

MICHIGAN Country Lines



Tammy Comes Home

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Ballpark, Cooperative

25 Cherryland's Solid Track Record



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Deryk Steinman, an apprentice lineworker for Midwest Energy Cooperative, helps Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days participant Rachael Hunt, of Hillman, climb a utility pole (story, p. 14). *Photo – Cory Wilson*

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MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC
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Rates Would Triple? Really!

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As most everyone knows, our wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative, is working on obtaining an air permit for construction of a solid fuel power plant in Rogers City, MI. The project is called the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture (WCEV). If constructed, it will be the cleanest coal-burning plant in Michigan.

Another piece of common knowledge is the fact that there has been some opposition to building anything fueled by coal anywhere in the state. Cherryland and Wolverine have not escaped this opposition and never expected to. There are special interest groups that have opposed coal for many years. They will be around many years into the future. Unfortunately, it is part of the business.

If the WCEV moves forward, you can expect the attacks to continue. As the opposition gets desperate, you will see an escalation in the scare tactics being used. The current one is a warning that electric rates will *triple*. Stop and think about that for a moment.

Triple? Really! In the last 20 years, rates haven't gone up 20 percent, let alone 300 percent. You can bet that rates may rise faster in the coming 20 years principally as a result of increasing government regulations, but *triple*? It is simply an absurd scare tactic designed only to get attention. Why would a not-for-profit utility like your electric cooperative allow rates to *triple*? Any profit made by a cooperative ends up back in the hands of the membership. We have no incentive to generate more revenue than it takes to meet our mortgage requirements.

The opposition will scream, "There won't be any profits because the money will line the pockets of employees and board members." Do you think any present employees and board members will survive a 300 percent rate increase? I certainly don't. Cherryland enjoys tremendous support from members all across our service territory. This support isn't simply because I'm a "good guy" or your board member is a "good old boy." This support is real because we have a long history of good

service and affordable rates. I love my job and where I live. If you think I am going to pass on a rate increase of any size without doing everything possible to lower its size, we need to talk. If rates *triple* due to decisions within my control or due to the Wolverine project, rest assured there will be a moving van in front of my house. Over and over, I will point to the past history of Wolverine and Cherryland.



Tony Anderson
General Manager

Environmentally and fiscally responsible future power supply will be a balance of many things—coal, nuclear, natural gas, renewables and conservation/energy efficiency. We (Wolverine/Cherryland) partnered in the first commercial wind farm in Michigan. We recently purchased additional natural gas peaking capacity. Cherryland just became the first utility in the state to file its achievement of mandated energy conservation goals for 2009 with the Michigan Public Service Commission. While other utilities were planning, starting and trying things out, we were saving members money and now have the audit to prove it. If we are fortunate enough to build the WCEV, we will once again be first in providing a clean and affordable source of generation for thousands of co-op members.

If the naysayers are right in their predictions of declining demand due to the Michigan economy, there will be excess power on the open market to purchase. Do you think rates will *triple* if demand is truly declining? What will the opposition say if we toss WCEV to the curb because the dirty, 50-year-old coal plants in our state are cheaper to run? The naysayers need to spend their time and energy on presenting a viable and affordable alternative strategy. When the economy returns as it is beginning to do, what is their plan for balancing all the generation sources necessary to provide 24/7/365 electricity?

As always, call, write or email anytime with your questions and concerns. When you hear, "Rates will *triple*," it is my hope that your next thought will be, "*REALLY?.....I don't think so.*"

Tammy Comes Home

Tammy Squires is a very important part of the Cherryland team, and her grandpa was a remarkable part of the co-op's past. **Nick Edson**

Every morning as she walks into work at Cherryland Electric Cooperative and looks at the old 1960s pictures on the wall of the smiling general manager, Tammy Squires smiles back.

"Hi Grandpa," she says under her breath.

There are four pictures hanging in the hall of Cherryland that show the late Bob Lambert, the remarkable Bob Lambert.

"He *was* remarkable," says Tammy. "He had an eighth grade education, got a job as a lineman at Cherryland and then later became general manager. But as his granddaughter, what I remember most is how kind he was to people."

It's fitting that Tammy took her place at Cherryland in 2006 as a member service representative and now heads into the field on a regular basis as the cooperative's energy use advisor. She succeeded long-time Cherryland employee Bill Garey in January.

"It's not easy for a woman to step into this job," Tammy says. "But I do have some background with electricity and I was trained by Bill. I know I will always have more to learn, but I love helping members, just like my grandpa did."

Bob Lambert was Cherryland's first lineman and second general manager.

How did he pull off such a difficult transition?

"Well, he wasn't a trained electrician," said his late wife Lucille Lambert, Tammy's grandmother. "But he could do almost anything."

He was helped by two intrinsic tools: He was strong in math and good with people.

Bob Lambert started working for Cherryland in 1941, just before the start of World War II. He had a unique way of helping people blend together as a team, so when Cherryland began to grow after World War II and through the 1950s, Lambert played a key role. He was elevated to general manager in 1962 and retired in that role in 1976.

"I never heard anyone say anything against him," said Lucille of Bob, who passed away in 1999. "And I don't think he had any enemies. He just worked hard and treated people right."

That's the same work ethic Tammy Squires tries to follow, even though she had no idea she would eventually follow her grandpa to work at Cherryland.

"I worked 20 years in medical billing and I enjoyed it," she explains. "But one day I saw an ad in the paper for a member service representative at Cherryland. I had to ask myself if I wanted to leave my comfort zone and apply for the job."

She did, but through the interview process, she didn't tell anyone that her grandfather was Bob Lambert.

She admits she almost gave her secret away one day after an interview with Member Service Manager Kevin Cragg.

"We walked past one of the photos of my grandpa that was hanging on the wall and Kevin said, 'That's one of my favorite pictures.' I looked at it and said, 'Mine, too.'"



Energy Use Advisor Tammy Squires assists co-op members with problems related to high electricity usage. (Cover Photo & Above—John L. Russell)

After she got the job, Tammy fessed up.

"He was shocked," she said with a laugh. "He asked me to tell (GM) Tony (Anderson) who I was."

Who Tammy Squires is—and has become—is a very important part of the Cherryland team.

"I help members who want answers to high usage," she said. "Some of them start out thinking our meters are wrong. Part of my job is to educate them to look for some of the common high usage problems, like water heaters, refrigerators, space heaters, windows, wells and air conditioning. Anything with a large motor can be the reason for high usage."

"I can help members, but it's more helpful when I have their cooperation," she said.

So, Tammy spends many days talking to Cherryland members on the phone or visiting their homes to help give them answers.

And when she leaves the office in Grawn after work, she walks right past the pictures of Cherryland's—and her own—past, knowing they are both a part of the cooperative's future.



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Talk About Waste!

Nice article in [the May] *Country Lines*, "Waste Not." This is something I have been advocating for years. We use mostly fluorescent lighting and have for years, though some decorative incandescent bulbs remain. We have used a geothermal heat pump since 1992 and love its efficiency. In the summer we re-use its output water to fill the pool and for irrigation. We also have two wood stove fireplaces (work like wood stoves, but look like fireplaces) though we don't heat with them routinely.

A few other things we've done is to put all computers in our home on a power strip. Computer off/strip off saves up to 20 watts of vampire power per PC. CRTs are replaced with flat panels, cutting power consumption considerably. A front-load washer and dryer

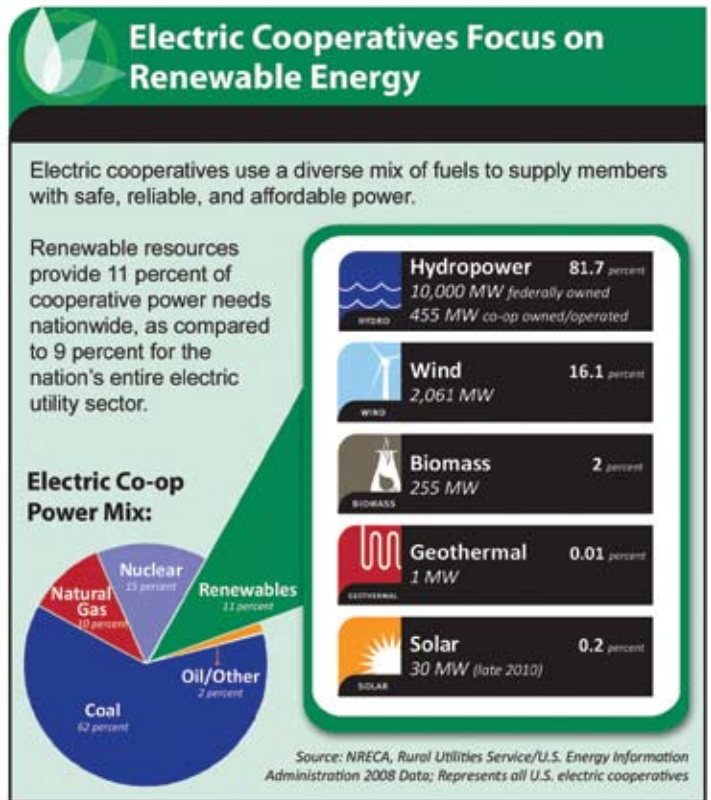
and highly efficient refrigerator and dishwasher have come to our home in the last three years, as well. Our TV and stereo system consume less than 1 watt combined when turned off.

