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MICHIGAN Country Lines



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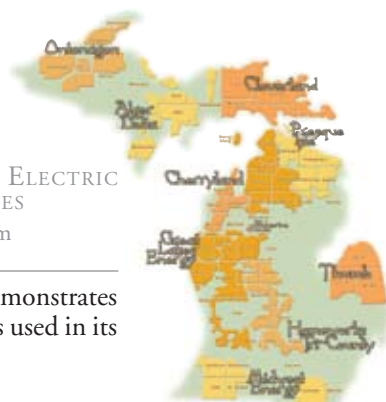
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MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC
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COVER

At Cross Village Rug Works, weaving apprentice Jamie Kornmeier demonstrates weaving that can incorporate washed wool (dyed or natural), which is used in its natural state—right off the sheep's back—and is a pleasure to touch.

Photo: Andree Serra – Elk Rapids – drephotography.com



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This Time It's Personal

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Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

I have always believed in the “commitment to community” philosophy that is a founding principle for electric co-ops.

Over the years, I have been an EMT, volunteer fireman, basketball referee, baseball coach, chamber board member and happily given personal time and money to many, many other worthy causes. A cooperative and the communities it serves simply must be intertwined, otherwise the cooperative is simply a utility. I have never wanted to work for a utility, and am proud to say that by my definition, I have not.

There are many great community causes and organizations in the service territory served by Cherryland Electric Cooperative. As a cooperative and through individual employees beyond just me, Cherryland has a great record for casting a wide net of support across our region.

Today, however, I am going to write about just one organization that I believe in very strongly. This organization is Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan. If you go to the website (big-supnorth.com), you see that their mission is: “Helping children in need to reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one mentoring relationships with volunteers.”

After having served on the board for almost five years and in my second year as a Big Brother at Blair Elementary, I like to supplement this mission statement with a quote from Maria Robinson: “Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but

these kids with mentors who meet with them at school or out in the community.

The interaction is as simple as being there to play a game of soccer, help with homework, answer a random question, or sit quietly over lunch.

These kids need adults they can count on who are willing to be a consistent, positive influence to fill the void left by whatever gender is missing from their daily life at home. I could fill the rest of the page with statistics

that show the positive outcomes achieved by kids that are matched with mentors by BBBS. The endings truly do change.

For me, it's not about the statistics—it is simply reality, because I am one of those kids. I lost my father when I was 18 months old. I know what it takes to change the ending without regular help because there was no organization like BBBS where I grew up.

Because I believe in BBBS, I have made my story public in an attempt to help raise money for the organization. With help from Wolverine Power Cooperative and Cherryland Electric, I have created a website at marathon4kids.com that contains my thoughts on how adults can help kids who have lost a parent. I also have a lifetime goal of running a marathon in every state. The website contains a detailed account of my last 10 marathons. You will also find some stories about my growing up in South Dakota, my favorite co-op columns, and some poems I have written over the years.

When you click your mouse on a story,



anyone can start today and make a new ending.”

Making new endings is what Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is all about. There are kids who, for reasons beyond their control, are left to grow up in single parent homes. Big Brothers Big Sisters matches

it will take you to a log-in section where you will be required to pay \$26.20 (26.2 miles in every marathon!). Your donation will go directly into the bank account of BBBS in Traverse City, which serves every county in your co-op's service territory.

This small donation will give you access

E-I-E-I-EO

Energy Optimization Update

You may recall details of the state's new Energy Optimization program from earlier articles here in *Country Lines*. The utility world refers to the program simply as "EO." This program, beginning in 2009, mandated that utilities shall offer incentives for energy improvements. To fund these incentives, consumers pay a monthly EO

The state-mandated program to reduce energy use includes residential and commercial cost-saving incentives.

fee to the utility (line item "ST OF MICH PA295 MANDATE" on Cherryland bills). In short, Cherryland must provide its members with incentives to use less of its product, and you pay the tab.

If you enjoy playing board games, you would truly enjoy administering an EO program. Like any popular board game there is a rule book which, in the case of EO, covers defined annual savings targets, generic savings values assigned to each energy efficiency improvement, and associated dollar incentives. For example, one standard compact fluorescent lightbulb (CFL) counts for 44.1 kilowatt hours (kWh).

So far so good—for every CFL Cherryland can get into the homes of our members we can count 44.1 kWh towards our annual goal. But when you consider that Cherryland's 2009 EO goal was 1,025,000 kWh and our 2010 goal is 1,750,000 kWh, that's a lot of CFL bulbs! Fortunately, just about any fixture or product that saves energy can potentially

qualify for the program. Further, those hefty kWh targets are spread over both our residential and commercial electric loads.

First Year Review

So how did we do for our first EO year? Looking back, we feel pretty good. In total, we exceeded our goal of 1,025,000 kilowatt hours. In addition to pushing over 7,000 CFLs into the homes of our members, we coordinated the removal of over 140 old energy inefficient refrigerators from

the electrical grid.

Cherryland also provided numerous free member classes on energy efficiency. Working with the Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency, we initiated a low-income residential program. By the end of this year, we expect to have met both the 2009 and 2010 goals.

One particularly successful EO program was a two-day CFL giveaway held in Copenish and just outside of Kaleva. Members received a special invitation by mail to visit locally with Cherryland representatives to learn about efficient lighting, grab a snack, and take home some free CFLs. We are planning similar events for 2010.

Commercial Incentives

On the commercial side, we helped Centre ICE install new, high-bay fluorescent lights over both skating rinks. Leelanau Fruit added insulation over their huge deep-freeze unit. A few schools upgraded gym lighting and

return, and the best I could come up with are my stories. You don't have to be a runner. You are simply invited to follow along and help some kids at the same time. If you ever wondered what it takes to run a marathon, check out [marathon4kids](#) on Facebook or follow [marathon4kids](#) on Twitter and leave the running to me.

I am generally a private person. Growing up with almost nothing made me very reluctant to ask anybody for any-



Even small energy saving steps can add up to savings for Cherryland members

converted their exit signage to LED fixtures. Lead Screws International replaced over 100 inefficient metal halide lights with new energy efficient fluorescents. And the Pantry Shelf, located in Grawn next to Cherryland Electric, replaced old T12 fluorescents with energy efficient T8 fluorescents.

Residential Campaign

To kick off our 2010 residential EO campaign, we will be including coupons and rebate information in next month's copy of *Country Lines*. Be sure to check it out! Since you are paying into the program, you might as well take advantage of some energy-saving opportunities.

Kevin Cragg is member services manager at Cherryland Electric Cooperative.



It's Personal *continued*

to the website for 12 months. The donation request is small because I know how tough the economy is and I prefer many small donors over just a few large ones. This should be a community effort at a level that almost everyone in the community can afford.

Rather than simply asking for money, I wanted to give each donor something in

thing. As a kid, if I could not do it, obtain it or achieve it on my own, I convinced myself I didn't need whatever "it" was at the time. As an adult, I know I can't sustain the Big Brothers Big Sisters program by myself.

I need your help and your annual donation. Sit down, click a mouse, follow along, read a story, and help a kid change an ending. It will be appreciated because, for me, this time it's personal.



Photo - NRECA International

Myc Manon (left) and Bud Stanley of NRECA International inspect a downed power line during their damage assessment in Port au-Prince.

Electric Co-ops Send International Program Team to Haiti

NRECA International, an arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, in coordination with USAID and other international and local partners, sent a four-person rapid-response team to Haiti to assess the damage of the electric power sector following that country's catastrophic earthquake.

The NRECA International Foundation has been present in Haiti since 1998. The Foundation coordinated donations of money, material and volunteer labor from the U.S. cooperative community to help Haitians in Pignon, a small town in the north-central region, establish the Cooperative Electrique de Pignon (COPELEP), the first electric co-op in Haiti.

The NRECA Foundation is contributing \$50,000 to the initial Haiti earthquake relief effort, and is spearheading a fundraising effort for additional contributions from the greater NRECA membership.

"Providing safe, reliable power will be vital to the massive assistance effort now underway in Haiti," said Glenn English, CEO of NRECA. "NRECA's International Foundation and our member cooperatives stand ready to help with money, materials and manpower."

The response team appraised the short-term measures needed to repair critical segments of the electric power system in Port-au-Prince, and identified the emergency power requirements for hospitals, health centers, refugee camps, and other public facilities both in Port-au-Prince and border towns along the Haitian-Dominican frontier.

The team also coordinated the installation of emergency generators at the principal hospital in Port-au-Prince.

All donations made through the International Foundation's website (nrecfoundation.coop) will be restricted for the Foundation's Haiti Relief Efforts.

Greg White Named to MPSC

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has appointed Greg White to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC). White, of Grand Rapids, most recently served as the MPSC legislative liaison and has been with the agency for 22 years. He is a graduate of Michigan State University and Grand Valley State University, where he earned a master's degree in public administration.

White was previously associate director of the Institute of Public Utility Regulatory Research and Education at MSU, and chaired the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners subcommittee on nuclear issues and waste disposal.

An independent, White's term expires July 2, 2015. He replaces Steven Transeth.



TEEN FORUM

If you could change one thing about your school, what would it be, and why?



This is my first year at Superior Central and I'm still learning a lot of new things every day about the school. But one thing that I would certainly change is the number of higher level science classes. Our school is quite small (40 kids in our senior class) and most of the higher level classes we have to take online, which is often difficult without a teacher handy. I'm planning on becoming a chiropractor someday and could use some higher level science classes for my senior year.

Jared Ollis, Wetmore



If I could change one thing about my school, I would change the racial diversity because nearly all of the students and staff are white. We have very few people of any other race. We used to have a couple of Hispanic families, a couple of African American families, and an Indian family, but nearly all of these families have relocated to other schools. If we had a variety of races in school, we could learn about other cultures. Each race

has their own set of cultures, so students of each different race could teach everyone else about their culture. More racial diversity would help all of us students in the long-run!

In college and beyond, we will meet and work with a wide variety of races. It is going to be hard for us to adjust to all the other races around us because all we have ever known is one race.

