energy Costs—With Landscaping

Landscaping does more than make a home look nice. It prevents air leaks and provides shading.

People tend to appreciate landscaping for its aesthetic value, but proper landscaping also impacts the energy efficiency of your house. From an environmental standpoint, good landscape design also minimizes the need for mowing and other lawn care. This not only saves you time, but you may be able to get by with a push mower or a battery-operated mower to eliminate gasoline costs.

In addition to increasing your home's efficiency, wise landscaping can reduce the need for watering. In the past, this was an issue primarily for the Southwest. Today, water shortages are an issue across the nation. Even if there's adequate water available, it takes large amounts of energy at municipal waterworks facilities to process and pump domestic water.

Proper landscaping includes the use of ground cover, dwarf and full-size shrubs, climbing vines, and trees. Ground cover is typically some type of plant, grass or gravel. The selection you make depends on your climate and specific house. Within the same neighborhood, a combination that works well for one house may not be the best for a home just one street away.

In general, try to use low-growing ground cover plants or gravel instead of grass. Other than some unique types, most common species of grass require maintenance. Grass is still the best choice for areas of your yard where children play or pets roam, but try to keep it to a minimum.

In all but the most humid climates, placing low-growing ground cover plants near your house helps keep it cool during summer. The leaves block the sun's heat from being absorbed into the ground, and they give off moisture. This evaporation of water from the leaves, called transpiration, cools air near the home—similar to when we perspire.

In hot, humid climates, gravel which is shaded from the sun can be more effective than ground cover plants. Using gravel also eliminates the need for watering, but it may increase the air temperature around your house. The thermal mass of the gravel stores the afternoon sun's heat, causing the heating effect to last into the evening. Though not helpful during summer, during winter gravel



Dwarf shrubs block the wind and the rocks capture the sun's heat during winter. During summer, trees shade the house wall and rocks.

provides an advantage.

When selecting ground cover plants, consider their specific characteristics (mature size, water needs, propagation, foliage density, etc.). To minimize the watering requirements, group the plant types based on their watering needs.

Dwarf shrubs are ideal for energy-efficient landscaping because they remain small at maturity (2 to 3 feet high). Plant some near the house foundation and some further away for windbreak ramps. Since they stay small, they require little care and watering.

Dwarf shrubs can also cut your utility bills year-round. The sill plate, the bottom frame along a home's foundation, is one of the greatest air infiltration pathways into many houses. Planting dwarf shrubs near the house, especially evergreen varieties, can block the force of cold winter winds and reduce the amount of air leaking in.

As a windbreak ramp, dwarf shrubs can

be planted to the northwest side of taller shrubs and trees. These smaller plants begin directing the cold winds upward toward the tops of taller trees. The upward wind path continues over the top of your house, not against it.

Planting climbing vines on a trellis can create effective shading to reduce the heat buildup on a wall during summer. In most climates, locate the trellis close to the house to also take advantage of transpiration cooling. In humid climates, locate the trellis a little further away from the wall. This allows the air flow to carry the moisture away, but still provides good wall shading.

Climbing vines are often more effective than trees for shade because you can target specific windows and areas of your house where heat produces the greatest problem. Deciduous vines that lose their leaves

during winter are best so the winter sun still reaches the house. One with a robust stem structure can help disrupt the force of winter winds.

Trees have perhaps the greatest impact upon your utility bills. The actual landscaping details vary for different climates, but some general concepts apply to all. Evergreen trees are effective for the northwest across to the northeast side of a house to block the winter winds. During winter, the sun does not shine from those sides. Deciduous trees planted on the other sides provide summer shade, but allow the winter sun through. You may want to leave a small gap to the southwest to allow summer breezes to reach your home.

*Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [dulley.com](http://dulley.com).*

Photo: James Dulley



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Thanks to the Economic Recovery Act, there's now a **30% "renewable energy" tax credit** for homeowners who install a qualifying **WaterFurnace geothermal comfort system**. WaterFurnace geothermal units use the **clean, renewable energy found in your own backyard to save up to 70% on heating, cooling, and hot water**. They **don't burn expensive fossil fuels, they reduce our dependence on foreign oil and also happen to be great for the environment**. Call your local dealer and discover for yourself the benefits that only WaterFurnace can provide.

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All-Temp Heating  
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Jim's Handyman  
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# Healthy Habits for Earth-friendly Families

**A**t the tender age of two-and-a-half, my granddaughter has hiked trails, fished streams, waded shorelines, and snoozed in rustic campgrounds. Furthermore, she has mastered an outdoor skill that confounds many a grown woman. When it's necessary (and sometimes even when it's not), Nellie knows how to tinkle in the woods.

I'm impressed. And I'm glad she's learning early to appreciate nature. It should motivate her to care about the Earth's resources, like clean air and water.

Good thing, too, because according to experts who track these sorts of things, Nellie has already gone through about 8,000 disposable diapers. Then there is the environmental impact of baby food jars, formula cans, plastic containers of wipes, scented disposable diaper bags, plastic swings and teething rings, and a crib with all its trimmings.