The one thing left that was really bugging me was the electric water heater in our basement. I looked around and found a heat pump for that, too! For \$700, it makes 2.5 gallons of hot water for every gallon the Marathon® unit makes. As a bonus, it kicks out cool, dry air. This can reduce or eliminate the need for a dehumidifier in some homes, saving even more money. Since my old heater was 15 years old, it got the boot, and the new unit took over two years ago. We love it.

Larry Bolhuis, Middleville

We have an appliance we use to melt snow in back of our house in winter, and to add humidity to the ambient air for our neighbors. We also use it in summer to increase township warming. Y'know, think globally, act locally.

Shortly after we married, I



attached a pair of me bryde's pantyhose to the dryer pipe to catch the lint and keep the heat and humidity in the basement. But me bryde didn't much like the plan. So we went back to heating the neighborhood.

Wonder if you could get a grant to design a heat-and-humidity trap that would be acceptable and workable, and that would not add too much heat and humidity all in one place in a house?

Bill Swart, via email

Such units are available, but you can't use them with gas or propane dryers, and they may add too much humidity to your home. A heat exchanger is an option, but the payback could be long. —ed.

Turtles Don't Sing

The article (May/"Turtles Are Out and About"/Ingle) misinterprets the quote from the "Song of Solomon." The "voice of the turtle is heard in our land" is the turtle dove, a bird.

This is a common error, presumably because the author is

not a bird-watcher (or listener).
Ms. Gene Regenstreif, Ann Arbor

Coca-Cola Museum

Great article and picture. Perfect timing for people planning summer trips close to home. Sounds like a full day with lots of fun for the whole family.

Christine Drumm, Onkama

I would highly recommend visiting the diner and pizzeria. The food is delicious and the atmosphere is so cool.

Mollie Kieffer, Goshen, IN

Recycled Paper

Michigan Country Lines is now printed on recycled paper from FutureMark Paper, which taps the "urban forest" of waste paper thrown out in Chicago every day. Using recycled paper reduces the carbon emitted in paper production, the paper deposited in landfills, and water and air pollution. The energy to produce recycled paper is about one-half the amount required to make paper from pulp.



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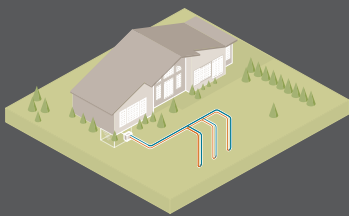
Favorite Michigan-made product. We'll build stories around your favorite Michigan-made products, whether past or present. Send us no more than 100 words describing your favorite product made in the state and why you have a passion for it. Think Vernor's Ginger Ale, Life Savers, Stroh's beer, American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

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

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

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ABC: Annual Meeting, Ballpark, Cooperative

The ABCs of being a Cherryland Electric Cooperative member will be on display Wednesday, June 16, at Wuerfel Park.

That is, we'll host our 72nd Annual Meeting, you'll get to attend a ballgame at Wuerfel Park, and you'll find out more about your electric cooperative.

For years, the annual meeting was held at the cooperative's home in Grawn. The attendance was usually around 300-400 members. There were Saturday morning breakfasts, all-day pig roasts and Thursday evening dinners. But nothing seemed to pull in more members.

Then, John and Leslye Wuerfel decided to bring minor league baseball to Traverse City. Their Traverse City Beach Bums franchise landed close to Cherryland's headquarters in Grawn, and they were also Cherryland members.

So, a plan was hatched to take the annual meeting to Wuerfel Park.

First, however, some due diligence was in order. Would the costs justify the move?

When Cherryland hosted its annual meeting at the cooperative, there was tons of work to be done and money spent renting everything from portable toilets to tables and chairs and all the food.

After Cherryland employees sat down with the Wuerfels and the park's assistant general manager, Jeremy Crum, and put a price to hosting the annual meeting and providing a game ticket and meal voucher for members, we crunched the numbers.

We compared costs. We blinked and ran the numbers again. Could this be? It was actually cheaper for us to go to Wuerfel Park than it was to hold the meeting at the cooperative.

And after two years at the park, our members are also telling us it's more fun.

In fact, they are telling us that in record numbers.

We jumped from 350 attendees in 2007 at the cooperative to 800 in 2008 at Wuerfel Park. So, we were hoping to break the 1,000-member barrier last year. Instead,



Photo - John Russell



Cherryland will host its 72nd Annual Meeting at Wuerfel Park on June 16.

1,600 members showed up.

This year, we're bracing for 2,000 members to attend.

So, with that in mind, our team is reminding members of our ground rules.

Bring your *FAST PASS* coupon, found in the May issue of *Country Lines*, to the meeting to help speed up getting into the park.

Bring your Energy Saver coupon, also found in the May issue, to get some free CFLs. We will have employees waiting to hand those out to you when you drive in to Wuerfel Park. That way, you don't have to carry them into the park. The Energy Saver coupon is only good between 3-5 p.m. the day of the meeting.

The gates open at 3 p.m., and the annual meeting will run from 4-5 p.m. We have to be done by 5 p.m. so the Wuerfels can open the gates for the general public to also attend the game.

Free tickets and vouchers for Cherryland

members will be handed out until 6 p.m. Many members come and stay for the business meeting. Others pick up their free tickets and vouchers between 3 and 4 p.m., then come back before the game starts at 7 p.m.

The business meeting provides members with an update on what's happening at the cooperative, and the results of voting for three spots on our board will be announced.

After the business meeting ends, many members use their vouchers to get a true ballpark dinner of a hot dog, chips and a soft drink.

The game starts at 7:05 p.m. that night, as the Beach Bums take on Windy City.

One of the highlights just before the game starts will be the person throwing out the first pitch. It will be Ruth Long, who has worked 44 years for Cherryland Electric Cooperative. Her last day of work is June 25.

— Nick Edson

All Politics Is Local

The legendary former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Tip O’Neill, Jr., often said, “All politics is local.”

One of the best examples of “local politics” is your electric cooperative’s board of directors. Your cooperative is governed by a set of principles, one of which is “democratic control.”

No other utility provider operates quite like an electric cooperative. Yes, all electric providers have a similar mission of delivering reliable and affordable electric energy to their customers. But with an electric cooperative, the mission goes beyond just keeping the lights on, it is *the whole reason* your cooperative was formed and exists today. And, guiding your electric cooperative is a board of directors made up of members just like you. These individuals ran for and were elected by the membership to set the direction for your cooperative.

We recently received a handwritten letter (seems most of the letters I get are email) from Paula Brousseau, a member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative. Besides thanking us for *Michigan Country Lines*, she states, “I enjoy voting for the board members.” Based on other comments in her letter, I am guessing she may not know any of the board

members personally, but she likely read their biographies in the magazine, and based on that information, she cast her vote. By her letter it is obvious that getting to vote for the people that run her electric cooperative is important to her.

In many cases, members personally know the board member from their “district” and may even call on them when the lights go out or they have a question about their service. Although we suggest you call the electric co-op office if there is ever an outage, a co-op board member is often seen as the cooperative’s local contact.

But your board member is so much more.

At any given board meeting, your board may be deciding on issues such as approving management’s plan to build a new substation at a cost that could exceed \$1 million, adjusting the rates the cooperative charges to operate the business,

deciding to invest more in energy efficiency measures to help members hold down their electric bills, approving a request to purchase new equipment to better able the employees to build new lines or restore power after an outage. The list is endless.

In 2008, the Michigan Legislature



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

passed legislation that recognized a cooperative board of director’s unique place in representing the membership. During the discussion of that legislation, we were questioned about the qualifications of those who serve on a cooperative’s board. Members of the legislative committee hearing testimony on the issue that day were surprised to learn that our board directors are comprised of very well-

qualified individuals, including some who are (or were) farmers, business owners, developers, builders, school board members, bankers, retired utility employees, lawyers, engineers, and more. Your board of directors is made up of diverse individuals who come together to make decisions that affect them just as they affect you. As such, they are fulfilling their role of representing you on the board and upholding the cooperative principle of “democratic control.”

So, exercise your right to elect your co-op’s directors—you’ll help keep politics local.





Photo—Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

Walking Alpena

1

Resurgent Alpena proudly displays its unique physical and cultural charms. **Rhonda Dedyne**

You can add the word “walkable” to the water, woods and wildlife that are part of Alpena’s attraction.

The town’s assorted walkways and bike trails are an excellent way to see all that Mother Nature provides for more than 11,000 residents of this northeastern Michigan community and the thousands of guests who visit each year.