Sabrina Russell, Mendon



Our technology. It seems like every day there is an announcement over the intercom saying that the

server is down. It puts a damper on my school day when that silly announcement comes on. I think to myself, "What am I supposed to do on my free hour?" The technology at our school seldom works, and when it does everyone is either on a computer or near one. I love how I can get a great education in my small town and know everyone in my school. If the technology at our school was always in top-notch condition then my school would be amazing.

Elena Smith, Howard City

Calling electric co-op sophomores and juniors! You could participate in this forum, attend a three-day camp, or even win a free trip to Washington, D.C., and see our government in action. Learn more about co-op sponsored youth programs at countrylines.com, and click on "Youth."



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Wild Blueberry Hero

As I read the article about the “Wild Blueberry Hero” in the Jan/Feb. issue of *Country Lines*, everything that Charles Day said about his Hero sounded real familiar to me. As I read further and saw the name of his hero, George Koskimaki, I about fell over. Mr. K. (as we use to call him) was my biology teacher at Roseville High School in Roseville. I graduated in 1951. He was a wonderful teacher, and I never heard of any student that felt any different. I attended a school reunion about four years ago and had the privilege of meeting and talking to him there. You were a Hero in many eyes, Mr. K. Keep picking those blueberries, and God Bless.

A former student,

Joan (Gildenpfennig) Jaworski,
Port Austin

Heater Efficiencies

In the article on space heaters, author Sloboda points out that all electric heaters are 100 percent energy efficient. Yet earlier in the article he writes that oil or water-filled heaters are more efficient. I’m confused. Can someone clarify this, please?

Tom McDonald

A good question. All electric heaters operate at 100 percent efficiency, in that the heating elements produce one unit of heat for every unit of electricity. (This does not mean they cost less to operate than other heaters, such as gas, wood or propane, because the fuel for those heaters may cost less than electricity when it comes to the amount of heat they can produce.) What the writer means—and what

we should have edited—is that the oil- or water-filled heaters store some of the heat and release it over a longer period of time, making the area being heated more comfortable by avoiding the on-and-off bursts of heat created by straight resistance heaters—the ones with glowing coils. The heavily-marketed infrared heaters fall into this category. Again, they don’t heat your house for less; they’ll heat a room if you turn the heat way down in the rest of your house. —ed.

LED Christmas Lights

We have lots of LED Christmas lights. Every year we have a string or two (two this year) quit working. So, our experience is that they last a year or two. So, let’s see: cost more, last shorter, cost less to run. hmmm, not too sure they’re worth the money or hassle.

Bill Ross, Shelby

Will Miss Hough

I received my January copy of *MCL* all the way down here in southern Texas and my heart sank when I read “Farewell to Paradise.” How Mr. Hough touched my love for Michigan, and I will indeed miss his column. The stories I have about paradise, chipmunks, and the great outdoors don’t compare to his column, which I look for every time I get my new issue. Thank you, for bringing Michigan to me, Mr. Hough—1,500 miles away—when I need it the most!

Christa Chisholm, Sugar Land, TX

Investing Math

I was shocked to read the article by Linda Wacyk (“It’s January. Got Bills?”) that claimed a \$100 investment in a basic savings account would grow to \$12,000 in 20 years and that a 6 percent bond or stock would grow that same \$100 to \$42,000+. Her math is way off—6 percent annual growth on an initial principal of \$100 would only grow to just over

\$320 after 20 years. The “basic savings account” would likely be far, far less.

Even if the person continued to add \$100 to the investment every year for the 20 years, the 6 percent annual growth wouldn’t even get to \$4,000.

Please be more responsible with your math.

Randall Keicher


Some numbers caught my eye ... a \$100 investment in a savings account can become \$12,000 in 20 years? Surely you jest. Please inform me of such a savings account so that I can invest in it, too. By my calculations, a \$100 deposit at a generous 3 percent interest rate and a monthly compounding over 20 years becomes almost \$200. Same with the stock investment, unless, of course,

you’re Hillary and put it into cattle futures. You might want to run your own number check on this one.

Dr. Willard Lyman, via email

The author responds: “Kudos to some calculating readers. The investment specialist quoted admitted the math in his example was a mistake. To reach the promised \$42,000, a family would have to add about \$1,000/year to the initial investment. The example was intended as a lesson on the power of investment with compounding interest. Instead it illustrates how essential it is to teach kids financial literacy skills. With a strong foundation—and the help of online financial tools like those offered at mijumpstartcoalition.org our kids won’t be misled by others....well-meaning or not!”


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VIEW FROM THE TOP
A collection of Jim Hough's columns from the past 10 years in *Michigan Country Lines*.

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Name on Card _____

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Make checks payable and mail to: **MECA**
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Cherryland Offers Scholarships

Adults: Cherryland Electric Cooperative is offering a \$500 Adult Education Scholarship to one of its members.

The scholarship goes toward covering the cost of a course or courses taken in a calendar year.

This scholarship will be awarded based on need, grades and community service, and is a one-time award.

Members may request an application by emailing Nick Edson with their name and address to nicke@cecelec.com, calling him at 486-9222, or writing him at Cherryland, 5930 U.S.-31 South, Grawn, MI 49637. Applications are due by *Friday, April 2, 2010*.

Students: High school seniors whose parents or guardians currently receive monthly electric service from Cherryland and live in our service area may apply for a \$2,400 college scholarship (\$600 for each of four years).

Selection is based on GPA, extracurricular activities, community involvement and/or after school employment. A minimum required GPA is 2.75 on a four-point system. To continue receiving the scholarship, a student must maintain a minimum college course load of 12 credits per term or semester and receive a 2.5 GPA.

Applications are due by *Friday, April 2, 2010*. Students may apply in three ways:

1. Complete the form below; or,
2. Contact your high school guidance counselor; or,
3. Contact Nick Edson, communications coordinator at Cherryland Electric, as noted in the adult scholarship section above.

2010 Student Scholarship Application Request

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____

Cherryland Account # _____

Mail to: CEC Student Scholarship
5930 U.S.-31 South
P.O. Box 298
Grawn, MI 49637



The opportunity of a lifetime...

...to make new friends and win a free trip to Washington, D.C.!



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By attending Co-op Teen Days in April—a three-day event sponsored by your electric co-op—with students from across the state, you'll learn about electrical safety, energy efficiency, and some valuable career information. You may then be chosen to represent your co-op at the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., in June, and along with 1,200 students from across the U.S., you'll go on tours, see the sites, and even visit

U.S. legislators and their staff members on Capitol Hill.

If you're a 10th or 11th grade high school student who will be 16 or 17 by June 2010, and your family receives their electric service from Cherryland Electric, you are eligible to apply. For an application or more information, call or write: Amanda Olds, P.O. Box 298, Grawn, MI 49637; 231-486-9254; or email aolds@cecelec.com.

Learn more about Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days and Youth Tour at countrylines.com, and click on "Youth." Also visit youthtour.coop to see more videos and photos.



'Facts' Take on a Life of Their Own

Recently I received a forwarded email, the kind many of us get every day, from a friend who read a story, purported to be true, about a weather report supposedly printed in the *Marquette Mining Journal* a few years ago. The weather report went as follows:

"Up here in the Northern part of Michigan we just recovered from a Historic event --- may I even say a "Weather Event" of "Biblical Proportions" --- with a historic blizzard of up to 44" inches of snow and winds to 90 MPH that broke trees in half, knocked down utility poles, stranded hundreds of motorists in lethal snow banks, closed ALL roads, isolated scores of communities and cut power to 10's of thousands. And guess what; no one howled for the government. FEMA was not called on to send assistance. Our Mayor's did not blame the President or anyone else. Our Governor did not blame anyone either. CNN, ABC, CBS, FOX, or NBC did not visit - or even report on this category 5 snow storm.

No one looted. Nobody - I mean Nobody demanded the government do something. Nope, we just melted the snow for water. Sent out caravans of SUV's to pluck people out of snow-engulfed cars. The truck drivers pulled people out of snow banks and didn't ask for a penny."

The email story included amazing photos of snow drifts so high they towered over road crews working to clear the way. It turns out that although some of the "facts" in the email were true, the story was not. It seems various versions of the story have been circulating on the internet for several years. Like many of the forwarded emails we get, the mixing of some "facts" and a compelling story makes for good reading, takes on a life of its own, and is often changed to meet the readers' or sender's needs. I am sure if I lived in North Dakota the "weather bulletin" would have been printed in the *Bismarck Tribune*.

The "facts" are that the weather report did not come from Northern Michigan nor was it reported in the *Marquette Mining Journal*, and it does not appear that it ever was a real weather report. The "report" can be traced back to an October 2005 snowstorm that hit the Dakotas, Montana and Wyoming. A National Weather Service report said the storm had been the earliest on record to hit the area. And, a request did in fact go to FEMA seeking assistance. As for hearty citizens plucking stranded motorists from their cars, I am sure that did happen, although the bulk of the digging fell to police, emergency workers and the National Guard, which were mobilized to help, as is often the case following serious weather events. As for the pictures, it turns out they were from the opening of the Trans Labrador Highway in Northeastern Canada and were going around the internet in 2004.

What this story does show me is that often you have to take most every "story" with a grain of salt and work to separate the "facts" from the "truth." For example, there was recently a report on the status of net metering (an incentive where owners of small renewable energy systems get retail credit for at least part of the electricity they generate) in Michigan. The report cited several conclusions that caused me to dig in a little deeper, and here's what I found:

Claim: Solar PV (photovoltaic energy) is approaching price parity, in other words, the cost of generating electricity by solar devices is becoming competitive with other sources of electricity.

Fact: Actual data (teammidwest.com/documents/EconomicAnalysisJan-Oct.pdf) from Midwest Energy's renewable energy park in Cassopolis shows that the cost of generation from their 4-kilowatt solar installation for the period Janu-



Michael Peters is president and CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His email address is mpeters@countrylines.com.

ary through October 2009 was \$.88 per kilowatt hour (kWh) generated. Larger solar installations (for example, a 500-kilowatt flat roof mounted system, not including back-up) are closer to \$.20 per kWh in sunny climates. However, in cloudy climates the same system would have a generation cost of about \$.43 per kWh, according to industry sources (solarbuzz.com/SolarPrices).