To tell you the truth, though, I worry more about the impact the environment might be having on her. With new research hinting that everything from autism to hyperactivity might be linked to toxins in our food, plastics and emissions, it just makes sense to avoid as many as possible, while teaching children some habits that will protect the resources we all need.

## Go Beyond Baby-Proofing

In its Blue Butterfly Campaign, the Children's Health Environment Coalition suggests "Five Easy Steps" to an environmentally child-safe home.

**Avoid pesticides and insecticides.** Read labels carefully to choose nontoxic, pesticide-free products for your family. Remove shoes and wash hands immediately after playing outside to prevent chemical-laced dirt from being tracked indoors.

**Use nontoxic cleaners.** As concerns about household toxins grow, companies are eagerly pushing their "green" versions of traditional cleaning products. Unfortunately, researchers say some potentially dangerous substances can still appear in products that are marketed as green. No matter what cleaners you use, take some simple precautions to minimize the dangers: dilute them; rinse surfaces after use; thoroughly wash sponges

after cleaning or store used cloths in a sealed receptacle, make sure the space that is being cleaned is well ventilated during and several hours after cleaning.

**Clean indoor air.** Indoor air pollution is linked to a host of health effects, including asthma. Use natural products whenever possible, from upholstery fabric and carpeting, to building material glues and adhesives, to paint and wallpaper. Use nontoxic techniques to scent the house, such as placing orange slices, lemon slices, cloves, or any other herb in boiling water on the stove.

**Go organic.** The baby food aisle of local supermarkets has seen a substantial increase in organic selections from companies such as Gerber® and Earth's Best®. "But why not think outside the jar?" asks Shazi Visram, founder of Happy Baby, whose frozen meals come in individual cubes in flavors like "Smarter Squash and Wiser Apple." "In our country, babies are started on processed food....but it cooks the flavor and nutrients out," Visram says.

**Use plastic products more wisely.** Choose smart plastics and avoid putting them in the microwave (where they can release dangerous chemicals when heated) or the dishwasher (where they can degrade in the heat and excessive moisture). Vinyl bath toys and plastic teething and bottles could also contain phthalates and Bisphenol A (BPA), which have been shown to disrupt the reproductive systems of lab animals. You can use the recycling codes to determine content, according to the folks at Healthy Child, Healthy World. If it's marked #1, #2, #4, or #5 it's safer; if it's marked #3, #6, or #7, avoid it.

## Want to do more?

If you're really serious about protecting your child and the planet, a few extra actions can



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earn you some bonus points.

**Eat local, and in season.** Sometimes you just need a tomato or strawberry, but eating foods raised or grown locally and in season is cheaper, better tasting, and better for you. It's better for the planet, too, since local products have less packaging and require fewer transportation resources.

**Choose "Green Schools."** Or work with your child's school to conserve valuable resources to ensure future availability and save money. Schools like Rapid River Public Schools near Escanaba are joining a growing number of "green schools" that provide more healthy, comfortable and productive learning environments, while saving energy, resources and money. As a result, kids are learning more and spending fewer days out of school. Plus, they're learning how to take care of the environment they will inherit.

**Diaper-free?** A small, but growing movement to abandon diapers completely might be the ultimate in "natural" parenting. DiaperFreeBaby now has groups and mentors in 35 states and 11 countries—but none in my neighborhood, if the reactions of the young moms I queried can be trusted.

Even if you're not ready for a move that extreme, consider taking one or two steps this month to make your family friendlier to the planet so that Earth can remain a safe and healthy place for our kids.

## RESOURCES

**HealthyChild.org** Healthy Child, Healthy World is a nonprofit on a mission to inspire parents to protect young children from harmful chemicals. Their website offers a wealth of information and tips for families to get started.

**EarthDay.net** April 22, 2010, marks the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, which makes this a great month for families to take up the challenge to protect the planet and keep our kids healthy now and for generations to come. Learn more and (maybe) find local activities.



# Energy Optimization



## About Energy Optimization

Energy Optimization programs offer solutions that can reduce your energy use and deliver significant savings on your electric bill. These programs are brought to you in partnership with the utilities listed below.

## Online Energy Profile

Is your home wasting energy? Use the online Energy Depot to get details on:

- Your energy consumption
- Your home energy use
- How to save on your utility bills

Free energy-saving kit with the completion of a full profile.

## Appliance Recycling

Is a second refrigerator or freezer running up your electric bill? Older units can use 2-3 times more energy than newer ones, quite often to chill only a few beverages. Turn in your old working appliance through this recycling program and:

- Get a \$30 Rebate
- Save Money & Energy
- Protect the Environment

## Residential & Small Business Energy Star® Program

This program provides incentives for installing Energy Star® qualified products.

## Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Great rebates on select energy efficient air conditioners, ECM motors, water heaters and pipe wrap encourage eligible consumers to reduce electricity consumption.

- Municipal electric consumers should call 877-296-4319 for more information
- Electric co-op members should contact their electric provider for details.

## Energy Efficiency Assistance/Income Qualified

If you're having trouble managing your energy bill, this program offers assistance. Improvements can be made to your existing home at no cost. To qualify, you must be eligible for the Department of Energy's weatherization program and your household income must be at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

To enroll in this program, please contact your local Community Action Agency.