“The Alpena Bi-Path and other walkways that connect downtown and other parts of the city definitely help attract visitors here, and it’s also a plus for our residents,” says Jackie Krawczak, Chamber of Commerce director. The city’s walkability also helped it earn a recent designation as a “Community for a Lifetime” by the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging. “There’s really nowhere you can’t get to by bike or on foot,” she adds.

Water, Water Everywhere

Beautiful blue water edges the 16-mile Bi-Path as it passes through the city’s parks and beach areas on Lake Huron and the Thunder Bay River. Visitors have a great view of Lake Huron at Bay View Park, where part of the walking path runs along the breakwall. The park, with its performing arts stage, play and picnic areas and basketball and tennis courts, is a favorite spot for both residents and tourists. Fun in the water is the focus at other city parks such as Mich-E-Ke-Wis, Starlite Beach, Blair Street, and Thomson.

A walk on the Maritime Heritage Trail is

a “must do” for any visitor. Also part of the Bi-Path, the Trail winds along the Thunder Bay River, starting in the downtown area and ending at South Riverfront Park. It includes interpretive signs with information on the importance of Lake Huron and the river in the community’s maritime heritage. A pedestrian bridge located behind the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center is a recent Trail addition that was funded in part by “Cool Cities” grants that Alpena received several years ago.

Other popular walkable areas are Duck Park and Island Park, which are part of the city’s 600-acre wildlife sanctuary located on the corner of U.S.-23 and Long Rapids Road. Island Park features nature trails and fishing platforms, while Duck Park has both fishing and a picnic area, and is a nationally-known viewing area for many varieties of birds.

“It’s pretty unusual to have a wildlife sanctuary right in the middle of a city, and have it so readily accessible for visitors,” Krawczak explains. “Bird-watchers come from all over to see all the different species.”

Over 200 Shipwrecks

Alpena and Thunder Bay are also well-known for something less peaceful than bird watching. Over 200 shipwrecks have been identified in the water that’s part of the 448 square-mile Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary. The first of its kind in the Great Lakes, the sanctuary was established to pro-

tect the collection of shipwrecks.

“Lots of divers are attracted to Alpena because of the shipwrecks,” Krawczak says, noting that some are even visible from the surface of the water. “I’ve taken my kayak out and seen some—that’s pretty amazing.”

If diving or kayaking isn’t your thing, at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center you can view shipwrecks without being on the water. The 20,000-square-foot building includes live video feeds from divers at shipwreck sites and many interactive exhibits and displays. You can even feel what it’s like to be on the roiling waters of Lake Huron when you board a replica of a ship that sank in Thunder Bay.

There’s no admission fee to the Center, which is open year-round, and has special events and activities during the Thunder Bay Maritime Festival that is part of Alpena’s annual Fourth of July celebration (<http://thunderbay.noaa.gov>).

Lighthouse Lovers

Whether they sank or travelled safely on Lake Huron’s waters, every ship’s captain focused on the rays of hope that came from light signals. Lighthouses in and around Alpena include the Alpena Light that can be viewed from the transient docks at Alpena City Harbor; Middle Island, where you can even stay overnight; Thunder Bay Island, one of the oldest light stations on Lake Huron; and two of the most famous stations on Michi-

gan's "Sunrise Side"—the "old" and "new" Presque Isle lighthouses. Located about 20 miles north of Alpena, the Old Presque Isle Lighthouse was built in 1840. The "new" station dates to 1870, and at 113 feet, it's the tallest lighthouse on Lake Huron.

If you love lighthouses, but your time in Alpena is limited, visit the Huron Lights Gift Shop and Museum, located at U.S.-23 and Long Lake Road. Owners Jerry and Barbara Roach have photographed and written about hundreds of lighthouses, with photos and books for sale beside a wide variety of Michigan-made products.

"We enjoy working with local artisans and displaying their items," Jerry says about the hand-crafted wares, including stained glass, metal art, woodworking, and log furniture. "People are always surprised when they stop here and see everything—it's not just about lighthouses, although we certainly enjoy our connection with the Middle Island Lighthouse Association and its museum here, too." Check out Huron Lights on Facebook or call the shop at 989-595-3600.

Alpena also hosts the Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival (Oct. 7-10; 586-566-1603 or lighthousefestival.org), but from Saginaw to Mackinaw, lighthouses will be open for tours and visits.

Downtown: Art and A Ghost

Beautiful sights and fun things to do aren't limited to the outdoors. Alpena offers many shopping and eating choices if you are in town for a day trip, weekend events, or a longer vacation outing.

One of the most well-known restaurants in the historic downtown district is the John A. Lau Saloon. The food is great and the brew tasty—just ask Agnes, a ghost of the saloon's original owner who makes occasional appearances.

"It's a fun place to go, and the legend about Agnes makes eating there even more



interesting," Krawczak says about the restaurant, where John A. Lau first served hungry lumberjacks back when the timber industry reigned in Alpena.

The current owners, John and Connie Van Schoick, have kept that history alive through renovations following their purchase of the business in 1987. See old and new photos—and learn about Agnes—at johnalausaloon.com

A short walk away is the Center Building, another of Alpena's many vintage structures that have been lovingly renovated for 21st-century lifestyles. Retail shops such as The Fresh Palate, featuring gourmet breakfast and lunch; and The Forget Me Not Shoppe, with scrapbooking offerings, fill the first floor.

Alpena's cultural heritage is on full display on the third floor, home to the Art in the Loft Gallery of the Northeast Michigan Center for Fine Arts. Nearly 200 artists keep the spacious gallery filled with works from all genres.

"In addition to all

the various art pieces that are available for sale, our artists conduct workshops and demonstrations throughout the year," says Karen Bennett, a board member for the nonprofit association. "We like to call this part of the downtown area our 'creative district'—close to our theatres, shops and cafes that are all nearby."

For details on Art in the Loft and the Passport to the Arts Program that includes special events at many venues around Alpena, visit artintheloft.org or artownmichigan.org.

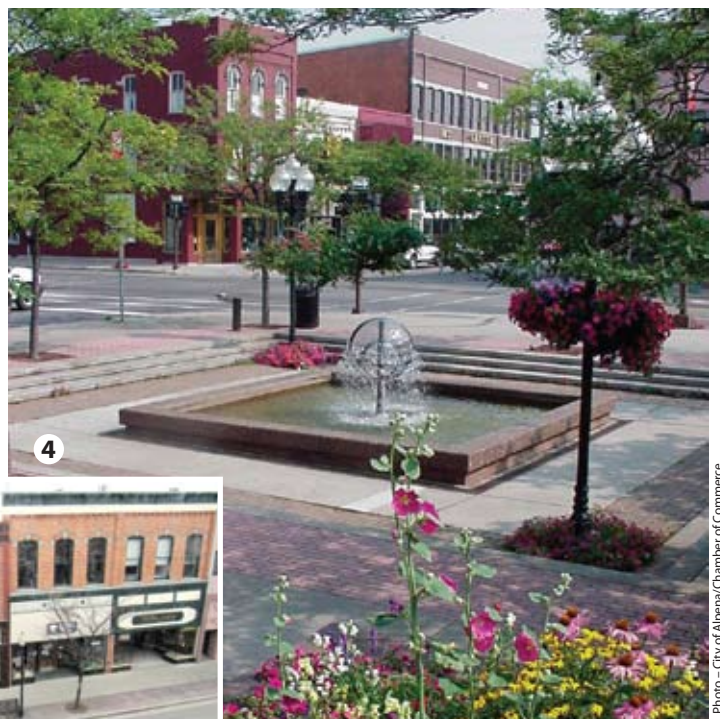
Other summer happenings include the Michigan Brown Trout Festival (July 17-25); Art on the Bay (July 17-18); Wings Over Alpena Air Show (Aug. 21). More details and lodging options are available through the Alpena Convention and Visitors Bureau at alpenacvb.com or 800-425-7362.

1) Shipwreck history comes alive at the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center.

2) Views of Lake Huron to the east—and the pretty city of Alpena on the west—greet walkers on a section of the Alpena Bi-Path that runs along the breakwall near Bay View Park.

3) Lighthouse lovers will want to see the Middle Island Lighthouse Association's museum, and nearby Huron Lights Gift Shop.

4) Culligan Square, and shops in downtown Alpena. The town has many vintage buildings that have been renovated.



A Greener Way to a Green Lawn

Most summer weekends are filled with the sounds of splashing in swimming pools, kids riding bicycles, and the steady din of lawn mowers. Mowers and other gas-powered equipment roar to life in most neighborhoods to keep yards looking trimmed and pristine.

However, these small engines emit a surprisingly large amount of pollution. By some U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates, engines used to maintain lawns and gardens account for 5 percent of total U.S. air pollution. Although regulation of small engines has not been a government priority, new rules will go into effect in the next year or two that govern these emissions.

The gas engines powering lawn mowers and other yard equipment emit carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless gas that is toxic to humans. They also emit hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide that contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone. Operating a gas-powered lawn mower for one hour produces the same amount of smog-forming hydrocarbons as driving an average car almost 200 miles, according to the EPA.