Electricity from conventional sources is about 5 to 7 cents per kWh.

Claim: "The number of net metering customers in Michigan has doubled, which demonstrates the high interest electric customers have in generating renewable electricity at home and selling back excess power to their electric utility.

Fact: Yes, the number of net metering customers has doubled each year. In real numbers, the state had fewer than 50 net metering projects statewide in 2007 and we are now up to about 250. Considering there are approximately 4.5 million electric customers statewide, I might question the statement that this demonstrates a "high interest" among electric customers in producing electricity at their homes and businesses with renewable energy.

As with the story of the winter weather report, you sometimes have to look past the interesting parts and dig into the facts. Although the "facts" may be true, the conclusions drawn from those facts may not be the whole story.

Killing

Energy Vampires



Energy parasites are costing you hundreds of dollars a year.

Brian Sloboda

Typical Power Consumption of Household Items in Watts

Device	On	Standby Mode	Off
40-inch LCD TV	200	-	1-3
42-inch Plasma TV	240-320	-	1-30
DVD player	13	10	2.3
Stereo	123	-	23.4
Xbox 360	173	168	2.2
Nintendo Wii	17	10	1
Power tool battery charger	33.7	4.2	-
Coffee maker	1,100	70	0.8

Vampires have frightened people for generations. The fangs, the wings, the immortality: it's scary stuff. While that's all legend—a subject for movies and Halloween costumes—a different breed of vampire could be lurking in your home right now. These vampires don't drink blood; they consume electricity.

An "energy vampire," also called a phantom or parasitic load, is any device that consumes electricity when it's turned "off." These electronic devices provide the modern-day conveniences we love, but they also waste energy and cost us money.

Vampire loads can be found in almost every room, but a favorite spot is the entertainment center. When the TV is turned off, it isn't really off. It's sitting there, waiting patiently for someone to press the "on" button on the remote—and waiting uses energy. TVs also use energy to remember channel line-ups, language preferences, and the time. VCRs,

DVD players, DVRs, and cable or satellite boxes also use energy when they're off.

The problem is significant. According to a study by the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the average home loses 8 percent of its

Common energy vampires include:

- TVs
- Stereos
- VCRs, DVD players, and DVRs
- Cable/satellite boxes
- Computers
- Battery chargers

monthly energy consumption to these energy vampires. A full 75 percent of the power used to run home electronics is consumed when those appliances are turned off, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

According to the Arlington, VA-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the average electric co-op residential member consumes roughly 13,900 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year. If 8 percent of this power is consumed when electronics are turned off, the average home wastes 1,112 kilowatt hours annually. Assuming a cost of \$0.10 per kWh, the average household spends \$111 per year to pay for these vampire loads.

The good news is that a sharp stake isn't necessary to kill these vampires. To eliminate the power consumption of an energy vampire,



simply unplug the device or plug it into a power strip and use the power strip's switch to kill the electricity to everything plugged into it. Power strips work like an extension of the wall outlet, and they cut all power to plugs completely when they are switched off.

Of course, there's always a catch. Some devices use standby power to make life more convenient. If you unplug your TV or cable/satellite receiver box, what happens? When plugged back in, the TV or set top box usually will have to run its initial setup program. Depending on the particular device, it could take up to 20 minutes for channels to be recognized or for the user to reset preferences, which isn't something most are willing to do every day.

But there are numerous devices in the home that can be unplugged easily and safely, or plugged into a power strip without causing any inconvenience. Computer equipment, such as printers, scanners, desktop computers and broadband modems, can be "unplugged" without harm. Cell phone, tool and other battery chargers should also be unplugged when not in use. Even though the charger is not charging anything, it is still drawing power.

A new device called the "smart" strip is beginning to find its way onto store shelves. Smart power strips allow you to plug devices into a specially marked section of the strip so they will still have power when turned off. Other devices that can be turned off safely are plugged into the rest of the strip. This allows you to turn off parts of a home entertainment system, such as the stereo, DVD player, or home theater audio system, without losing the ability to record programs to a DVR or having to reprogram the TV every time you want to watch a show.

For devices that cannot be turned off, consumers should look for those with that are Energy Star® certified or ask the salesperson about the device's standby power consumption. There can be big differences in power consumption between manufacturers, and sometimes even between models from the same manufacturer.

As in the movies, it is impossible to kill off all of the energy vampires in your home—but every one that's vanquished will mean that much less of a bite out of your wallet.

Brian Sloboda is a program manger specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, which evaluates and applies technologies that help electric cooperatives control costs, increase productivity, and enhance service to their consumers.

Tracking the Electricity You Use

Eat potato chips straight out of the bag and they'll be gone in no time. Pour them into a bowl first and they disappear a little slower.

The same goes for electricity. Learning to track how much electricity your home consumes remains a good way to start managing electric use billed by your electric co-op in kilowatt-hours (kWh).

Devices are appearing in stores that provide a constant, digital reading of how much electricity your home or even individual appliances are using. One type, like the Kill A Watt™ meter, fits between an electrical outlet and an appliance to give you an instant reading of how much electricity the appliance draws.

Another type connects to your electricity meter and wirelessly relays use information to a small screen inside. Called an "in-home display," the device looks like a wireless weather monitor and can help make consumers more aware of their daily energy use.

Research conducted by the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, shows that most consumers who have an in-home display use less energy than those without one. And even after homeowners stop paying attention to the devices, most still use 1 to 3 percent less energy than before.

"The question of whether in-home displays catch on and become permanent fixtures in the American home is still open," explains Brian Sloboda, program manager with CRN. "However, for anyone wanting to take a proactive

approach to understanding electric consumption, the in-home display may be worth exploring. You could use the knowledge that an in-house display provides to change the way you use electricity in your home and save some money."

There's also the old-fashioned way of tracking electricity use: reading your meter. As your home draws current from power lines, your electricity meter keeps a steady record of every watt used.

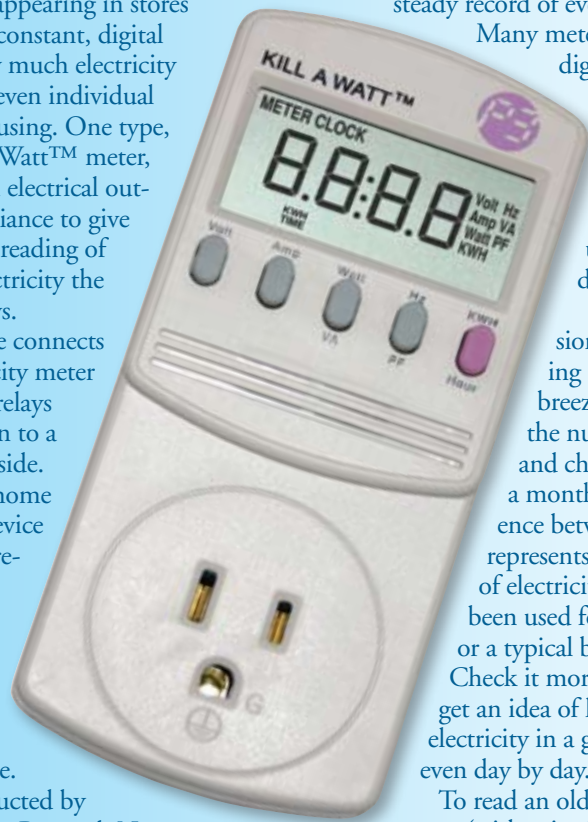
Many meters today are digital, replacing the older—though still reliable—design that uses spinning disks and dials.

Digital versions make tracking energy use a breeze: jot down the number you see, and check it again in a month. The difference between the two represents the amount of electricity that has been used for that month, or a typical billing period. Check it more frequently to get an idea of how you use electricity in a given week, or even day by day.

To read an older model meter (with spinning dials), write down the numbers as shown on the small dials from left to right. Some of the dials spin clockwise, some counter-clockwise, but record each number closest to the dial hand. Once you have the full reading it can be compared to later readings, as described above.

If you have any questions about reading your meter or learning more about how much electricity your home uses, please contact your electric co-op.

Scott Gates writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Coming Clean on Washers

Wash clothes efficiently without getting caught in the spin cycle.

Washing machines perform a fairly simple function: getting dirty clothes clean. Yet prospective buyers can be overwhelmed with all of the different models and “bells and whistles” available—top-loading, front-loading, high-efficiency (HE), water-saver, steaming, and wrinkle removing, to name only a few.

Energy-efficient washing machines, easily identified by the Energy Star® label, are a priority for any cost-conscious consumer's list. Approximately 93 percent of all American households have a clothes washer, adding up to 102 million clothes washers across America. About 9 million washing machines are sold each year, and efficient models account for slightly more than one-third of sales.

Energy Star-rated washing machines cost slightly more than their less-efficient counterparts, anywhere from \$400-1,500, depending on other features selected. To get a handle on how much electricity a particular unit will draw, pay close attention to the yellow energy guide before

making a purchase.

An energy-efficient washing machine can save the typical homeowner around \$50 a year, or \$540-\$600 over the life of the appliance. Efficient machines also save more than 5,000 gallons of water annually. The energy and water efficiencies of clothes washers are measured according to their modified energy factor (MEF) and water factor (WF). These criteria generally limit Energy Star qualification to front-loading and advanced top-loading models.

Front-loading clothes washers use a horizontal or tumble-axis basket to lift and drop clothing into the water, instead of rubbing clothes around a central agitator in a full tub. These units use less energy than conventional clothes washers by reducing the amount of hot water

needed to clean clothes. Front-loading models also squeeze more water out of clothes by using spin speeds that are two to three times faster than conventional washers, reducing both drying time and energy use.

Energy Star-qualified top-loading models typically use spray valves to rinse clothes, rather than a new tub of water. This method not only reduces the energy required for water heating, but typically saves an average of 15 gallons of water per wash, compared with conventional clothes washers.

Qualified top-loading models also boast sensors to monitor and adjust incoming water temperature. This keeps water hot enough to dissolve the detergent and provide high-performance cleaning, but cool enough to save energy and minimize hot water damage to fabrics. One limitation of efficient top-loading washers is that many models do not offer a high-temperature standard wash option.