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Contact us for more information  
**877-296-4319**  
or check out our website at  
**www.michigan-energy.org**



City of Stephenson



Ontonagon County REA



Newberry Water & Light Board

# Morels!



May is Morel Month in Michigan. Most of these recipes are from the "Taste Of Boyne 1995 Morel Mushroom Cookbook," a publication of the Boyne City Mushroom Festival (see p. 19). Find even more recipes at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com).

## Rainbow Trout With Morel Stuffing

6-7 oz. fresh rainbow trout fillets  
 1/2 lb. smoked bacon  
 1 c. fresh spinach, chopped  
 1/4 c. domestic mushrooms, sliced  
 1/4 c. Shiitake mushrooms, sliced  
 1 c. fresh morels or 1/4 c. dried, reconstituted in water, quartered  
 1/4 c. chopped leeks  
 1/8 t. sage  
 1/8 t. basil  
 salt and pepper  
 3 c. flour  
 3 eggs  
 2 c. milk  
 1 c. chopped walnuts  
 1 c. bread crumbs

Sauté bacon until golden brown. Drain off grease, reserving 2 tablespoons in sauté pan. Add shiitake, domestic and morel

mushrooms; sauté gently. Add leeks and continue cooking on low heat. Add spinach and sauté until spinach becomes soft. Finish with sage, basil, salt and pepper to taste. Lay trout, filleted open, skin side down. Spoon on stuffing and fold over in half carefully. Combine walnuts and bread crumbs and place in shallow pan. Beat together eggs and milk. Roll each fillet in flour, then dip in egg wash. Roll in walnut-crumbs mixture. Place in an oven proof, preheated sauté pan. Brown fillets on each side. Place in a 400° oven; bake 10-15 minutes.

*Stafford's, Boyne City*

## Chicken-Morel Bisque

3/4 c. butter  
 3/4 c. flour  
 2 minced shallots  
 2 c. Half and Half®  
 6 c. good quality chicken stock  
 2 c. chopped, cooked chicken  
 1 c. heavy cream  
 1/4 t. grated fresh nutmeg  
 salt and white pepper  
 1 oz. dried morels, reconstituted and drained  
 1/4 c. butter

1/2 lb. fresh morels

Sauté reconstituted, dried morels in 1/4 cup butter; set aside. Melt 3/4 cup butter in a 3-quart saucepan; sauté shallots for 2 minutes to soften. Whisk in flour and cook for 2-3 minutes without allowing to brown. Add Half and Half and whisk smooth. When thickened, gradually add chicken stock and cook for 5-6 minutes; stirring constantly. Stir in chicken, morels and heavy cream. Season with salt and pepper. Heat to serving temperature but do not allow to boil. Makes 8 servings.

*The Rowe Inn, Ellsworth*

## Spinach Balls

2 sm. pkgs. frozen chopped spinach  
 18-oz. pkg. Pepperidge Farm® seasoned stuffing mix crumbs  
 4 eggs  
 3/4 c. butter or margarine, melted

1 med. onion, finely chopped  
 1/4 t. thyme  
 1/2 t. garlic  
 3/4 c. chopped morel mushrooms  
 1/2 t. pepper  
 3/4 c. Parmesan cheese

Cook spinach as package directs; drain well. Beat eggs; add all ingredients and mix well. Chill mixture for 1 hour. Roll into bite-sized balls and place on cookie sheet. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Serve immediately. These can be made ahead, frozen, then baked as needed. Makes 60-80 pieces.

*Deer Lake B&B, Boyne City*

## Morel and Asparagus Quiche

1 9-inch pie shell, prebaked for 5 minutes  
 2 t. butter or margarine  
 1 T. minced onion  
 6 fresh morel mushrooms, halved or dried morels soaked for 2 hours  
 4 eggs  
 1 1/2 c. milk  
 1/2 c. plain yogurt  
 1 t. Dijon mustard  
 1/2 t. thyme  
 1/4 t. salt  
 1 c. grated cheddar cheese  
 2 fresh asparagus spears, blanched, cut into 3-inch pieces  
 1/4 c. chopped, seeded tomato  
 1/3 c. Parmesan cheese

Melt butter in skillet; sauté onion about 2 minutes. Add mushrooms and sauté until tender, set aside. In a bowl, food processor or blender, blend eggs, milk, yogurt, Dijon mustard, thyme and salt. Stir in cheddar cheese. Pour egg mixture into pie shell. Bake at 375° for 30 minutes or until filling begins to firm up. Top with mushrooms, asparagus and tomato. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and continue to bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean and quiche is golden brown, about 15 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting.

*Duley's State Street Inn, Boyne City*

## Morel and Leek Pizza

pizza dough of choice  
 1/4-1/2 c. pizza sauce or pesto sauce of choice  
 Mozzarella cheese, sliced or shredded  
 morels  
 leeks  
 spinach  
 herbs of choice

Place pizza stone or baking sheet in a 500° oven. Wash and slice morels and leeks; sauté gently in butter; set aside. Prepare dough. Top dough with sauce, sautéed morels, leeks and cheese. Remove pizza stone from oven. Slide

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prepared pizza onto stone and place back in oven. Bake at 500° for 5-10 minutes until golden brown.