What's more, gas lawn mowers are noisy—

just ask anyone who wanted to sleep in on a Saturday morning when a neighbor decided to get an early start on yard work.

Luckily for your lawn and neighbors, options exist to help keep the grass groomed while reducing air and noise pollution.

A manual reel mower is a great option. These mowers have no engine, no fuel, and use human power to operate. They have zero emissions and operate with very little noise. The cost of a reel mower starts at \$70. To maximize their effectiveness, the blades should be sharpened regularly and the wheels lubricated. These mowers can last years with proper care. Though it's still hard to push this mower through tall grass, today's models are lighter and easier to maneuver than those of several decades ago. They are best-suited for smaller yards, although they can be used on any size lawn. Just keep in mind: the bigger the lawn, the more energy is needed from whoever is doing the mowing!

Electric- and battery-powered mowers offer another alternative. Like gas mowers, these have a motor that spins a blade, which cuts the blades of grass. They are quiet, emit no direct pollutants, and are available in corded or cordless.

Costs for a corded mower are similar to a gas-powered machine, ranging from \$150 to over \$400. However, they do have one very limiting feature: they must be connected to the house via an extension cord. As you can imagine, users must be aware of where the cord is at all times in order to avoid running over it with the mower.

Cordless rechargeable mowers are more convenient than their corded counterparts. Some cordless mowers have a removable battery that can be charged inside the home and placed in the mower when it is time to mow. Costs range from \$200 to over \$500.

Rechargeable mowers are limited by the life of the battery pack, so they may not be best for large lawns. When shopping for a cordless mower, look for information on the size of lawn the mower can handle or the minutes the mower will be able to run on a single charge. Many cordless mowers claim to handle one-third to one-half acre of yard or have a cutting time of 45–60 minutes. Actual times will vary depending on the battery's age, grass height, and how quickly the user can get the job done.

In recent years, the choice in cordless mowers has expanded, with models introduced by well-established companies like Toro® and Black and Decker®, as well as newcomers like Neuton®. But cordless mowers receive mixed reviews. Given their higher price tag, careful attention should be paid to the brand and model being purchased, and online reviews are a helpful resource in picking the right one. Many retailers offer customer reviews of products and these should be looked at prior to purchasing.

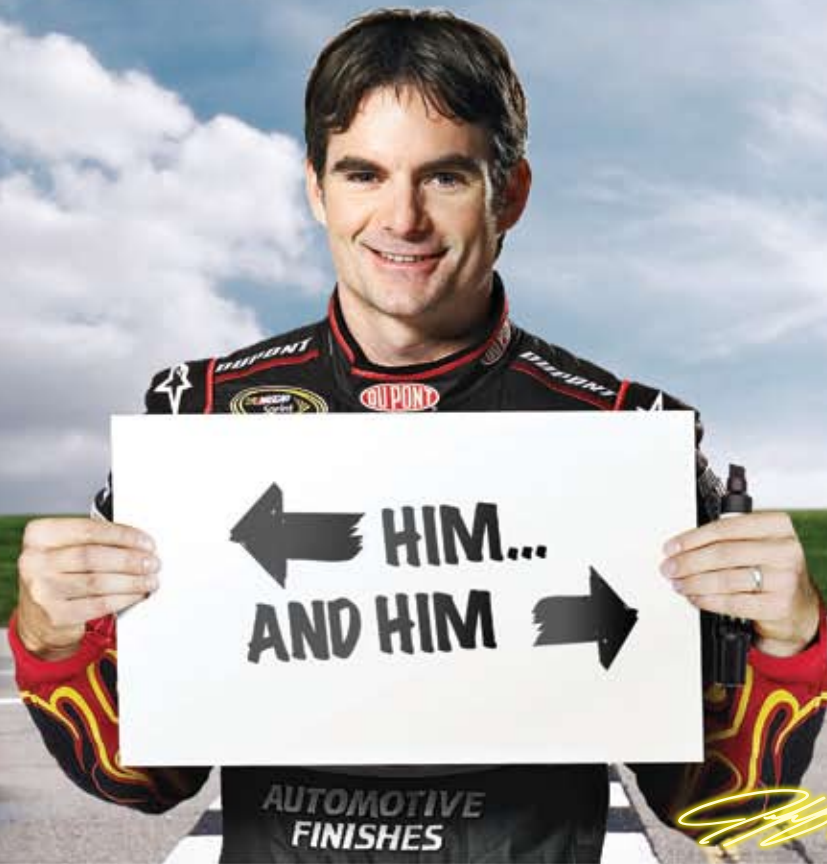
Gas-powered lawn mowers can be found on almost every street in America. However, because of rising fuel costs and environmental concerns, more people are switching to human-powered reel mowers or electric mowers. These alternatives are a reliable and attractive alternative to gas-powered models. They pollute less, and perhaps most importantly, they won't disturb your neighbor's summer nap.

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Neuton battery-powered mowers run on a rechargeable DURACELL® battery.



Photo—Neuton



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

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Learning the Co-op Way

Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days gives students from around the state a new take on learning.

Aiming to inspire the next generation of co-op leaders, six Michigan electric co-ops recently sponsored 29 high school sophomores and juniors from across the state to participate in a three-day “electric camp.”

The annual Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days event gives participants the opportunity to learn hands-on about staying safe around electricity and how to use it efficiently, information on careers in the electric industry and at their local electric co-op, and how the cooperative business model works.

While riding 60 feet up in a bucket truck or learning how wind turbines are built, the students also made lasting friendships as they increased their awareness about electricity.

“I came to Teen Days not knowing much about electricity or energy and not knowing anyone,” one student said, “but I left with more knowledge of electricity and co-ops, and many new friends. Teen Days is sweet.”

Held at the Kettunen 4-H Center near Tustin, the students also had the unique opportunity to watch a live newscast at TV 9&10 and take a tour of Wolverine Power Cooperative where they visited the energy



control center.

Wayne Bumstead (right) and Bob Kettle of Great Lakes Energy’s safety department brought in a hotline demonstration trailer, and Ray Bouvet, safety director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, taught the importance of safety at all times with special emphasis on not texting while driving!

Lineworker Deryk Steinman of Midwest Energy Cooperative demonstrated how to climb a utility pole and students had the opportunity to strap on the gear and try

it themselves.

Forming a mock board of directors, the students also learned about the co-op business model and how their co-ops are involved in the communities in which they live.

“Teen Days made me realize how much work people put into giving us power and how much they care,” says Rachael Hunt. “This experience was amazing.”

Nine co-op employees and two board members acted as chaperones for the event.

Thirteen of the students were also chosen to visit Washington, D.C., in June for the Rural Electric Youth Tour. Learn more about these co-op programs at countrylines.com, and click on “Youth.” — *Cindy Zuker*



Participating co-ops and students included: **Cherryland Electric**—Robert Myers, Autumn Russell and Gabrielle Kuznicki. **Cloverland Electric**—Maddy Hancock, Jared Hill, Kevin Bolz and John Swanson. **Great Lakes Energy**—Jessica Honig, Brittany Bonar, Dylan Koszegli, Mollie Andor, Brady Rands, Jake Smith, Luke Smith, Tyler Ashbaugh and Will Puerner. **HomeWorks Tri-County**—Tabitha Lyon, Emily Wilson and Karol Chubb. **Midwest Energy**—Craig Zebell, McKenna Wolf, Marcus Ruff and Emily Williams. **Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op**—Christian Tollini, Brook Szymoniak, Jasmine Materna, Rachael Hunt, Esther Hardies and Debbie LaLonde.

Expect More From Students

When she was 17, high school senior Dawn Lankford started hanging around with an older crowd. The Taylor resident lost interest in school, and when she realized that she couldn't graduate with her class, she gave up on her diploma.

"It is to this day my biggest regret," Lankford says. "This has been a very difficult road. For two years I struggled for everything—food, gas, bills. The emotional toll it took on my family and me was unbearable at times; would I be able to take care of myself? Would I get stuck in an overall 'bad situation?'"

It's a road traveled by too many Michigan students. One of every four won't graduate with their class, and in 2009, 11 percent didn't graduate at all.

Dropout Potential

Cara Harvey, guidance counselor at Forest Hills Central High School and president of the West Michigan Counseling Association, says some kids show "red flags" when they're struggling to stay in school.

"Low academic achievement, low extracurricular involvement—a general detachment or blatant withdrawal," she explains. "If a student does not have connections to the school community they are certainly at higher risk." Athletics, music, drama and relationships with teachers and fellow students are important connections.

The dropout risk is increased even more if a student doesn't see the relevance of school or have goals or see school as a step to meeting those goals. Other contributing factors can be substance abuse, lack of family support, and pregnancy. There are also unfortunate times when a student is needed to work to help support the family or themselves, or school is given up in order to focus on basic survival, such as, "What will I eat? Where will I sleep? How will I escape abuse?"