By looking for the Energy Star logo and shopping at a store with knowledgeable staff, you should be able to leave with a new washing machine that will, over time, pay for itself.

Source: NRECA's Cooperative Research Network



What's an Energy Factor?

An Energy Factor (EF), a mandatory evaluation done on all water heaters regardless of fuel source (natural gas, electricity, oil, etc.), indicates a water heater's overall energy efficiency based on the amount of hot water produced per unit of fuel consumed daily. This includes:

- **Recovery efficiency:** How efficiently heat from the energy source is transferred to the water.
- **Standby losses:** The percentage of heat loss per hour from stored water compared to heat content of the water.
- **Cycling losses:** The loss of heat as water circulates through a tank and/or inlet and outlet pipes.

The higher the EF, the more efficient the water heater. But keep in mind higher EF values don't always mean lower annual operating costs, especially when comparing fuel sources.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy



Star-crossed

Is the Energy Star rating a reliable guide to energy-efficient products? Yes—mostly, but some products aren't even rated. **Megan McKoy**

Lots of Michiganders are cutting down on their energy use: improving a home's insulation, turning lights off, or exchanging traditional lightbulbs for more efficient lighting options. So when consumers shop for new appliances it's common to focus on finding a product with an Energy Star® rating.

But how do appliances get this rating, and why don't all appliances have them? The answers may surprise you.

Computers and monitors were the first products to receive an efficiency rating from Energy Star, a program launched in 1992 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy. Since then, more than 60 product categories have been added, from dishwashers to windows and DVD players. According to the program, Energy Star-rated products deliver the same or better performance as comparable models while using less energy and saving money.

"We're recognizing the top performers when it comes to energy efficiency," explains Katharine Kaplan, Energy Star program manager. She notes the initiative works closely with folks in a wide variety of areas, including industry experts, governments, nonprofit organizations and utilities. "We agree on a fair way to test products. Manufacturers test products using that procedure, submit the data to us, and we say, 'These are the top performers. This is how much energy you can use to be considered a leader by Energy Star.' Generally, that means you're in the top 25 percent."

For example, qualified refrigerators must be at least 15 percent more efficient than the minimum federal standard. Energy Star-rated TVs consume 3 watts or less when switched off, compared to a standard TV, which consumes almost 6 watts on average. By pushing for the manufacture of more efficient products, Energy Star estimates the rating system saved businesses, organizations, and consumers \$19 billion in 2008 alone.

Consumers are taking advantage of the program. A survey by the Consortium for Energy Efficiency—a group including members like the quasi-governmental Tennessee Valley Authority and Bonneville Power Administration, a federal power marketing

administration in the Northwest—discovered 76 percent of American households recognize the Energy Star brand. Of these consumers, 73 percent purchased an Energy Star-labeled product within the last year.

But not all products are rated by Energy Star. The program gauges the average energy efficiency of different appliance technologies and evaluates whether there's potential for increased efficiency—generally at least 25 percent higher than minimum standards. According to Energy Star, the most efficient electric resistance water heaters on the market have an Energy Factor of 0.95, about 5 percent more efficient than the minimum federal standard. Since there's little room for improvement, Energy Star does not have a category for the product.

"The technology doesn't qualify for the Energy Star program—not because it's not efficient, but because it's already as efficient as possible," says Steve Koep, a regional manager for RHEEM/Marathon Water Heaters. "When it comes to purchasing an electric water heater, consumers should consider durability and energy factor [EF], a mandatory evaluation done on all water heaters regardless of fuel source. EF takes into account fuel use, standby energy loss, and insulation under simulated actual conditions."

Last October *The New York Times* revealed some manufacturers of household appliances were testing products for Energy Star-certification internally instead of using independent laboratories. In response, Energy Star ramped up oversight of product ratings and by the end of the year had revoked the Energy Star label for some refrigerators while raising the bar for the efficiency expected from TVs.

Energy Star remains a driving force not just in the United States, but in other countries, such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the European Union. Federal energy efficiency tax credits for appliances and home heating and air systems typically require qualifying products to be Energy Star-rated.

If you're in the market for an appliance and have questions about which product might be best for you, feel free to contact your electric cooperative. To learn more about the Energy Star program, visit energystar.gov.



An [Energy] Star is Born

Energy Star, a voluntary, international standard for rating energy-efficient consumer products, was created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 for home computers and monitors. Since then, the program has expanded to cover more than 60 categories and been adopted by Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the European Union. Devices carrying the Energy Star logo, such as computers and electronics, kitchen and household appliances, residential lighting, and homes, deliver the same or better performance and use 20 percent to 30 percent less energy on average than comparable models.

Since 1992, Americans have purchased more than 2 billion Energy Star-qualified products; the number of qualified homes tops 1 million. Here are some highlights:

- 2005-2010** Battery chargers, power adapters, commercial dishwashers, and ice machines included.
- 2002** Hotels rated and more than 100,000 new homes earn rating.
- 2001** Supermarkets, acute care hospitals, dehumidifiers, ventilation and ceiling fans, small commercial heating and cooling equipment, and commercial freezers, refrigerators, and washing machines rated.
- 2000** Water coolers and traffic signals rated; label extended to schools.
- 1999** Audio/DVD equipment, roof products, and compact fluorescent lightbulbs rated. Label extended to office buildings.
- 1998** TVs, VCRs, windows covered.
- 1997** Residential light fixtures, scanners, and washing machines rated.
- 1996** Exit signs, insulation, boilers, dishwashers, refrigerators, and room air conditioners rolled into the program.
- 1993-1995** Energy Star for homes launched. Copiers, fax machines, printers, heating and cooling products rated.
- 1992** Program begins with computers and monitors.

Source: Energy Star

HOOOOKOO



Producing locally-crafted works of art gives an economic boost to this isolated "Up North" area.
Linda Sirois

Vibrantly-colored wool rugs cover the walls and floors inside the Cross Village Rug Works. The rug designs are an array of familiar northwoods flora and fauna: trout, squirrels, blueberries and bears, as well as local landmarks and Native American themes.

The Rug Works, a member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, is an exciting newcomer to the tiny community of Cross Village, nestled about 20 miles north of Harbor Springs, at the end of the scenic "Tunnel of Trees" drive on M-119. It's housed in a unique log-and-stone building crafted by the builder of Legs Inn, a historic restaurant just across the street.

"It kind of takes your breath away when you first walk in the door," says Rug Works gallery manager, Ellen VanderZee. "It's amazing, really."

The shop offers an array of woolen products, including rug wool and knitting yarns, warm shawls, felted wool goods, and woven and pictorial rugs. The vividly-dyed yarns, detailed original designs, and weighty heft of these artworks demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship.

"They're really heirloom pieces," explains Cheryl Reed, one of the Rug

Photos - Andree Sierra, DiePhotography.net





Jasmine Petrie, wool dyer.

Cross Village Art Galleries

Cross Village Rug Works

Lakeshore Drive • 231-526-7849

crossvillagerugworks.com

Winter: M-T-TH-FRI-SAT, 11-4

Summer (Memorial Day): Daily, 11-7

Three Pines Studio and Gallery

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threepinesstudio.com

Summer (Memorial Day): Daily, 11-7

Cross Village Outpost

3 miles E. of Cross Village

Handcrafts, including Ottawa

quill boxes made from birchbark,

sweetgrass and porcupine quills.

Works' organizers. The pictorial rugs are created by area artisans using punch-needle tapestry with regionally harvested wool that is dyed and custom designed on-site.

Reed recites a list of yarn blends that includes the spun wool of rare sheep breeds, such as the blue-faced Leicester, Lincoln long-wool, and Cotswold (direct descendents of the flock brought over by Henry Ford to Greenfield Village in the 1920s). These heirloom sheep varieties are nurtured locally by some of the Rug Works' members in order to propagate and preserve the unique qualities of their wool. "We want the yarn we use to have a very high degree of strength and sheen," says Reed. "We want a luster, and jewel-toned colors." They mix in a medium grade, shorter-fibered wool from the sixth generation Matchett family sheep farm near Charlevoix, to also give the rugs "a resiliency; a 'spring' under your foot,"

Reed continues.

The Rug Works group is made up of committed people with a larger vision. In 2007, at Reed's kitchen table, she and MaryAnn VanLokeren became excited by the possibilities of establishing a cottage industry that would bring an economic boost to Cross Village. They incorporated as a nonprofit organization and rely partially on donations to meet their operating costs. Their goal is to become self-sufficient within the next two to three years. Reed points to the erratic employment options of this rural area after tourism quiets down each autumn. "We wanted to find something—a skill set—that would be a real craft that they could work in their homes," Reed says. To date, Rug Works has trained over 20 people in the rug-making craft.

Ties to the local community are a crucial component of "our bigger mission of education," says Reed. They've forged an

informal partnership with North Central Michigan College in Petoskey through art instructor Shanna Robinson, who developed classes in dyeing and weaving. Several Rug Works members have enrolled in Robinson's fiber courses in order to take those skills back to the workshop.

"People don't realize how much this place is affecting the people up here in the village," adds VanderZee. As an area native, she sees the ripple effect of Rug Works' activities. Besides the 25 people actively working, she points to several local farms, the people who process the wool, and the many satisfied customers among those who are benefiting. Using quality materials, new skills and integrity, these dedicated rural residents are helping themselves while producing truly regional works of art.

"When you see what an impact it [Rug Works] has on the people around you...it's inspiring, really," says VanderZee.

Top, left: Ellen VanderZee, Cross Village Rug Works' gallery director. **Bottom, L-R:** Sheep raised by Cheryl Reed, one of the Rug Works' organizers, include Polly, Grace, Aspen (part Wensleydale) and Priscilla (Leicester Longwool cross), who help provide wool for the shop. A careful combination of the wool and vivid dyes produce unique textures, weights and colors. The three-trout and dragonfly rugs are originals by the Rug Works' design team. A punch-needle tapestry rug made by Polly Hudson, gallery human resources director, depicts Holy Childhood Catholic Church in Harbor Springs before it was remodeled. Punch-needle classes and kids' workshops are offered to the public, and their designers can convert photos or other material into rug designs for custom orders. Several of the gallery's designs are also inspired by regional Native American beading patterns.