*Kim Brown, Morel Festival Committee*

### Morel Mushroom Gravy

1/2 c. dried morels  
warm water  
4 T. butter  
3 T. Wondra® or flour  
3/4 c. milk  
salt and pepper to taste

Cover dried morels with warm water and soak for 1/2 hour. Strain water from morels through a coffee filter, reserving water; set aside. Cut morels into pieces. In a saucepan, melt butter; stir in flour. When mixed, add milk and morel-flavored water. Stir until thickened. Add morel pieces; heat through. Season sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Serve over warm biscuits.

*Pam Chipman, Boyne City*

### Moe's Favorite Morel Sauce

1/4 lb. butter  
3 green onions with tops, chopped  
2 c. fresh morels, quartered lengthwise  
1 sm. clove fresh garlic, minced  
1 c. heavy cream  
flour  
1 c. Chablis wine  
salt and pepper

Roll morels in flour. Melt butter, sauté green onions, garlic and morels until morels are limp. Add wine and bring to a boil; boil for 1 minute. Reduce heat and simmer to reduce liquid. Add heavy cream; simmer 5-10 minutes. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve over char-broiled poultry or steak.

*Lena's Wine Cellar, Boyne City*

### Morel Mayonnaise

6 egg yolks  
1 t. salt  
pinch white pepper  
2 T. wine vinegar or lemon juice  
3 c. safflower oil  
2 T. mustard, optional  
2 lbs. morels  
2 c. Madeira wine

Wash morels, soak in Madeira for one hour; set aside. In a non-steel bowl, season egg yolks with salt and pepper and half of the vinegar or lemon juice. Whisk until smooth. Slowly add oil to mixture, adding 1-2 tablespoons at

a time and whisking until combined with egg mixture. When mixture begins to thicken, oil may be added more quickly. Mayonnaise will become hard to whisk, add remaining wine vinegar or lemon juice. Continue beating and adding remaining oil. Place marinated morels and Madeira in a saucepan on medium heat; sauté mushrooms for 5 minutes. Remove mushrooms; cook Madeira until reduced down to approximately 1/4 cup. Blend mayonnaise, morels and reduced Madeira in a food processor until smooth. Yield 1 quart.

*Wolverine Dilworth Inn, Boyne City*

### Salmon Fillets With Wild Mushroom Ragout

3 T. butter  
5 shallots, minced  
18 oz. assorted mushrooms – morels, oysters, chanterelles  
3/4 c. bottled clam juice  
2 T. whipping cream  
2 t. chopped, fresh tarragon  
6 6-8 oz. salmon fillets  
fresh lemon juice  
2 T. butter, melted  
fresh tarragon sprigs

Preheat broiler. Melt 3 tablespoons butter in a large, heavy skillet over medium heat. Add shallots; sauté 2 minutes. Increase heat to medium-high; add mushrooms and sauté 8 minutes. Add clam juice and wine; boil until liquids are syrupy, about 20 minutes. Add cream to mushrooms, simmer until thickened. Mix in tarragon, and salt and pepper to taste. Arrange salmon, skin-side down on broiler pan. Brush with lemon juice, then melted butter. Season with a pinch of salt and pepper. Broil just until cooked through, without turning, about 6 minutes. Transfer to plates. Spoon mushrooms over salmon. Garnish with tarragon. Yield 6 servings.

*The Tannery Saloon, Boyne City*

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May 13-16



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# It's Digging Season, Remember to Call

Spring is finally here, and so is National Safe Digging Month! With the snow melted and the ground ready for planting, anxious homeowners, like yourself, are gearing up to start those outdoor digging projects. Before you reach for that shovel to start, remember to call MISS DIG at 811 to ensure that your buried utility lines are marked.

National Safe Digging Month was designated to remind us that our land is made up of a complex underground infrastructure of pipelines, wires and cables. Striking an underground utility line while digging can cause harm to you or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.

Michigan law mandates that a call must be placed to MISS DIG before every digging project, from simple landscaping projects like planting trees or shrubs, to building a deck or installing a rural mailbox. MISS DIG also takes calls and notifies the electric company when a project is in close proximity to overhead electric lines.

## Here's how it works:

One free, simple phone call to 811 makes it easy for MISS DIG to notify all appropriate utility companies of your intent to dig. The call center is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to take these calls.

Call at least three business days prior to digging to ensure enough time for the utility lines to be properly marked.

When you call 811, a representative will ask for the location and description of your digging project.

MISS DIG will notify the affected utility companies, who will then send a professional locator to the proposed dig site to mark the approximate location of your lines



at no charge.

Once the lines are properly marked, roll up those sleeves and carefully dig around the flagged areas.

MISS DIG has processed over 17 million calls in its 40-year history,

and remains dedicated to protecting the public and utility infrastructure in Michigan. You can protect yourself and your utility service by always calling 811 before digging and working safely around the utility marks and lines themselves.

For more information on safe digging practices or any of the programs offered by the call center, please visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org).

— Eric Urbain, MISS DIG System, Inc.