Helping Kids Succeed

Identifying and helping potential dropouts succeed is a major project for state and federal lawmakers. In April, Gov. Granholm announced that the state's high school dropout rate has decreased 3 percent since 2007 (from 14 to 11 percent), when tougher graduation requirements were adopted. Research says that holding kids to higher standards is a good idea. In a recent survey,

high school dropouts said they felt that classes were uninteresting and no one noticed if they failed to show up.

To address these issues, the 2009 "Superintendent's Dropout Challenge" was issued by Mike Flanagan, state superintendent of public instruction. He pushed Michigan's elementary, middle and high school administrators and staff to identify 10-15 students in their schools who were nearing or in a transition year with multiple dropout risk factors, and to provide support and intervention. It's a more personalized version of Granholm's higher standards—letting kids know that they're expected to work hard, but they've got help when and where they need it.

What Parents Can Do

"I encourage parents to be involved in their students' lives, including their education," Harvey says, and "Praise students for successes, keeping in mind success is relative."

Be interested in what is happening, she adds, and recommends being involved with the school, talking with teachers and counselors, and being willing to consider outside help, such as professional counseling, tutors and after-school programs. Parents must also "Be willing to face and confront the issues, whatever they may be, that are interfering with their child's success."

Harvey suggests starting with the school

counselor, who can help identify programs, advocate for the child, and be a listening ear to all.

If a student has already dropped out, parents should recommend that he or she meet with a GED chief examiner as soon as possible. Jack Thompson, executive director for the University Center at Gaylord and GED chief examiner for Otsego and Cheboygan counties, says even if the child isn't interested in obtaining a GED, "at some point, the realities of life usually kick in. It might take a year or it might take 10.

Many GED students are accustomed to failure when it comes to education, Thompson explains, but "Completion of the GED is a second chance to achieve a goal they didn't appreciate, or that may have escaped them earlier in life." Most are very pleased to earn their GED certificate, he says, and a certain sense of pride and self-esteem is restored.

On Her Way

In 2006, at age 19, Dawn Lankford took the GED exam, and now attends Wayne County Community College. This fall, she'll attend Wayne State University to pursue degrees in science and nursing.

"I feel pretty great about my life now," Lankford says.



High School Graduates:

- ▶ Live longer and are less likely to be teen parents
- ▶ Are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children
- ▶ Earn nearly \$10,000 more annually
- ▶ Contribute about \$60,000 more in taxes over a lifetime.

On The Other Hand:

Dropouts from 2008 will cost Michigan almost \$12 billion in lost wages over their lifetimes. Nationally, the U.S. would save between \$7 billion and \$10.8 billion annually by improving the education level reached by people who receive food stamps, housing assistance and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

If just the male graduation rate were increased by only 5 percent, the nation would see an annual savings of \$4.9 billion in crime-related costs.

Resources:

- ▲ ProjectFindMichigan.org (*educ. support/all students*)
- ▲ DropoutPrevention.org (*publications, research, links*)
- ▲ ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml (*No Child Left Behind*)
- ▲ michigan.gov/adulteducation (*517-373-8800*)
- ▲ solutionsforamerica.org/healthyfam/dropout_prevention.html
- ▲ acenet.edu/resources/GED/center_locator.cfm (*find a local GED program*)

When Will I Get My Power

Ever wonder how your electric co-op decides where to start restoring power after an outage? When your co-op's staff begins assessing storm damage, they focus on fixing the biggest problems first, prioritizing repairs according to how quickly and safely they can get the most homes back into service.

Step One: Clearing the Path

Think of the flow of electricity as a river in reverse. It originates at a single ocean of power (a generation plant) and diverges from there into a series of transmission lines, substations and smaller feeder lines until it reaches homes and businesses at a trickle of its original strength.

Transmission lines, which carry power at high voltages from power plants, and local substations, where the voltage is lowered for safe travel to neighborhoods, must both be inspected for damage and repaired before any other restoration efforts take place. After all, if the substation linked to your neighborhood's power supply is damaged, it doesn't matter if lineworkers repair every problem near your home—the lights will stay dark.

Step Two: Bulk Efforts

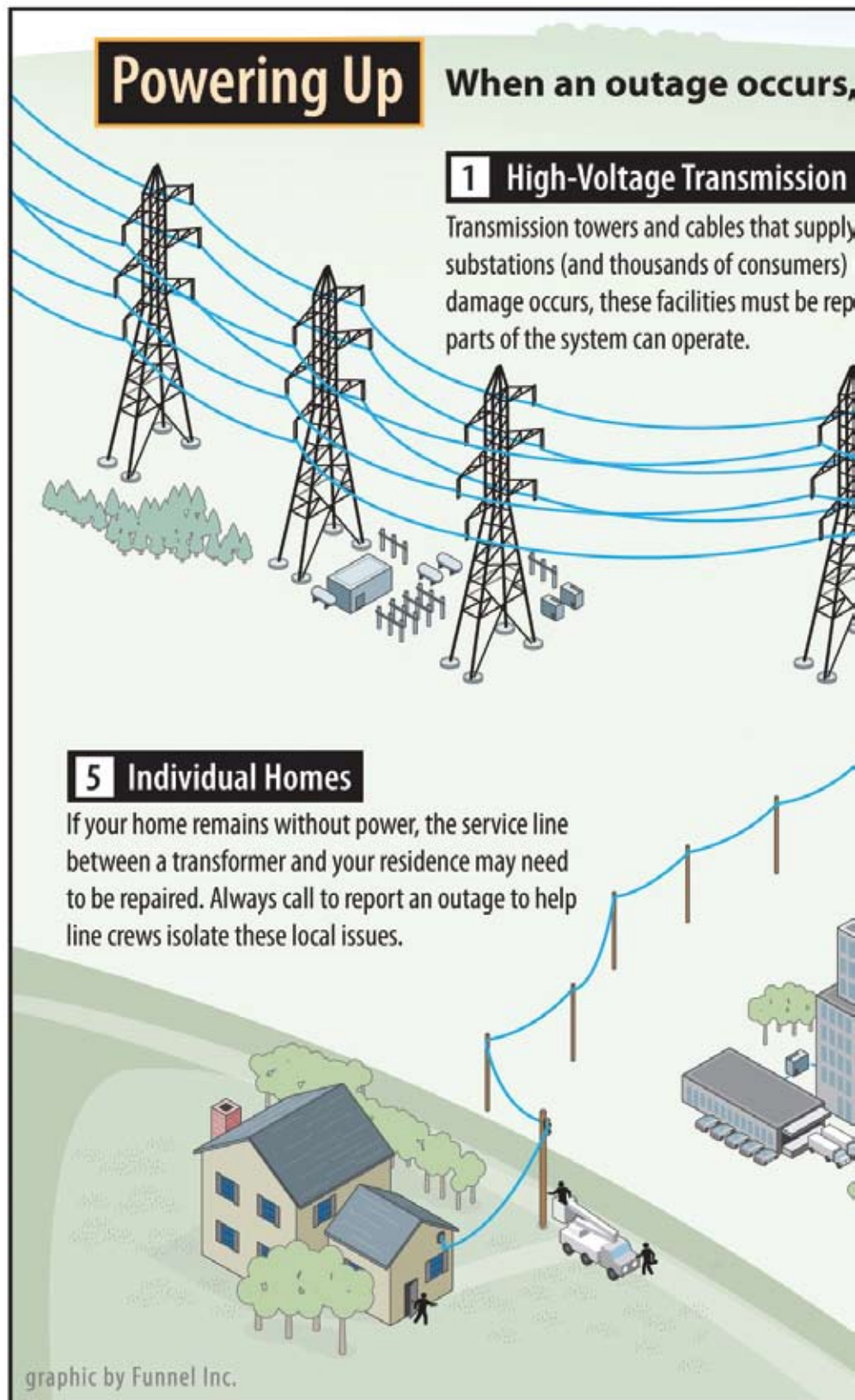
After restoring the flow of power to local substations, co-ops focus on getting power back to the greatest number of members. Distribution lines in more populated cities and communities are checked for damage and repaired quickly, delivering electricity to most members.

What does this mean? You may live on a farm with neighbors a mile or two away, or you may live in a neighborhood surrounded by 20 homes. Folks in neighborhoods will likely see power return before those in remote areas. Line repairs are once again prioritized by the number of members who benefit.

Step Three: One-on-One

After fixing damage that blocks power from large pockets of members, your co-op focuses on repairing tap lines (also called supply or service lines). These lines deliver power to transformers outside homes and businesses. This is the final stage of power restoration, requiring a bit more patience.

If you or a family member depends on special medical equipment, let your co-op know before an emergency arises, so you can receive special attention. — Megan McKoy



When electricity goes out, most of us expect power will be restored within a long, hard hours, often in bad weather, to restore service safely to the great

er Back?

line crews work to pinpoint problems

1 Distribution Substation

power to transmission lines rarely fail. But when they fail, they are repaired before other

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.