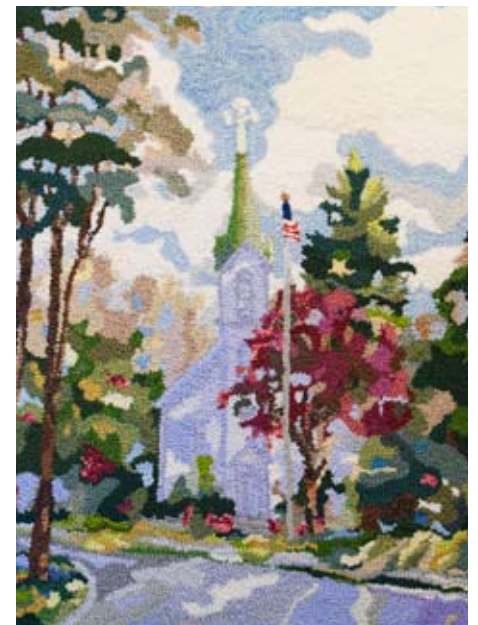


Photo - Linda Sirois

Vive la Différence

French for “Long live the difference” (between the sexes).

My youngest daughter’s claim to fame is her vocabulary. She said her own name at six months and now, at age two, she carries on actual conversations, like, with adjectives. Because my mother taught me to blush at compliments, whenever someone praises Marta’s speaking skills I say something like, “Oh, you know little girls! They love to talk.” My friend Ellen, who has two boys the same ages as my girls, grunts at this. “I don’t know,” she says. “She’s really saying quite a bit.”

Her boys, on the other hand, are dissecting mechanical trains and developing complex climbing systems to reach their cups or toys, and they understand the rules of every sporting event known to man.

Research shows that our little ones are following universal trends. As early as three hours of age, girls excel at imitation—a precursor to back-and-forth interaction. They’re more attuned to the sound of human voices than boys, and start using gestures like pointing or waving earlier. At 16 months, they produce as many as 100 words, while the average boy uses about 30.

Their brothers, on the other hand, express fear later than girls, and less often. One

study found that when their moms made a fearful face when they approached a toy, 12-month-old boys went for it anyway, while girls slowed their path.

Boys end up in the ER more for injuries, their gross motor skills take off during preschool years, and they prefer watching mechanical motion over human interaction. They’re also ahead of their female friends when it comes to figuring out the laws of motion (if they push a train through a tunnel, it will pop out the other side, for example).

While chromosomes are at work when our babies learn to play early-on, our children are sweet and naughty, smart and challenged entirely in their own ways, no matter their sex. What’s important for parents to remember is that when we model behavior—good or bad—it’s imitated.

Jodie Withey, mom to two girls and two boys in Harbor Springs, doesn’t mind letting nurture give nature a little kick in the pants. “I believe I’m a better woman because I know how to run a lawn mower, fix a leaky pipe, build a swing set, wire a light and check the oil in the car,” she said, “so I do try to teach my daughters things that may fall into the ‘male’ category. At the same time, I have my



sons help with the dishes or the preparation of food, because I know what that means to me as a wife when my husband helps me out. I believe that we pass on our views to these impressionable lives during the early years.”

It’s a concept many parents take to heart. Respect, compassion, confidence and kindness aren’t found on a DNA code—they’re taught at home. And whether a child is a tomboy or all boy, made of sugar and spice or snips and snails, it’s all about *how* they follow their passions in life that helps them become well-rounded adults.

Common Myths About Boys and Girls

■ Boys bully more than girls

Girls actually bully as much as or more than boys. While physical assaults are more common among boys, girls bully using social aggression.

■ Boys are better at math, computers and science

In the U.S., girls perform as well as boys on standardized math tests. Girls are now taking calculus in high school at the same rate as boys, and the percentage of U.S. doctorates in the mathematical sciences awarded to women has climbed to 30 percent in the 21st century, up from 5 percent in the 1950s.

■ Girls have low self-esteem

Research says that fourth grade is the peak year for girls’ self-esteem, but in fifth grade

it plummets. Ten-year-old girls report feeling image-obsessed and depressed because they don’t look like the models and actresses they see in the media. Between 20 and 40 percent of 10-year-olds diet, and 73 percent of girls between the ages of eight and 10 dress and talk like teenagers to “fit in.”

■ Boys get in trouble more now than ever

Justice Department statistics show that the population of juvenile males in prison is only half of its historic high. The number of high school senior boys using illegal drugs has fallen by almost half compared with the 1980 rate, and the percentage of high school boys drinking heavily is now the lowest on record.

■ Girls are the only sensitive sex

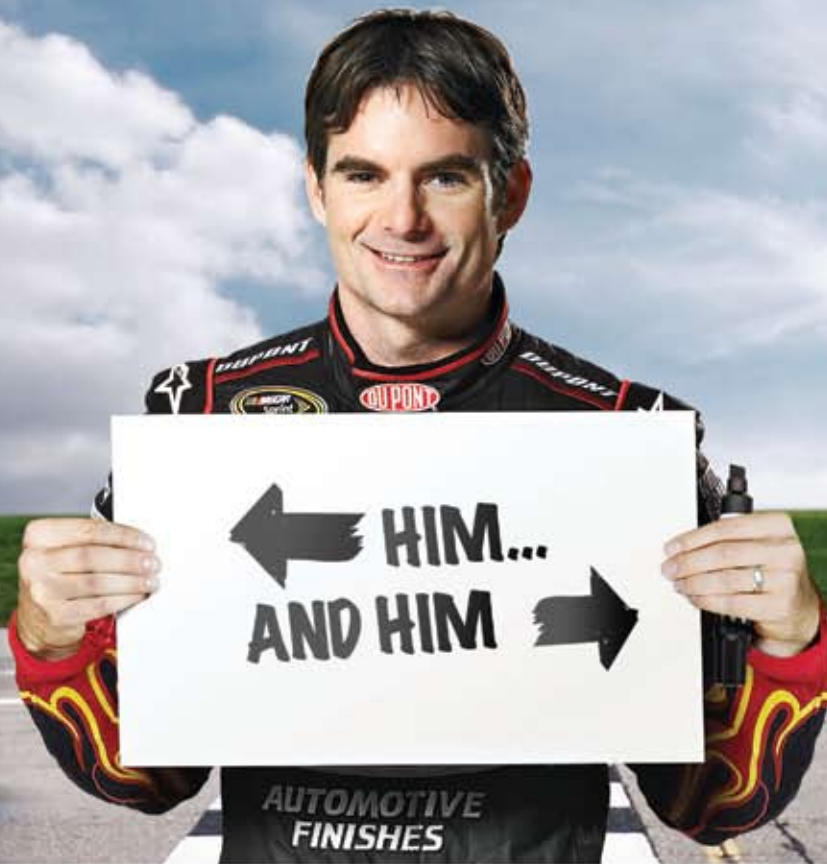
Not true, cry legions of parents. In fact, one researcher who studied babies during their first few months of life found that a higher proportion of girls could calm themselves when their

Speaking Out

While parents may notice innate inclinations in their children, kids aren’t always pleased to see them play out later in life as stereotypes.

A group of Swedish sixth-graders filed a complaint against Toys R Us over the company’s 2008 Christmas catalog, decrying the gender stereotyping in the product photos. The group’s teacher told the local paper that filing the complaint came after more than two years of the students’ work on gender roles. “When I see that only girls play with certain things, then, as a guy, I don’t want it,” said 13-year-old Hannes Psajd.

mother’s face displayed a ‘stony expression,’ but the boys could not. More boys would get easily distressed, they cried more, and were unable to calm themselves.



A WATERFURNACE GEOTHERMAL UNIT IS LIKE TAKING TWO CARS OFF THE ROAD

(Sorry, you can't pick *which* two...)

Jeff Gordon's office is a bit more extreme than most. It's hot. It's loud. You don't want to know what he spends on gas. So when Jeff gets home, he wants to be comfortable without spending a fortune on fuel. That's why when it was time to decide how to condition his house, Jeff chose a WaterFurnace geothermal heat pump. A WaterFurnace geothermal system uses the clean, renewable energy stored in your backyard to save up to 70% on heating, cooling and hot water. It's the environmental equivalent to planting an acre of trees or taking two cars off the road. It's good for the environment, it's great for your budget and thanks to a 30% federal tax credit, now is the best time to act. Visit waterfurnace.com for more information and to find a local dealer.

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FROSTING

The right frosting makes the cake! Find many more recipes at countrylines.com.

Crème De Menthe Frosting

1-lb. box powdered sugar
3 heaping t. cocoa
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
milk
1 c. whipping cream
3 t. green Crème De Menthe
shaved chocolate

Combine sugar, cocoa and cream cheese in a large mixing bowl. Beat well until creamy, adding a few drops of milk if necessary to achieve spreading consistency. Spread on cooled cake. Beat whipping cream until stiff peaks form. Gently stir in Crème De Menthe. Spread over frosted cake. Top with shaved chocolate. Chill until ready to serve.

Paula Brousseau, Bellaire

Deluxe Chocolate Frosting

2 c. chocolate chips
1 1/2 c. butter, softened
3 c. confectioners' sugar
4 t. vanilla

Melt chocolate chips in a double boiler over boiling water or in a microwave. Stir until smooth; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, cream butter and confectioners' sugar, beating well. Add melted chocolate and vanilla; beat until light and fluffy. Frosts a two-layer cake.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

Fast Frosting

8 oz. Cool Whip®
3 oz. pkg. any flavor gelatin

Gently combine thawed whipped topping and gelatin until well mixed. Spread on cooled cake. Try assorted gelatin flavors with different cake flavors. Interesting and delicious.

Karen Gamelin, Munising

Vanilla Buttercream Fluff Frosting

2 sticks unsalted butter,
softened
1 7-7.25 oz. jar marshmallow
cream
1 c. powdered sugar
1 t. vanilla

In a medium bowl, beat butter with mixer on medium speed until creamy. Beat in marshmallow cream, blending well. Beat in powdered sugar and vanilla. Increase speed and beat 3-4 minutes until fluffy. Makes 3 cups frosting. Use immediately or chill for later use.