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# Michigan Steelhead

## ...From California With Love

**A**s other anglers along the Little Manistee watched, another angler clearly had his hands full.

His fishing rod was bent over from the weight of a hook-stung rainbow trout, while all marveled at the red-flanked steelhead's power and feisty refusal to quit. It thrashed clear of the water to tail-walk over the stream top before plunging back into the battle.

After several minutes of this give-and-take, the fish finally ran out of steam and another angler waded up to help with a landing net.

The fish's size and beauty is an answer to why it's so popular among Michigan anglers. Subduing this magnificent cold water game fish is a trophy experience in itself, and April is the time to join this game, as steelheading fever spreads.

It is something we can thank early-day fisheries pioneers for when they decided to add this acrobatic member of the Pacific salmon family to the state's waters.

Yes—you read it right. The rainbow trout, once thought to be a true trout of the salmon family, like the brown trout, is actually a close relative of the Pacific salmon—a family that includes the coho, chinook and pink salmon. However, unlike its Pacific cousins, the rainbow often survives after spawning and may, if not injured or over-stressed during spawning, return to the natal streams where it was born (or released to be imprinted) again in future years.

Michigan received its first rainbow trout from California 134 years ago. Michigan's steelhead were first reared and released to state waters from stocks developed primarily from the McCloud River strain. From these original California imports were developed what we now call the Michigan steelhead. Over these 136 years, many additional strains were brought in and have combined, evolved and contributed to the genetic development of the Michigan or Little Manistee strain.

Michigan's steelhead stocks began with both hatchery and wild fish, specifically the

Campbell's Creek and McCloud strains from California; to these strains were added fish from the Klamath River in Oregon. These were first planted in Michigan's AuSable River. Though the Upper Au Sable is noted more for its brown and brook trout fishing, it still has land-locked rainbows that would have been running upriver until they were cut off from Lake Huron by power dams.

The program's success resulted in the planting of rainbows into many tributaries throughout the state. By 1903, Michigan was

One happy steelheader on the Little Manistee River.

planting out 800,000 fry in over 50 of its 83 counties.

By 1908, plantings of over 1 million fish were made, with numbers increasing to 2.5 million by 1911 and 5 million in 1914. Much of the stock reared then came from the Paris fish hatchery along the Muskegon River. These numbers were supplemented by 4 million wild fish from the Pine River (landlocked ancestors of the Pine rainbows still swim and tempt anglers in that watershed today).

From rainbow stocks in the Little Manistee River, the modern steelhead program took off in 1966. Eggs and milt (male sperm) were taken from rainbow trout in the wild Manistee, Little Manistee and Platte rivers. Since 1968, the Little Manistee River has been the major source of Michigan steelhead eggs. Eggs are collected at a weir, stripped from females by injecting air into the egg sac, but leaving these females unharmed and fit to be released back into the stream. Milt taken from the males is then mixed with the eggs, and each batch held for an on-site inspection and health check.

Any infected eggs are destroyed and healthy eggs are transferred to hatchery facilities like Oden, where fingerlings hatch and then go to rearing facilities to grow to release size.

Recent creel studies show that many steelhead caught in Michigan waters are wild fish that have evolved and adapted well since the late 1800s. Michigan has come to the forefront of management and preservation of its great steelhead resource.

Today, the Little Manistee River supports a fishery with annual runs of over 10,000 adult steelhead trout and is maintained entirely by natural reproduction. The Little Manistee facility produces over 5 million eggs each year that go to hatcheries here and in other states.

And now, April is here, bringing a chance to test your luck against what is clearly one of America's legendary game fish.

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# Wolverine Clean Energy Venture Update



**W**olverine Power Cooperative announced the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture (WCEV) in May 2006. Nearly four years later, the cooperative continues working to advance the project.

The WCEV has two components—a power plant and a wind farm. The proposed power plant would use solid fuels to generate up to 600 megawatts of electricity continuously and economically. The proposed site for the facility is the Carmeuse Lime & Stone quarry near Rogers City.

The proposed wind farm would be sited four miles east of Rogers City. To determine the viability of this project, Wolverine has been collecting weather data at the proposed site, including the temperature and wind speed and direction.

Let's take a closer look at the status of the project.

## Power Plant

■ **Permits** – Wolverine and Carmeuse have obtained the permits needed to expand the existing harbor at the Carmeuse limestone quarry. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment (MDNRE) also approved the landfill permit for the project.

Wolverine expected a decision on its air quality permit from the MDNRE in 2009 and continues to wait for word.

Permit documents were filed in September 2007.

“The air permit is the most critical for the power plant,” says Eric Baker, Wolverine president and chief executive officer.

■ **DOE Grant** – The United States Department of Energy (DOE) awarded Wolverine a \$2.7 million grant for development of a carbon capture and sequestration demonstration project at the power plant site. Additional grant monies may be available provided the Wolverine demonstration project is selected by the DOE.

■ **Biomass** – Wolverine's work with Michigan Technological University and Michigan State University in planting and maintaining biomass crops continues. Biomass is renewable organic matter including wood, woody forest and mill residues and switchgrass. Up to 20 percent of the fuel for the WCEV plant could be sustainable biomass.