2 Main Distribution Lines

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

3 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

Stay clear of downed power lines! They may still be "live" and could cause serious injury or death. If someone is injured by contact with a power line, call 911 and keep others away until help arrives. If a power line falls across or near your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives. If you must exit, jump clear so that no part of your body is touching the car and feet land at the same time. Keep both feet together and then shuffle or hop at least 30 feet away from the vehicle.

few hours. But when a major storm causes widespread damage, longer outages may result. Co-op line crews work the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.



appetizers

Find many more recipes from readers at countrylines.com.

Salmon-Cucumber Appetizers

2 oz. *canned salmon, chopped*
3-4 oz. *cream cheese, softened*
1/4 t. *dry dill weed*
2 lg. *cucumbers, peeled and cut into 1/4-inch slices*

Mix salmon, cream cheese and dill weed. Spoon onto cucumber slices.

Mary Ann Frazee, Baldwin

Hot Virginia Dip

1 c. *chopped pecans*
2 t. *butter*
16 oz. *cream cheese, softened*
4 T. *milk*
5 oz. *dried beef, minced*
1 t. *garlic salt*
1 c. *sour cream*
4 t. *minced onion*

Sauté pecans in butter; set aside. Mix remaining ingredients together; mixing well. Place mixture in a 1/2 quart baking dish; top with pecans. Chill until serving time, then bake at 350° for 20 minutes. Serve hot with crackers or small breadsticks.

June Dougherty, Evart

Celery Canapes

celery
sharp cheese spread
chunky peanut butter

Separate celery stalks; wash and dry. Fill stalks with cheese or peanut butter. Tie stalks together lengthwise; chill well. To serve, slice stalks crosswise in 1-inch thick slices.

Janet O'Donnell, Beaver Island

Beer Dip

2 8-oz. *pkgs. cream cheese, softened*
1 *envelope dry Ranch dip or dressing mix*
1 *can or bottle flat beer*
shredded cheddar cheese

Using a mixer; combine cream cheese and dry dip mix. Slowly add beer, mixing until

smooth and of dipping consistency. Add cheese to your liking. Serve with pretzels.

Tommie Schmidt, Union

Pickled Eggs

1 16-oz. *can sliced beets*
12 *hard cooked eggs, peeled*
3/4 c. *cider vinegar*
1/2 c. *sugar*
2 T. *salt*
1/2 t. *cracked pepper*
1/8 t. *ground allspice*
6 *whole cloves*

Begin recipe 12-72 hours before using. Into a 1-quart saucepan, drain liquid from beets. Place beet slices and eggs in a 1/2 quart jar or a large glass bowl. Into the beet juice, stir vinegar, sugar, salt, pepper, allspice and cloves; heat mixture to boiling. Pour boiling mixture over eggs and beets in jar. Cover and refrigerate at least 12 hours to allow flavors to penetrate eggs. To serve, drain liquid from eggs and beets. Slice eggs crosswise, place egg slices on small crackers and top with a dollop of mustard or mayonnaise, then add a piece of sliced beet. Egg and beet slices can also be used to dress-up salads.

Paula Brousseau, Bellaire

Stuffed Mushrooms

8 oz. *cream cheese, softened*
8 oz. *bacon*
12 oz. *medium-sized button mushrooms*

Place softened cream cheese in a bowl. Fry bacon until crisp; drain, cool and crumble into cream cheese; mix together. Wash mushrooms, pop out stems; drain caps on paper towel. With a butter knife, stuff caps

with cream cheese mixture using all the filling. Place mushrooms, filling side up, in a 9x9-inch baking dish. Bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes or until cheese is slightly brown and mushrooms have cooked. Remove from oven, let stand 5 minutes then transfer to a serving dish. Mushrooms may be broiled, but must be watched more carefully. Mushrooms can be filled the day ahead, covered with foil and refrigerated until ready for baking.

Mary Paukert, Gaylord

Sugar & Nut-Glazed Baked Brie

1/4 c. *brown sugar*
1/4 c. *chopped pecans*
2-3 T. *maple syrup*
1 16-20 oz. *double crème Brie round, with rind on*
apple wedges
crackers

In a small bowl, stir brown sugar and nuts together. Place brie round, in rind, on a foil covered cookie sheet. Sprinkle sugar-nut mixture on top. Drizzle maple syrup over nut mixture. Bake at 350° about 15 minutes until topping mixture is slightly bubbly and cheese is soft. Place Brie on a large plate surrounded with crackers and apple wedges.

Pamela DeTullio, Ann Arbor

Sweet and Sour Chicken Wings

3 lbs. *chicken wings*
1/2 c. *flour*
1/2 c. *cornstarch*
2 *eggs, well beaten*
Sauce:
3/4 c. *sugar, brown and white combined*
1/2 c. *cider vinegar*
1/4 c. *chicken stock*
3-4 T. *catsup*
1 T. *soy sauce*
1/2 t. *MSG, (optional)*
1/2 t. *salt*

Sprinkle wings with garlic salt and MSG. Let set for one hour; refrigerate. Heat oil. Combine flour and cornstarch. Dip wings in flour mixture, then in beaten eggs. Fry in oil until golden brown. In a saucepan, heat all sauce ingredients until sugar dissolves. Lay chicken wings in a baking pan; pour sauce over wings. Bake at 350° for 1 hour, turning after 1/2 hour.

Mary Ann Schultz, Scottville

► **Send in your recipes!** If published, you'll receive a free kitchen gadget. Send in: **POULTRY recipes by June 10, SANDWICH recipes by Aug. 10, and STIR FRY recipes by Sept. 10.** Mail to: *Country Lines* Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email jhansen@countrylines.com.

Fresh Bruschetta with Feta Dip

3 med. tomatoes, chopped in 1/4-inch pieces
1 T. fresh minced garlic
1/4 t. salt
1/4 t. pepper
1 T. balsamic vinegar
1 T. fresh chopped parsley
1 T. fresh chopped basil
1 T. fresh chopped mint
1/2 c. feta cheese
2 lg. baguettes
1 T. fresh chopped parsley
2 T. grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 c. olive oil

Slice bread into diagonal length pieces; place slices on a large cookie sheet. Drizzle olive oil over all slices until gone. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese on slices; then parsley. Bake uncovered at 375° about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, combine all dip ingredients except feta cheese. Let dip sit for 5 minutes; add feta cheese and mix well. Serve dip with hot bread slices.

Danielle Cochran, Grayling

Marinated Mushrooms

3 lbs. whole mushrooms
4 oz. Kraft Zesty Italian dressing
5 sprinkles oregano

5 sprinkles Worcestershire sauce
2 sticks butter or margarine
1 pkg. dry Italian Good Seasons® dressing mix
4 beef bouillon cubes

Put everything in a crock pot. Heat on high for 6 hours, stirring occasionally.

Julie Grulke, Cheboygan

Hors d'oeuvres

1 sleeve Ritz® crackers
cheese, any flavor
pepperoni slices, optional
olives, black or green, halved
mayonnaise or Miracle Whip®

On each cracker, spread a small amount of mayonnaise or Miracle Whip. Top with a slice of cheese, a piece of pepperoni and half of an olive.

Patricia Sutton, Punta Gorda, FL

Sweet Onion Appetizer

1 1/2 c. chopped sweet Vidalia onion
2 c. shredded Swiss cheese
1/3 c. mayonnaise
few splashes hot pepper sauce, optional
paprika

In a medium bowl, mix onion, cheese, mayonnaise and hot sauce. Spray an 8x8-inch baking dish with cooking spray. Spread onion

mixture in baking dish. Lightly sprinkle with paprika. Bake at 350° for 20-30 minutes until bubbly and golden brown. Serve warm with crackers or slices of hearty dipping bread.

Katy Lutz, Traverse City

Cheese & Ham Spirals

1 egg
1 T. water
1 sheet puff pastry, (1/2 of 17 1/4-oz. pkg), thawed
1/4 c. grated Parmesan cheese, divided
1/4 t. cayenne pepper, approximately
8-12 slices shaved ham

Beat egg and water with wire whisk until blended; set aside. Unfold pastry on a lightly floured surface; roll into a 14x10-inch rectangle. Brush lightly with some of the egg mixture. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of the cheese and the cayenne pepper evenly over pastry. Place ham slices down center of pastry, lengthwise. Roll jelly-roll fashion to make a log, 14-inches long. Cut into 24 equal slices. Place on a greased baking sheet and brush with remaining egg mixture. Sprinkle with remaining cheese. Bake at 400° for 12-14 minutes until golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

10 Hot Tips for "Green" Summer Cooking

Keep your cool this summer when preparing meals. You can save money and reduce your carbon footprint with these 10 easy tips for "going green" when cooking summer meals.

1 Cook outdoors when possible to reduce the load on your air conditioner. Try a solar cooker or oven. Solar cookers and ovens are by far the most energy-efficient cooking appliances. They require no fuel, reduce unwanted summer heat in your home by taking cooking outside, and can accommodate any food a slow cooker can. Some solar ovens can reach 500 degrees. To learn more, visit solarcooking.org.