Eileen Hughes, Dayton, OH

Lemon Meringue Frosting

3/4 c. sugar
2 large egg whites
3 T. water
1/2 t. cream of tartar
1/8 t. fine salt
1 T. finely grated lemon zest
1 t. pure vanilla extract

an electric mixer bowl above the water. Whisk the sugar, egg whites, water, cream of tartar and salt in the bowl by hand. Set the bowl above the boiling water and beat with an electric hand mixer at medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, about 7 minutes. Remove from heat; beat in lemon zest and vanilla.

Jennifer Hansen, Mason

Quick & Easy Whipped Cream Frosting

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
8 oz. Cool Whip®, thawed
1/2 c. sugar
1/2 t. clear vanilla, coconut or
almond extract

an additional 3 minutes, scraping the bottom and sides of the bowl, until mixture is smooth and no sugar residue remains. Using a spatula, gently fold in Cool Whip. Beat for 1-2 minutes on high, until mixture is smooth and creamy. Use as cake filling or frosting. Double recipe if you are filling and frosting a cake. Refrigerate any leftover for up to a week.

Karen Wormnest, Clarkston

German Chocolate Torte Frosting

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2/3 c. packed brown sugar
1 t. vanilla extract
1 t. salt
2 c. whipping cream, whipped
2 T. crushed Heath® Bar

according to package directions; cool and remove from pan. In a mixing bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar, vanilla and salt until fluffy. Fold in whipped cream. Cut cake in half, then cut each half into two horizontal layers, making four layers total. Place one layer on a serving platter. Spread with 1/4 of the frosting; repeat until all layers are frosted. Sprinkle crushed bar bits on top. Cover and refrigerate 8 hours or overnight.

Linda Geddes, Newaygo

Line a 9x13-inch cake pan with heavy duty foil, leaving extra foil on each side for easy removal. Mix cake according to package directions. Pour batter into foil lined pan. Bake

Quick Caramel Frosting

2/3 c. butter
1 c. brown sugar
1/2 c. milk
1-lb. box powdered sugar
1 t. vanilla

In a saucepan, melt butter. Add brown sugar and milk; heat to boiling, stirring constantly; boil for 5 minutes. Cool mixture for 10 minutes. Blend in powdered sugar, beating until smooth. Beat in vanilla and then frost cake.

Donna Schonveld, Schoolcraft

Cream Cheese and Orange Frosting

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 stick butter, softened
4 c. confectioners' sugar
1 1/2 T. orange juice
1 orange, zested
3 drops yellow food coloring
1 drop red food coloring

Cream cheese and butter together with an electric mixer until smooth. Beat in confectioners' sugar until smooth. Beat in orange juice, zest and food coloring. Frosts tops of two 9-inch cake layers.

Jenn Rekus, Detroit

Cocoa Butter Frosting

1/2 c. butter or margarine, softened
1/2 c. cocoa powder
3 c. powdered sugar
3 t. vanilla
2-3 T. milk

Cream butter with cocoa. Add powdered sugar, vanilla and milk, one tablespoon at a time, beating until smooth.

Joyce Tamminga, Jenison

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Try Something New In Your Garden

Drum roll, please! The 2010 garden catalogs are in, and there are more new vegetable varieties to choose from than worms in a good batch of compost. Plant breeders have been busy tinkering to come up with tastier tomatoes, bigger melons and more prolific cucumbers.

For instance, check the Hales Best Cantaloupe, offered by Farmer Seed and Nursery out of Faribault, MN. They say it's "unsurpassed in flavor and size." Gardeners in central and lower Michigan should give this 83-day variety a try and let me know how it works out.

Then there are cucumbers that purportedly produce cukes all summer long. How can this be? They do this by being parthenocarpic (huh?). It simply means it doesn't need pollinating, which results in more fruit (at least I think that's the theory). After combing the catalogs, I found two varieties offered, both from Jung's Seeds and Plants: the Diamont Hybrid pickler and a gourmet mini cuke from Germany called "Inik."

For gardeners in the "mitt" and over the Big Mac, where the season is a little shorter and cooler, there are a few new varieties that catch the eye. Jung's Canesi hybrid winter squash claims to be the "earliest butternut squash to date." I've never had much luck growing the butternuts in my Zone 4 garden, but this 80-85 day variety may be worth a try. Some season-extending ideas may be necessary to get this to ripen here in the E.U.P., where we only get about 65 good growing days.

"What's old is new" is apparently the case among many purveyors of vegetable seeds. Heirloom seeds, which are generally those that originate prior to WWII, are popping up in the new catalogs like radishes on a warm spring day. Gardeners are apparently shopping with their palettes as they long for the tastier fare of yesteryear, something that has been sacrificed in some newer varieties that aim for size, color and ability to keep longer at the expense of taste.

Pine Tree Garden Seed owner Richard Meiner has added many heirloom varieties

to his new catalog in response to the demand from gardeners nationwide.

"It's in response to people being interested in the older varieties, especially taste," says Meiner. These heirlooms were passed down through the generations much like a hope chest, he adds, some which originated from companies that went out of business during the Depression. An example is Long Island Improved Brussels Sprouts, which date back to the 1890s, need about 85 days to mature, and cost just a little over \$1 for 100 seeds.

The popular Burpee seed company is offering an interesting new tomato variety called Tye Dye. Recommended by a fellow gardener, it is actually a hybrid that boasts "heirloom flavor" and should also be a conversation piece when it turns from green to a bi-color gold-and-red. The 7-ounce fruits are nonacidic. Allow 78 days from seeding to a ripe, colorful, tasty tomato.

Have you ever been a little frustrated when your beans start like gangbusters and then just quit? The result is more beans than you can eat fresh. Burpee's seems to have the answer with their new Bush Beans Beananza. This dwarf French bean will produce twice as long as your old bean fare if you keep them picked. Come on, give it a try!

I asked Susan Anderson, the Johnny's Selected Seeds product manager in Maine, to help us northern gardeners with some new varieties for short-season zones. You know, those areas in the state where you just seem to run out of summer, leaving green tomatoes hanging on the vine. One new offering they are jumping up-and-down about is Sultan, a high-yielding, 7- to 8-inch seedless cucumber that requires only 56 days to mature.

"Home gardeners will just love this one," Anderson says enthusiastically. She suggests waiting until the ground warms up to about 70 degrees before direct-seeding all cucumbers and other cucurbits.

Other new Johnny's varieties include Cherokee, a tomato that ripens green. Anderson says it's one of her favorites because of its "bold and acidic flavor." It needs 72 days to mature and like all tomatoes, needs to start



Burpee's Tye Dye Tomato

Photo: W. Atlee Burpee & Co.

indoors about eight weeks before setting-out. She also gushes over Red Pearl, a 58-day grape tomato that's a product of the company's own breeding program. The few seeds it produces can be re-sown for next year's crop.

One of my personal favorites is Stokes Seeds, an international company that caters to both commercial and home gardeners. I've grown their seed for years in a commercial greenhouse. Some of their notable new offerings include Hickock, a "longer lasting" dark green gourmet bean with good disease resistance, and Golden Beet, a novelty bright orange beet.

So, go ahead and try a few of these new veggie varieties—I promise you'll be more excited than a leaf-hopper on a potato plant! Happy Gardening.

Visit Neil's website at neilmoran.com.

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Throwing Money Up The Chimney

It's not your imagination. Though it may seem contradictory, an open masonry fireplace can actually cool your house and result in higher overall heating costs. The fireplace opening attracts heated indoor air and then releases it through the chimney. The resulting vacuum draws cold outdoor air into your house through windows, doors and gaps anywhere. You may feel comfortable by the fireplace, but your heat pump or furnace runs like crazy trying to keep the rest of the house warm.

Although I do not recommend using an open fireplace during cold weather, if you really do like the ambiance of a fire, close all the doors to that room, open a window and turn the furnace thermostat down. You will still lose some heated air up the chimney from the rest of the house, but hopefully most of the air is being drawn from the open window. The loss is not as severe during mild weather because outdoor air is not as cold.

Every efficient wood-burning fireplace or insert will have tight-sealing glass doors between the room and the chimney to block the loss of already heated room air. You may be able to operate some fireplace models with the glass doors open and just a screen covering the opening, but do not burn it this way very long. When burned properly, the efficiency of a good fireplace can be higher than an old furnace.

Burning firewood to heat your home—one of several forms of biomass heating—may qualify for a federal tax credit. Biomass sources include cord firewood, wood pellets, corn, switch grass, peanut shells, and even cherry pits, and can be burned in a variety of heating appliances. Fireplaces, wood stoves and pellet stoves are most common. I've even burned cherry pits in my wood pellet stove—they produce a lot of heat and burn cleanly.

The tax credit applies to any biomass heating appliance placed in service during 2009 and 2010. The credit is equivalent to 30

percent of the cost (including installation), up to a maximum of \$1,500. To qualify, the appliance must have an efficiency rating of 75 percent or greater. Check the specifications because not all fireplaces or stoves are this efficient—generally, they range from 70 to

hot, it loses density and naturally flows into the room through an upper vent. This pulls cooler air from the room in through a lower inlet to be heated.

If you want more heat output and better control of the flow of heated air, install a blower kit. Each manufacturer offers its own specially designed kit to mount on fireplaces. The better ones have thermostats and variable-speed controls for the best comfort. A blower kit can usually be added by the homeowner after installing the fireplace.

For the greatest efficiency and least amount of drafts indoors, install an outdoor combustion air kit with the fireplace. Make this decision before you install the fireplace because a duct has to be attached to bring in the outdoor air. It is often run under the floor to the front of the firebox.

Airtight fireplace inserts are often the most efficient design and provide the longest burn-time and maximum heat output from a load of firewood. They are not as stylish as a fireplace, but provide much better control over the heat output and combustion air used. For air quality considerations, select an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified model. Pellet and catalytic cord firewood models typically produce the least particulate matter.

Despite great improvements in efficiency, keep in mind that some stoves and fireplace options use electricity and may not operate properly during an outage. The cost for efficient models can also be high, which makes qualifying for the federal tax credit that much more important.