Plans for 2010 include new plantings of hybrid poplar trees and switchgrass on 15-acre, operational scale plots. Previously, smaller tracts of land were planted for testing, and these trial plots will continue to be monitored.



Above is a computer rendering of the proposed Wolverine Clean Energy Venture power plant near Rogers City, with an accompanying map drawing of the project layout.

## Wind Farm

Weather data collected at the proposed wind farm site indicates the project could be viable. However, development of the wind farm would correspond with development of the power plant. The wind farm is not likely to be financially feasible without the power plant.

## Bottom Line

Wolverine is pleased with its progress on the WCEV, yet time is not on the cooperative's side. The air permit is needed.

“The window of opportunity for this project will shrink as interest rates begin to rise,” Baker explains. “However, we continue to believe in Rogers City. It's a world-class site for electric generation.”



# Reliability Improvements Are a Good Value

Large investments in electric distribution system improvements have helped make it possible for Great Lakes Energy to reach its annual reliability goal for four straight years.

More large investments will be needed, however. “We will not be satisfied until we reduce average outage minutes for our members to a level that puts us among the top electric cooperatives in the nation with the most reliable service,” says Steve Boeckman, GLE president/CEO. “That will take time and a continued strong financial commitment.”

## How large is “large”?

Out of more than 800 electric cooperatives in the United States, Great Lakes Energy ranks second in most miles of line. Power line improvements and maintenance require sizeable investments for a co-op that maintains over 11,000 miles of overhead wires, plus nearly 3,000 miles of underground line.

Line circuits with the worst reliability records are targeted each year for related upgrades. Work includes replacing old equipment such as transformers, lightning arresters, insulators, connectors and service wire. Line segments are sometimes replaced with new underground facilities. All equipment being replaced is more than 30 years old and has reached the end of its useful life.

In the last six years, 80 worst-performing circuits were identified throughout the co-op’s service territory and improved. Over 69,000 members benefited from the upgrades, and that number will grow as nine more circuits serving nearly 9,400 members are scheduled for improvements this year. Over \$10 million has been dedicated so far to this reliability improvement program.

## System Improvement Plans

Another piece of the overall reliability improvement initiative is system improvements. These projects involve replacing entire line sections (several miles at a time), which means building new facilities and retiring the old. The new facilities are more reliable and have greater capacity to handle our

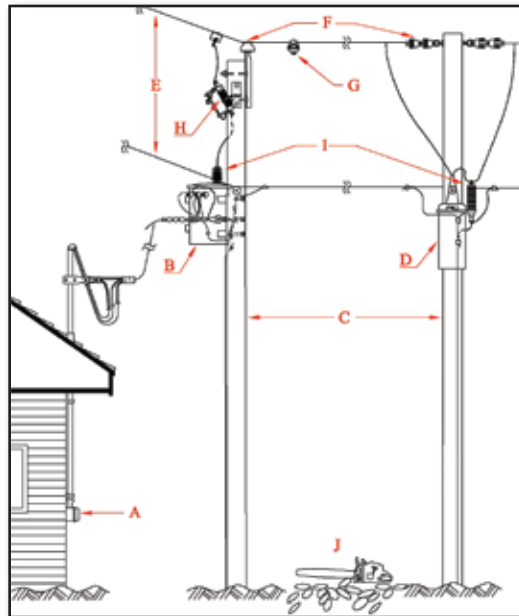
members’ growing energy needs. The average cost for these improvements is approximately \$100,000 per mile.

## Sectionalizing Program

More than \$3.8 million was invested in the last four years to add more line protection devices so smaller sections of line, and fewer members, are affected by outages. Two examples of devices used are shown in the diagram below: an oil circuit recloser (D) and a fused cut-out (H).

A recloser momentarily shuts off power to allow a temporary problem, such as a tree branch brushing the line, to clear. Members will often experience blinks (1-3 second outages), but not longer duration outages. If the problem persists, the recloser will operate a set number of times before permanently opening to de-energize the line section. The line then remains off until crews arrive to correct the problem. A recloser resembles a transformer (B) which is necessary to deliver power into your home at an acceptable voltage level.

A cut-out consists of a fuse that will blow



The poles, wires and equipment that help provide reliable service along a typical mile of line serving an average of nine GLE members includes: nine automated meters (A) and transformers (B), 20 poles (C), two (or more) overhead wires (E), 20 insulators (F), a fused cut-out (H), nine lightning arresters (I) and a cleared right-of-way (J). It may also include a recloser device (D) and a fault indicator (G).

and de-energize the line to protect components from being damaged by high fault currents caused by lightning, trees, animals and other sources.

Porcelain cut-outs, insulators (F) and lightning arresters (I) are gradually being replaced by ones that are constructed with a more durable polymer material that is less susceptible to physical (cracks and chips) and electrical damage.

Fault indicators (G) are being added to Great Lakes Energy lines as another step to reduce outage time. As the name suggests, the device directs crews to the general fault location. They can get to the outage location sooner because less time is needed to walk the lines to find the problem.

## Rights-of-Way Maintenance

The chainsaw (J) is just one of many pieces of equipment Great Lakes Energy contractors use to clear trees from within power line rights-of-way. In 2010, about \$4.45 million will be invested to trim and remove trees and brush near power lines for safe and reliable electric service. Right-of-way re-clearing work is done on a multi-year cycle and only a part of the distribution system is re-cleared each year.