2 Toaster ovens, convection ovens, and slow cookers get the job done with less energy than conventional stove tops or ovens, especially when preparing smaller meals.

3 Use as small a pan, as little water, and

as little pre-heating time as possible.

4 Bake in glass or ceramic oven ware instead of metal. You can turn the temperature down by 25 degrees, and foods will cook in the same amount of time.

5 Avoid thawing food in the microwave. Thawing food in the fridge is far more energy efficient, contributes to the fridge's cooling, and is safer than thawing food on the counter top or in the sink.

6 Don't open the door and peek in the oven. Use the oven window instead!

7 Clean burner pans (trays under burners that catch grease) regularly – they'll reflect heat more effectively to the cookware. Dirty burner pans absorb heat and reduce efficiency.

8 Use flat-bottom cookware that rests evenly on the surface of electric coil burners, solid-

disk elements, or radiant elements under smooth-top ceramic glass.

9 Use residual heat. Turn the stove or oven off before cooking is done to allow cooking to continue while reducing energy use. An electric burner element can be turned off two minutes before removing the cookware, since it remains hot. Ovens can be turned off 20 minutes before cooking's done.

10 Consider substituting one or more stove top burners with an induction cooker. The typical efficiency of an induction cooker is 84 percent, gas stove tops are 40 percent efficient, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. What's more, induction cookers (which require magnetic cookware such as cast iron or enameled steel) produce as much heat as gas and are less costly to operate than a conventional electric burner. Visit theinductionsite.com to learn more.

John Bruce is a freelance writer based in South Carolina. He writes on energy efficiency for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Photos © iStockphoto.com

Grow Terrific Tomatoes

Tomatoes are an equal opportunity vegetable. That is, anyone can grow them as long as they have a spot that is sunny most of the day. You can grow tomatoes in a large garden, small garden, containers, or a patio—and upside down, for gosh sakes! However, they aren't equitable when it comes to ripening. So let's see if we can level the playing field so that everyone, even us folks up North, can enjoy a juicy red-ripe tomato.

Tomato plants (rather than seed) are probably the best option now that summer's here. Select varieties that have a fighting chance in your area. I envy folks in the southern part of the state who can grow the humongous "Beef Steak" tomatoes. It's human nature to want to grow one of these huge hamburger slicers. However, if you've left more of these rotting on the vine than you care to remember, you may wish to try some smaller, but no less tasty varieties, such as "Early Girl," "Big Beef Hybrid," or my favorite, "Celebrity."

If you really want a guarantee you'll be seeing red in August, grow the cherry type. These sweet things are a joy to eat right off the vine, and are great in a salad. They can even be canned. There are many varieties, including "Sweet Million Hybrid" and "Sweet

Baby Girl Hybrid."

Tomatoes planted right in the garden should be planted in soil rich in organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted livestock manure. Tomatoes are heat loving plants and very susceptible to frost, so set them out when the weather is warm and settled. Remove the tomatoes from their containers and sink them down into the soil so that the lower branches are buried in the ground.



This encourages multiple roots to form and keeps the plant well-anchored in the wind. Water the plant with warm water before you fill in the hole and firm the soil around the plant base.

To hold water in after a rain or watering, construct a 3-4 inch berm about a foot out from the base of the plant. Sprinkle a little 12-12-12 or organic fertilizer inside the berm.

To grow tomatoes in a container, you'll need a 12x12-inch pot that drains well. Fill the container with a combination of a quality potting mix and compost at about a 50/50 ratio. Mix in a little slow-release fertilizer, such as Osmocote®. Choose a compact variety of tomato for the container, such as "Superbush" or "Tumbling Tom" (a cherry type that is best grown in a hanging basket). Put only one plant per container and place

it in a sunny, protected area and be ready to water almost daily during summer's heat.

While the weather's still cool in early June, I like to protect my tomatoes from the chilly north wind and give them a little kick-start. One way is to use one of my own inventions, which is to place an 18-inch-tall wire cage around the plant and drape a black plastic garbage bag over the top and around the cage. Cut the bottom out of the bag so the plant is exposed to the sun. Secure the plastic to the fencing with clothes pins. This method will really draw heat to the plant and protect it from the wind. Keep the plastic on until the weather has warmed up nicely. After you remove the plastic, you'll have a nice support for the plant.

Another trick to ensure ripe tomatoes is to surround the base of the plants with black or red plastic mulch. Both colors will warm the soil. Red plastic mulch has the added benefit of increasing tomato yields, according to studies at Cornell University. There is something about the red spectrum rays reflecting up into the tomatoes that encourages them to be prolific.

The next few strategies are critical if you want the bragging rights to "Big Red." Water well once per week during the growing season. Fertilize with an all-purpose fertilizer each time you water, applied at half strength.

Stake the tomatoes as necessary and continue watering once per week until the plant starts to set fruit. At this time you can ease back on the watering. Once the tomatoes are fully mature you won't be watering at all. If you're still worried they won't ripen, try a little technique I learned from a vegetable garden author, Dick Raymond. He says to 'grab hold of the trunk and give it a nice yank.' This will interrupt tomato growth, which hastens ripening.

Prevent disease by purchasing disease resistant varieties and practicing proper spacing and watering (i.e., never water the plant's foliage). An application of lime that contains calcium will help prevent blossom-end rot disease. Don't worry too much about browning leaves underneath the plant, it's common. Remove diseased plants from the garden each year and keep them out of the compost pile.

I hope this gives you enough helpful tips to satisfy your desire (obsession?) with growing red-ripe tomatoes.

Happy gardening!

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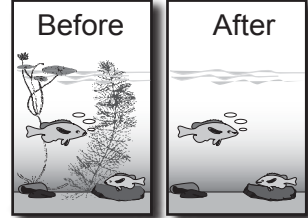
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Clean Plates, Lower Bills



Photo-Miele

New energy efficient dishwashers save hot water and trim energy bills.

Using an automatic dishwasher is typically more efficient than hand-washing dishes (although if you take your time and are very miserly with water usage, hand-washing can be more efficient).

No matter which new dishwasher you select, you can be certain it will use less electricity and hot water than your old one. The vast majority of dishwashers made today exceed Energy Star® efficiency standards. Over the life of the new dishwasher, the energy and water savings as compared to your old one can pay back its initial cost.

The majority of the cost of using a dishwasher is for heating the water. A portion of this energy is used by the home's primary water heater, the rest by an internal heater in the dishwasher. With this in mind, if a dishwasher design consumes less water, less energy is needed to wash a load of dishes. Always compare the overall water consumption specifications for an average load cycle among the models.

Of course, the most important feature is how well a washer cleans dishes. If it does not clean well, people tend to run it on the heavy cycle when normal will do, or they hand rinse

the dishes first. Rinsing can use more than 10 extra gallons of water, and if hot water is used, more energy is being consumed. With a good dishwasher, a simple hand-scraping of dirty dishes should be adequate.

Top-of-the-line dishwashers offer many cycle settings to fine-tune the process to the cleaning needs of the specific load. This is a nice feature, but most families can get by with three basic cycles: light, medium, and heavy (for pots and pans).

Some dishwashers also sport a two-pump design in the bottom of the tank: one small pump is used for spraying the dishes and another is used to drain the unit. Many models still use a single, reversing pump that sprays in one rotation and drains in the other. Two smaller pumps require a smaller water reservoir, but the efficiency difference between one- and two-pump models has narrowed considerably.

Newer electronic controls offer greater convenience and efficiency. Hidden digital electronic controls—which typically run along the top edge of the door—look good when the door is closed, but you cannot watch the progress of the cycle and see the time left. Partially hidden controls are another

This efficient dishwasher uses three spray arms to clean all the dishes from many cabinets and the exterior digital controls allow you to follow the progression of the cycle.

option. A dishwasher I recently selected has exposed controls, which I find easier to see and use.

Newer dishwashers are also much quieter, accomplished by better motor/pump design and higher insulation levels—both for noise reduction and better efficiency. Layers of insulation are placed around the pump assembly and the cabinet door and walls. The stainless steel dishwasher I recently installed in my own home is significantly quieter and has shorter cycles.

Automatic dirt sensors measure the cloudiness of the water to determine when the dishes are clean and how long to run the cycles. There are several technologies to accomplish this, and they function pretty well. A filter option strains the water inside the dishwasher to remove food particles. Self-cleaning models use a grinder, but this may increase the noise level. A rinse-hold feature uses only two gallons of water to rinse the dishes if you do not plan to run the dishwasher for a long while.

And, as for efficient washing by hand? I've tested it in my own home using a Delta® spray kitchen faucet with touch control, which allows me to minimize water usage when rinsing the washed dishes.

The overall energy savings when hand washing is really only realized during winter. I leave the warm sudsy water in the sink until it cools off. This heat is given off to the kitchen air, so the heating system has to run less (the same applies when taking a hot bath during cold winters). During summer, I do not hand-wash dishes to reduce the heat and humidity buildup indoors. Hand-washing dishes in the summer can actually cause a double loss because your air conditioner has to run longer to remove the excess heat and humidity.