The following companies offer efficient wood-burning fireplaces: Desa International, 866-672-6040, desaint.com; Fuego Flame, 800-445-1867, fuego flame.com; Jotul, 207-797-5912, jotul.com; Kozy Heat/Hussong, 800-253-4904, kozyheat.com; and Lennox Hearth Products, 800-953-6669, lennox-hearthproducts.com.

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit dulley.com.

Ready to get cozy by the fire? Not too fast—first learn to keep your energy dollars from floating up the chimney.



The decorative airtight doors on this heat circulating fireplace improve efficiency and reduce room air loss up the chimney.

90 percent efficiency. Get a manufacturer's statement certifying that the unit meets the efficiency requirements. For details, check energystar.gov/taxcredits.

When buying or upgrading a fireplace you're faced with several options. Initially you must decide between a zero-clearance or masonry fireplace. If your old fireplace is large, you may be able to fit a new unit inside. If you plan to install a fireplace somewhere else, a zero-clearance model is easiest. It often uses a double-walled design with insulation so it can be safely placed against wood wall studs.

A heating-circulating fireplace provides the best efficiency and most heated air output. Many of these operate without a fan and rely on the natural flow of room air around a super-hot firebox. As the air gets

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Peaking Plant In Southeastern Michigan To Complement Wolverine's Generating Fleet

Wolverine Power Cooperative is purchasing a 340-megawatt peaking power plant from FirstEnergy Generation Corp. The plant, located in Sumpter Township near Belleville, MI, consists of four General Electric natural gas combustion turbine generators, each capable of generating 85 megawatts. Wolverine will use the facility to meet the current and future peaking needs of its members.

“One reason this acquisition happened so quickly is the plant’s good fit with the

experience and talents of our generation employees,” said Dan DeCoeur, Wolverine’s vice president of generation. “We also moved quickly to capitalize on an attractive business opportunity.”

Wolverine expects to finalize the Sumpter plant purchase during the first quarter of 2010. Each of the plant’s units is currently permitted to operate about 1,800 hours per year.

“As we do with the five peaking plants we currently own and operate, we’ll run these generators on hot summer days when

co-op members need air conditioning to stay comfortable,” DeCoeur said. “Our members set a new all-time peak record for January last month, so we’ll rely on the units during winter months, too.”

FirstEnergy Generation, a subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corp., constructed the plant in 2002 to serve existing customers in northwest Ohio and participate in what was Michigan’s emerging electric choice marketplace at that time. FirstEnergy says the facility is no longer a good strategic fit for them and their 4.5 million accounts in Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Wolverine currently owns and operates peaking plants in Tower, Gaylord, Hersey, Vestaburg and Burnips. These five plants are capable of generating close to 200 megawatts.

“Our purchase of the Sumpter plant does not change our ongoing efforts to build long-term, base load capacity near Rogers City,” DeCoeur said. “The simple fact remains that Wolverine has no base load supply beginning in 2012.”

Peaking Versus Base Load Power Plants...

► How do the two differ?

Peaking plants are called on when electricity is needed quickly and for a brief period of time. These plants are typically fueled with natural gas and are generally more costly to operate.

Base load plants operate around-the-clock, 365 days a year. The two primary types of base load power plants in the Midwest are coal and nuclear, providing nearly 85 percent of the region’s electricity needs. Base load plants are built for scale and efficiency, and thus provide low-cost, reliable electricity.

The Sumpter peaking power plant, located near Belleville, consists of four units capable of generating 340 megawatts.



Cherryland Bulletin Board

Cherryland Annual Meeting Set

Cherryland Electric Cooperative will hold its 72nd Annual Meeting on Wed., June 16, at Wuerfel Park, home of the Traverse City Beach Bums minor league baseball team.

SAVE THE DATE!

**June 16, 2010
Wuerfel Park**

Members who attend the meeting will receive a ticket to the game and a voucher for a baseball dinner (hot dog, chips

and a soft drink).

“Switching the annual meeting to Wuerfel Park has been wildly popular with our members,” says General Manager Tony Anderson. “We used to attract between 300 and 400 members when our meetings were at Cherryland. We had 800 people attend at Wuerfel Park in 2008 and 1,700 in 2009. We’re looking to top 2,000 in attendance for the 2010 annual meeting.”

Wuerfel Park is a Cherryland Electric member.

Cherryland Member Wins Third NCAA National Championship

Alisha Glass of Leland, whose mother Laurie and grandparents Larry and Dee Glass are long-time Cherryland Electric Cooperative members, wound up her outstanding college volleyball career by being named a first-team All-American for the second straight year and helping Penn State capture a third straight NCAA national championship.

Penn State beat Texas in the national finals to extend its consecutive match winning streak to 102—the second-longest winning streak ever in Division I team sports. Glass, who was also a unanimous All-Big Ten selection, was named to the all-tournament team.

Glass still has one semester of school left. She’ll graduate in May with a degree in kinesiology with a minor in human development and family studies.

Then there’s the Olympics. Glass is hoping to do an internship in California this summer so she can train with the national team, something she and teammate Megan Hodge did last summer, as well. After that, she’s thinking about playing professionally overseas.

Cherryland Member Named Las Vegas Baseball Manager

Cherryland Electric Cooperative member Dan Rohn of Traverse City has been named the Triple-A manager of the Toronto Blue Jays.

Rohn heads to spring training this month as manager of

the Las Vegas 51s of the Pacific Coast League. Rohn is a three-time PCL Manager of the Year and was the manager of Fresno in the PCL the last three years.

The 53-year-old Rohn has compiled a 15-year managerial record of 1,021-1,014 while working for the Minnesota Twins, Seattle Mariners, San Francisco Giants and now the Blue Jays. He is an Alpena native who played pro baseball for the Chicago Cubs, Oakland and Texas. He lives in the off-season with his wife Mindy in Traverse City.

CEC Student Scholarship Now Worth \$4,000

Cherryland Electric Cooperative’s scholarship for a high school senior is now worth \$4,000.

Since the inception of the scholarship over 20 years ago, the amount was \$600 a year for four years—\$2,400. But with college costs escalating, Cherryland has increased the scholarship amount to \$1,000 a year.

Also, an adult scholarship is available for \$500 for those who have graduated from high school and are taking college courses.

The application deadline for both scholarships is Friday, April 2. More details can be found on page 8.



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Energy Tip

Space heaters can help cut heating costs, and here’s how: Turn the central thermostat down (as low as 50 degrees) and use the space heater in a closed, occupied room.


— Source: Alliance to Save Energy

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Each initial, group of figures, phone number, abbreviation, e-mail address and website address counts as one word. Hyphenated and slashed words count as two or more words. Ads are subject to editor's approval and editing. For member rate, attach your mailing label. To pay by credit card, include card number, exp. date, address related to the card and signature with ad. M/C or VISA only, please indicate with. Send your printed or typed ad and check made payable to MECA (advance payment required) by 15th of month prior to publication to: *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864, or email jhansen@countrylines.com. Call 517-351-6322, Ext. 201, for more information.

No classifieds accepted by telephone.
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Scholarships Offered

Each year, the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association awards two \$1,000 scholarships to qualifying applicants. Individuals are chosen based on their scholastic achievement and extracurricular involvement during their high school career.

The applicant's parent or guardian must be a member or employee of a Michigan electric co-op, and the applicant must be planning to attend a Michigan college or school full-time.

Selection will be based on grade point average, character, leadership, academic achievement, extracurricular and community activities, and essay response.

Applications are available at countrylines.com; click on "Youth," email wolford@countrylines.com, or call 517-351-6322, ext. 205, to request an application by mail. Eligible applications must be postmarked by *April 1, 2010*.



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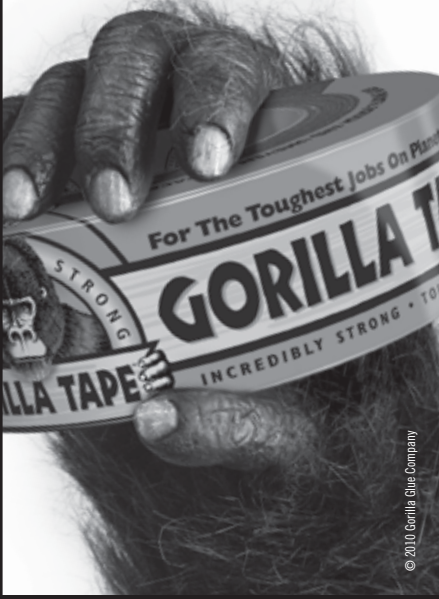
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We might not know each other, but I'll bet we have "friends" in common.

I'm willing to bet that you know either George Bailey, Forrest Gump, Austin Powers or Andy Dufresne.

They are movie characters, of course. But they come to life on the big screen and we get to know them as seemingly real people.

Movies are what I call "The Great Escape." There are times when two hours spent in a movie theatre or in front of our TV sets are just what the doctor called for, especially during these winter months when "Cabin Fever" sets in.

Movies are one of the great common denominators. They cut across gender and generational barriers.

Of course, there are what we call standard "chick flicks" and "macho movies" that seem to separate the sexes.

But in listing my favorite 25 movies, I noticed a "chick flick" or two on my list. That's just the way it is.

My interests run a wide range—I like music, sports, comedy, fiction and documentaries. When I'm flipping around on TV, I'll stop at just about any war movie or western, but I also like musicals and good comedy.

So with that in mind, I'm going to throw out my "Top 25 Movie List," subject to ridicule and discussion. This is such a subjective topic that you could list a totally different Top 25 and get no arguments from me.

"The Shawshank Redemption": One of my favorites. If I had to choose between a couple of movies to watch endlessly, this would be one of them. Andy Dufresne



Nick Edson

(Tim Robbins) as the innocent inmate is "The Man." It's also one of my favorite Morgan Freeman roles. This was a Stephen King story.

"The Green Mile": Another Stephen King story. This one is brought to life by some fine acting from Michael Duncan Clarke, Tom Hanks and Co.

Sounds like I have a thing for prisons, so far.

"Almost Famous": This is a must-see about a rock 'n roll band and a young journalist. You'll be hooked right off the bat. Kate Hudson and Crew are fantastic.