## Poles and Wires

Great Lakes Energy takes a proactive approach to maintaining its poles and wires. This year, about \$250,000 will be invested in pole inspections and testing, and another \$400,000 in line/facilities inspections.

Poles are inspected on a multi-year cycle with 10 percent of the system checked each year. About 300 poles are replaced annually at a cost of about \$360,000.

Line inspectors identify equipment that needs to be replaced on circuits scheduled for reliability-related upgrades. They also inspect other problem areas that cause member power quality issues.

## Automated Meters

Last but not least, automated meters also play a role in improving reliability. Automated meter communication enables the co-op to quickly determine whether any members are still off in areas where line repairs were just made. Crews can then remain to get everybody back on before heading to the next outage location. They often travel to many trouble spots following a damaging storm.

Together, all these things create a system designed to bring reliable electricity and good value to Great Lakes Energy members.

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## What Members Collect

Ed Frenak of Rochester Hills has been collecting chipmunks for 10 years.



Many of Jeanne Furman's trinket boxes come from antique stores or as gifts. She has collected them for over 20 years. Jeanne lives in Shelby.



Bonnie Smith of Johannesburg collects anything with an owl on it. She has over 1,000 items in her collection.



Do you collect something *unusual*? We'd like to hear about it! Please send your name, address/phone, and a color photo (not from a computer printer) of your collection to Editor, *Michigan Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864, or by email to czucker@countrylines.com.

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A People Fund grant for emergency dental care gave staff at Petoskey's Community Free Clinic a reason to smile. Pictured are: (back row, left to right) Wendy Grangood, medication advocate; Shonny Riehl, medication advocate; Janet Garber, RN; (front row, left to right) MaryIn Graham, RN; Niki Kenny, RN, and CFC director; and Ginger Downey, RN.

## People Fund Grant Brings Smiles

**A** \$3,000 People Fund grant is allowing dental care providers to offer a service they say has immeasurable value for needy families in Emmet County.

The Community Free Clinic (CFC), affiliated with Northern Michigan Regional Hospital in Petoskey, is using the grant to provide dental work for low-income county residents through Dental Clinics North.

CFC Director Niki Kenny, RN, explains that the poor economy has left many in Emmet County without jobs and health insurance. People Fund grant dollars pay for limited dental services to low-income residents with critical problems. The patients receive antibiotics and use vouchers supplied by the clinic for treatment at Dental Clinics North.

Patients often appear at the clinic with tooth infections which, left untreated, can lead to a life-threatening situation and result in hospitalization. Timely dental care prevents such situations and helps control health care costs.

In 2008, dental services cost the clinic over \$5,400. In 2009, the cost exceeded \$6,000. Funds formerly granted for the program were exhausted in December 2008.

"This People Fund grant allowed us to

continue operating the program during 2009 and into 2010," Kenny says.

However, with the cost of common dental procedures averaging \$120 to \$200, the clinic has had to limit dental services to stretch available funds. Kenny is seeking additional funds to ensure continued services.

"If we do not have donations specified for this purpose, we cannot make referrals until we are able to replenish the fund," she says.

Kenny adds that organizations like the Free Clinic leverage donations through services provided and suffering relieved into an enormous return on investment. That makes the People Fund grant worth far more than its "face value" of \$3,000.

"Great Lakes Energy members might imagine themselves walking in the shoes of those suffering with dental pain and having 'no admittance' to a dental office, and then realize that their donation through the People Fund made all the difference for a very real person with that very real problem," Kenny suggests.

The Clinic's office at 820 Arlington, Suite 6, is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. They hold primary care clinics staffed by professional volunteers on Monday afternoons and Wednesday

evenings. Great Lakes Energy members are invited to stop in and see why their People Fund donations are so important and valued.

For more information about services available at CFC, call 231-487-3600.

### Power In Numbers

If every Great Lakes Energy member who participates in the People Fund got just one other person to join, it would easily double the amount of money available to help local food pantries, senior citizen centers, youth programs, and more.

The People Fund program works because there is power in numbers. A Great Lakes Energy member's average contribution of 50 cents a month or \$6 per year isn't much, but it adds up fast when thousands of members get involved.

Get involved and help the People Fund expand to meet the growing needs of Michigan residents, young and old. It all starts with asking just one person to contact us and we'll do the rest. Members can also enroll online by visiting the "yourCommunity" section on our website, [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com).



# GLE Sponsors Tree-planting Project

For the third straight year, Great Lakes Energy will participate in the national Energy for Wildlife program that helps utilities integrate wildlife management education and practices into their vegetation management work.

Boyer Falls sixth and seventh graders will celebrate Arbor Day at their school on April 29 with a tree-planting ceremony sponsored by Great Lakes Energy's vegetation management staff. In addition to helping students plant trees, staff will host other activities that include a bucket truck demonstration, a tree identification station, and a visit by a Great Lakes Energy lineworker who will discuss his job. A utility forester with Wolverine Power Cooperative will hand out seedlings to students. Wolverine is Great Lakes Energy's power supplier.