"BIG": This is the first of what I call "Make Believe" movies that I like. Tom Hanks should have gotten an Oscar for it.

"Field of Dreams": My family teases me because every time Ray Kinsella asks his dad to play a game of catch at the end of the movie, I always choke up.

"Hoosiers": This movie reminds me so much of my dad coaching basketball in small towns during the 1950s and '60s.

"Groundhog Day": Bill Murray lives the same day over and over until he finally

gets it right. A classic.

"Overboard": This is what is called a 'B' movie. Never a big hit, but always worth watching when it's on TV. Goldie Hawn and Kurt Russell were never better.

"Forrest Gump": This explains life in the 1960s better than any documentary ever did. Over the top? You bet. An entertaining story? Yes. It weaves its way through a fascinating decade.

"It's A Wonderful Life": Go watch this at the State Theatre in Traverse City during the Christmas season. On the big screen, you'll notice little things you never saw before in this movie.

"GoodFellas": A great Mafia movie. Lots of blood and guts. Sometimes you just need to sit down and watch one of these.

"Blazing Saddles": One of Mel Brooks' many classics. When I first saw this movie in the theatre, I spit out my popcorn because I was laughing so hard.

"Toy Story" (all of them): Great writing and great humor for children of all ages. You can throw all the Shrek movies into this mix, too.

"Airplane": So many cameo appearances, so many great one-liners.

Roger.

"The Godfather" (I and II): This is one of those rare instances where the first Godfather was a classic and the sequel was just as good.

"The Sound Of Music": I know this might fall into the "chick flick" category, but Julie Andrews, Christopher Plummer and the children in this movie sing the socks out of these classic songs.

"The Usual Suspects": Kevin Spacey stars in this twisting, churning thriller.



When the movie ends, you'll hit the rewind button so fast it will make your head spin.

"Caddyshack": Rodney Dangerfield vs. Ted Knight in an absolute laugh-a-thon. Bill Murray's outrageous lines in this movie are still used on golf courses today.

"Star Wars": The first Star Wars was a classic and the fun was getting a ticket to the premiere so that you could say you were there.

"Harvey": Jimmy Stewart was never better. Harvey is his make-believe rabbit friend who steals the movie. We rented this last winter and loved it.

"Titanic": With all the pre-release hoopla, I didn't think there was any way this film could live up to the hype. It did. Very moving, especially on the big screen.

"Austin Powers" (all of them): Mike Myers struck gold, quite literally, with the Austin Powers movies. These are laugh-out-loud flicks that I never get tired of.

"The Best Years of Our Lives": A poignant look at life after World War II. An Academy Award winning movie that's worth going back and seeing.

"Dances With Wolves": This is best on the big screen, but it's always intriguing to go back and see. Kevin Costner at his best.

"A League Of Their Own": I never thought a movie with Madonna and Rosie O'Donnell would make my list, but Geena Davis and Lori Petty steal the show in this story which starts out about baseball but is really about the relationships between sisters. Since I have two sisters and two daughters, I have seen these relationships play themselves out in real life.

Movies, after all, are a reflection of real life.

Honorable Mentions: "Stand By Me," "Raiders Of The Lost Ark," "The Sting," "Gods and Generals," and "Jaws."

Mom's Right: Avoid Hypothermia

I look forward to having the opportunity to run errands with my mother. I call it an opportunity because I look forward to spending time with this dear woman, who has put up with me and seven siblings for so many years.

Every time we go out in this weather, my mother bundles up, layer after layer. I try to explain that the car is warmed up and is probably warmer than the house.

"Doesn't matter, we have to get out in the cold sometime," she says.

And, as usual, she's right.

She's always teaching Cherryland's safety director something about being safe. And if you can't learn from your mother, who can you learn from?

So it got me to doing a little research about staying warm in the winter and avoiding hypothermia.

What is hypothermia?

It's when the body temperature falls and the body loses heat faster than it produces heat. The condition is life-threatening. It does not require sub-zero temperatures, and can occur in unexpected places, such as in southern states and on summer days.

The signs of hypothermia vary from mild to severe cases. Mild cases manifest themselves through shivering, slurred speech and a cool abdomen.

Severe cases of hypothermia then occur when shivering has stopped, muscles are rigid and stiff, the skin is ice cold and looks blue, and the victim is listless.

How do you treat hypothermia?

First aid and emergency care books usually tell you what to do, but seldom explain why to do it. Here are treatment methods and the reasons behind them.

▲ Try to block the victim from the wind so less heat escapes.

▲ Be as gentle as possible; rough handling of a victim can cause heartbeat irregularities and death. In unresponsive victims, check breathing and circulation for 30 to 45 seconds.

▲ If the victim isn't breathing and shows



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no signs of circulation, start CPR, if you are trained and certified.

▲ Insulate the victim by applying blankets and extra dry clothing.

▲ Keep the victim at rest. A horizontal position is best: This helps prevent shock and makes it easier for the victim's heart to maintain blood flow to the brain. This position is especially important for victims taken from the water.

▲ The best warming method in mild hypothermia cases is allowing the victim to shiver inside dry insulation. Give the victim high-energy drinks if they are alert and able to swallow. Sugary fluids provide energy to sustain shivering. Do not give hot drinks. They taste good and may give a psychological boost, but they have no warming effect. Hot drinks signal the brain to send more blood to the skin, which leads to some heat loss.

▲ Try to avoid using heated objects, such as heating pads and packs. These objects may stop the desirable effects of shivering, but hypothermic skin is very sensitive to heat and is easily burned. When I am lucky enough to spend time with my mom, you can bet I listen carefully, follow her advice and bundle because, after all, it is northern Michigan and sooner or later we all have to go out in the cold.

Tim Keenan is Cherryland's safety supervisor.



We Hear You

Your letters to Jim Hough and your responses to our survey spur us to excel.

When Jim Hough first signed on to write the “Right at Home” column on this page in 1984, *Michigan Country Lines* wasn’t yet a magazine. It was, more accurately, a tabloid—black ink on newsprint—which meant your hands would get mighty black from handling it. And, boy, did we get complaints. Eventually, we changed to the format you’re holding now. It’s easier to handle, carries color much better, and doesn’t make your hands look like you’ve been playing with coal. That’s the kind of positive change that comes from listening to you.

Country Lines actually started 30 years ago this coming November. At the time, it was the youngest of 30-some publications across the country started by state electric co-op associations to help electric co-ops stay in touch with members. Some of those magazines were in business 40 years before Michigan co-ops saw the light. The goal of the magazines is to help members keep up with what’s going on in the utility they own, which is actually one of the golden rules of the cooperative form of business.

We know that if we were to fill these pages with only information about transformers, substations, rates and generator safety, we wouldn’t have many readers. And so we make room for other things that may interest you more, like gardening, recipes and the great outdoors. And Jim Hough’s column on this back page.

The sad thing, of course, is that Jim has packed away his large-print typewriter, upon which he created the warm-hearted stories about his friends in his beloved U.P. He delivered the columns to us on letter-sized sheets of newsprint strung together with tape into 6-foot long scrolls. He writes that way because he is legally blind and the large type allows him to read his own copy. Still, it often looked like we were getting an over-sized roll of toilet paper. And considering the columns he wrote about Engadine’s outhouse races and the toilet seat nailed to a tree announcing that his Paradise cabin was open for

visitors, toilet paper would have been appropriate.

But Jim’s columns weren’t fluff. We wanted him to write stories that would draw you into the magazine, to help create a community of electric co-op readers across the state and beyond.

As proof, there are the many letters he’s received from well-wishing readers who just wanted to let Jim know how much they loved his column.

“We have enjoyed your articles in every issue,” wrote one reader.

“You don’t know me, but after reading your columns for a long time, I felt I had to let you know how much I enjoyed your writings,” wrote another.

“If it was not for your articles I probably wouldn’t even open the magazine,” wrote still another, frankly. (Do you know that studies show about half of the population starts reading magazines from the back?)

That so many of you would take time to write a letter to Jim Hough wishing him well after his farewell column in the January issue is testament to your connection to the magazine. We thank you, and we promise that we will work hard to keep your trust.

For those of you who fear they will miss Jim’s special connection with the U.P., I want you to know that I and my teacher wife, Barbara, were high school sweethearts in Ironwood, and have a special fondness for pasties, Saykly’s chocolates, trout streams, Marquette and Lake Superior. The title of this new column reflects the approach I hope to take in writing about the people and places along co-op lines, but it is also a tip of the hat to our now long-gone St. Ambrose High School, whose sports teams went by the name of “Ramblers.” You can take a kid out of the U.P., but you can’t take the Yooper out of the kid.

Our latest survey shows that our community of readers is as strong as ever, but also that we have work to do to keep your trust and build a stronger relationship with younger co-op

members.

The survey was conducted online in November, with a follow-up random sample mail survey in December. It reveals that over 90 percent of co-op members read the magazine regularly and that 63 percent of you clip items from the magazine. We’re pleased that attention is being paid, because your co-op counts on the magazine to keep you informed and get you involved.

A surprising majority of readers who participated in the survey expressed a desire to see *Country Lines* printed on recycled paper. We are planning to do that in April, after we use up our current paper stock.

Finally, I’ve got to get something off my chest.

We get calls almost daily from readers who want to talk about something in ‘*Country Lines*’. We do appreciate the calls. But, the name of this magazine is *Michigan Country Lines*. Notice the ‘r’ between the ‘t’ and the ‘y’ in *Country*. That ‘r’ is not silent and it’s always been there, but for some people it seems invisible. It’s been bugging the staff here for decades, and I promised I’d mention it. So there it is. Honestly, I don’t care what you call it (*Country Lanes* is another favorite) as long as you don’t stop reading—and calling.

Thanks for joining us.



Mike Buda is the founding editor of Country Lines and continues to work on the magazine, as well as other activities of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. He lives in Mason with Barbara. Their boys, Dan and Jon, have flown the coop.

Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com

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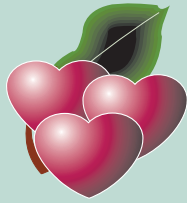
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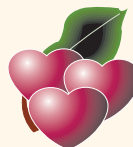
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