"The theme this year will be 'plant the right tree for the right place,'" explains Kathy Massey, the assistant vegetation management supervisor coordinating the event. "We want students to understand that an important first step in planting a tree is selecting a location that will keep it safely away from both overhead and underground power lines."

The vegetation management department is responsible for managing over 11,000 miles of power line rights-of-way. They work with contractors who clear trees away from the lines to maintain safe and reliable service for Great Lakes Energy members.

Last year the department helped Shelby third graders plant maple trees at their school.

In 2008, vegetation management staff assisted Boyer City High School Natural Resources students with the planting of 200 shrub seedlings along a Great Lakes Energy power line right of way that will provide food for wildlife in the Chandler Hills area of Charlevoix County. The low-growing, fruit-bearing shrubs will not threaten overhead lines and were planted along the sides of the right of way where they will not be in the way of line maintenance crews.

The Energy for Wildlife program helps



Last year Great Lakes Energy vegetation management staff helped Shelby third graders plant maple trees at their school. A similar tree-planting project involving Boyer Falls sixth and seventh graders will be held this spring at their school.

Great Lakes Energy and utilities throughout the country manage millions of right-of-way miles and other properties that could provide ideal habitat for a number of wildlife species. It is run by the National Wild Turkey

Federation (NWTf), a grassroots, nonprofit organization that supports scientific wildlife management on public, private and corporate lands and wild turkey hunting as a traditional North American sport.

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# Giving Hope to Haiti

After spending a week amid the devastation and desperation in Haiti, Lane Wildfong went back to work at Cherryland Electric Cooperative literally counting his blessings.

Haiti was hit on Jan. 12 by an earthquake that measured 7.0 in magnitude and reportedly killed more than 150,000 people and left hundreds of thousands more homeless.

"It really hit home to me how good we have it here," said Lane, a 29-year-old apprentice lineman who has worked at Cherryland almost four years. "The irony is that one day, near the end of our trip, we went to the ocean. When we were looking out toward the ocean, it looked like heaven. When we turned around and saw all the destruction on land, it was like we were in hell."

But that didn't stop Lane and seven members of a Buckley church group from rolling up their sleeves and helping out for a week in early March. In fact, Lane says the experience was life-changing.

"I witnessed a miracle from God when I saw a little 10-year-old girl survive after being told earlier in the night that her chances of living were 10 percent," he said. "We were told she had cerebral malaria."

In fact, he said that particular night was one he'd never forget. In addition to helping doctors and nurses keep tabs on the ailing girl, Lane was called away to deliver a baby.

"As an EMT, I had always wanted to experience a birth, but not quite the way this happened," he said. "The mother delivered standing up, so I caught it coming out. There were a few other people there to help, but the baby and the mother were fine. In fact, within 15 minutes after the birth, the mother, baby and her friend left to go home."

In the meantime, the 10-year-old girl began to show improvement during the night. By the light of morning, doctors said she would survive.

"It was quite an emotional night," said Lane. "I got back to the little Wesleyan church we were staying at nearby and began to cry like a baby. It's funny, the first three days we were there, we were so busy



Donations are still needed in Haiti. Here are a few reliable sites for giving:

[ClintonBushHaitiFund.org](http://ClintonBushHaitiFund.org)  
[RedCross.org](http://RedCross.org)  
[Care.org](http://Care.org)

Lane Wildfong visiting with Haitian children.

and everything was so new that we just took everything in. But after that, when small miracles happened, we cried quite a bit—mostly tears of joy."

What struck Lane as much as the destruction in Haiti was the upbeat attitude of the Haitian people.

"They are beautiful people in every sense of the word," he said. "They would always smile and greet you. And physically, they are mostly slender and dress up on an everyday basis as much as they can. That surprised me."

Lane and his church group spent the first part of the week helping to build a 16 x 24-foot clinic to treat people. Before the clinic was built, patients were seen under tarps to shield them from the harsh temperatures.

"It was hot all the time," Lane said. "It was in the 90s during the day and in the 80s at night."

The second half of his week was spent helping the Haitian people in any way he could. Lane and his group ate some of their own food they brought over, but were also treated to some "fantastic" meals by the Haitian relief group.

"With my electrical background at Cherryland, I did the wiring for the clinic," he said. "But they didn't have electricity yet. I just got it ready to be hooked

up when electricity becomes available."

For Lane and his group, the experience was both spiritually rewarding and eye-opening.

"In just the week we were there, you could see how hard the Haitian people were trying to keep going, trying to forge ahead," he said. "Markets were going back up and people appreciated the little things that we brought over with us, like flashlights, toys and candy."

"I think what we did—and what the relief effort is doing—is offering a glimmer of hope to these people again. And they are responding with kindness and smiles. That's what kept us going."

But it also made Lane yearn to return to his family.

"It made me realize how blessed we are here and how we take the great lives we have for granted," he said. "When I got home, I hugged my wife and kids so hard. My wife and I cried together for a half hour when I got home."

"It made me feel good to know that we helped in a small way," he said. "And little by little, their conditions are improving. That's what keeps them going. That's what gives them hope."

*Nick Edson is communications coordinator for Cherryland Electric Cooperative.*

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