The following companies offer efficient dishwashers: Asko, 800-898-1879, askousa.com; Bosch Appliances, 800-944-2904, boschappliances.com; Dacor, 800-793-0093, dacor.com; Kitchenaid, 800-422-1230, kitchenaid.com; and Miele Appliances, 800-843-7231, mieleusa.com.

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



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Biomass Research Continues With Large-Scale Crops

Wolverine Power Cooperative is taking the next step in its biomass research partnership with Michigan Technological University (MTU) by planting larger crop sites this season, which will help to evaluate costs and efficiencies.

Biomass is renewable organic matter including wood, woody forest and mill residues, and switchgrass. Up to 20 percent of the fuel for the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture power plant, proposed for a site near Rogers City, MI, could be sustainable biomass. Wolverine's goal is to grow biomass fuels for the power plant on fallow land in the area to benefit the local economy.

"We planted two 20-acre sites this spring, one with hybrid poplar trees and the other with switchgrass," says Brian Warner, director of environmental services for Wolverine.

"With these crops, we're looking at the costs of machinery, labor, seed and seedlings, herbicide, fertilizer and leasing land to arrive at a total farm gate cost," adds Robert Froese, associate professor of forest science at MTU.

Wolverine and MTU began studying biomass in 2008, when trees were planted in small, fenced fields. In 2009, trees and switchgrass were planted in open fields.

"We're seeing varying degrees of success with our 2008 and 2009 experiments," Warner says. "Overall, we're pleased with our results. The rooted hybrid poplar trees are doing especially well, as are the soft maple."

Froese and MTU graduate students are monitoring the crops' impact on the ecosystem by taking carbon and nutrient inventories. Optimal spacing for tree plantings and the timing and effectiveness of herbicide applications are also being studied.

An MTU study completed for Wolverine in the spring of 2008 identified more than 260,000 acres of herbaceous land within a 75-mile radius of Rogers City that is suitable for biomass crop production. There are also opportunities to better manage existing forest land in the area.

"Current harvest rates for forests within 75 miles of Rogers City are at 26 percent. Imagine growing a field of corn and only cutting one-quarter of it, leaving the rest standing," explains Froese. "Clearly, there's room for additional forest harvest."

"Through our work with Wolverine, we know there is an abundant opportunity to use existing and new sources of biomass in the area to generate clean energy," he concludes.

Top: Hybrid poplar trees planted in spring 2008 have grown several feet.

Bottom: Native aspen trees were planted at a test plot near Onaway in May. Native aspen are new to the biomass research effort. An auger is used to drill holes for small-scale tree plantings.



Cherryland's Solid Track Record

I've proudly worked in two industries during my life.

Both are industries that people depend on every day, and both have sharp-tongued critics.

Fair enough.

That comes with the territory when you've worked in the newspaper industry (24 years) or the electric co-op business (10 years).

In both cases, we try to put out the best product we can, every day. In the newspaper industry, no matter how many sides to a story you quoted, there were always readers who claimed you were being unfair or one-sided.

In the electricity business, it doesn't matter if you are an owner of one of the largest wind farms in the Midwest or a state leader in energy optimization; there are people who will claim you aren't doing enough to be "green."

In the case of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, I know for a fact that we are always looking out for what's best for our members.

That means trying to balance price with principle. For us, principle is huge. I think our employees and our company reflect that in the care we show for members and the amount of volunteer time we put into our community.

We are looking at ways to get "greener" every day, but we aren't in the business of making idle promises to members or the media just so we look good or win awards.

The easiest thing in the world for us to do would be to tell our members that we are going to get 30 percent "greener" in the next 10 years. That would win us widespread acclaim. But in small letters, we'd have to mention that our rates would also shoot up.

Why? Here's a good example. When our huge wind farm opened a few years ago, some people assumed that would be the answer to all of our problems. We found out that reliable wind power is only produced 25 percent of the time. The same goes for most other forms of renewable energy: great in theory, not so much in practicality, as far as base load goes.



Nick Edson

It's nice to be able to get up on a soapbox and criticize electric companies for not going 100 percent renewable. But people need reliable power 100 percent of the time, not just when the wind blows or the sun shines. That's why

the word *coal* is considered a dirty, four-letter word by critics.

In truth, coal is still a big part of our portfolio because it offers reliable and affordable energy. That has to be part of the energy mix, too.

When it comes right down to it, there are no easy answers when it comes to

power supply.

Over the last couple of years in this magazine, we have looked at nuclear energy, hydro, wind, and all forms of sustainable energy.

The best answers we have right now are that an energy portfolio has to be diverse in order to best serve our members.

It's too bad that honest answers like that aren't enough to make some people happy, but it's the truth.

We're not in the business here at Cherryland of making false promises. Our promise is to keep the lights on at an affordable cost...and we've done that for 72 years.

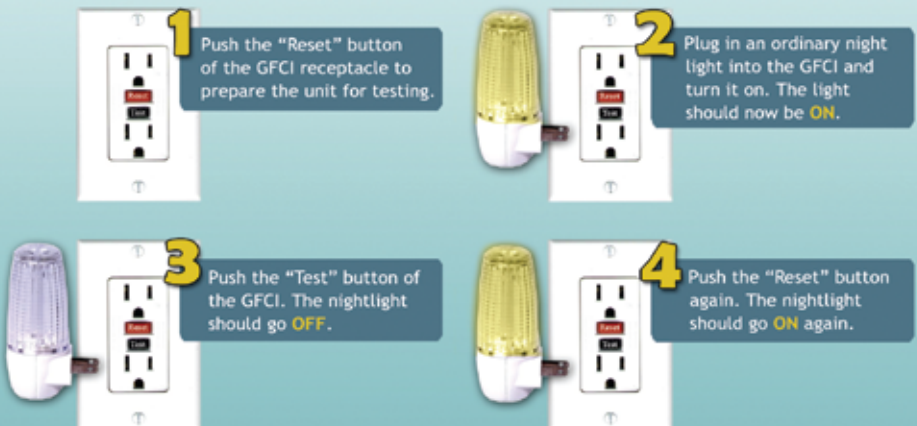


"...I know for a fact that Cherryland is always looking out for what's best for our members...that means trying to balance price with principle."

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WANTED, RING – Middle Eastern flair, 22-carat only, please. Her birthday is April 1st, from Baghdad. Looking for something old, if possible. 231-846-0346 or alanj@coxx.com

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Cherryland Bulletin Board

Nonprofits Urged to Apply for Grants

Area nonprofit agencies that are seeking financial help can apply for a grant through our Cherryland Cares program. The deadline for the June 28 quarterly meeting is June 15.

Cherryland Cares has a five-member board, made up of Cherryland Electric Cooperative members, who distribute money from Operation Round Up to nonprofit agencies that help local people.

Operation Round Up gets its money from Cherryland members who elect to round up their bills to the nearest dollar every month. During the last two quarterly meetings of Cherryland Cares, the board has given out more than \$30,000.

For a 501 3C nonprofit agency to receive an application, contact Nick Edson at Cherryland. His direct line is 486-9222 and email is nicke@cecelec.com.

Cherryland Raises \$4,600 for Relay

Cherryland's Relay for Life team took part in the annual Traverse City event on June 5-6 at the Civic Center.

Team captain Chris Holmes reports that Cherryland raised nearly \$4,600 for the Relay.

Over the past 10 years, the Cherryland team has raised more than \$40,000 toward the fight against cancer.

Co-op Changes Office Hours

Effective May 3, Cherryland Electric Cooperative changed its business hours.

The new hours are 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

"We have experienced a trend toward heavier call volume later in the day, which has resulted in service and coverage issues," explains Amanda Olds, member service supervisor. "By opening one-half hour later, we will improve overall member service by shifting resources to the later time. The cooperative receives very few calls and walk-in traffic from 7 a.m. to 7:30 a.m."

Hathaway Wins Energy Star Rebate

Mildred Hathaway of Suttons Bay won a \$100 Energy Star® rebate from Cherryland Electric Cooperative at the Leelanau County Business Expo on May 12. The \$100 will go toward the purchase of an Energy Star appliance. She and her husband have been Cherryland members for 35 years.

Myers Wins Teen Days Trip To D.C.

Robert Myers of Onekama High School, whose family is a Cherryland Electric Cooperative member, was selected to win an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., as part of the Rural Electric Youth Tour.

Myers will join a group of teens from other Michigan electric cooperatives to spend a week in Washington during the third week in June.

Myers was one of three Cherryland representatives to attend the three-day Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days event in Cadillac in April. He was joined by Gabrielle Kuznicki of Lake Leelanau St. Mary's and Autumn Russell of Traverse City Central.

Cherryland Annual Meeting June 16

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

Members attending 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 Awarded \$300,000 USDA Grant

A \$300,000 grant that Cherryland Electric Cooperative received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will help the new Grand Traverse Metro fire station on East Silver Lake Road buy a new pumper truck.

The USDA grants are made through the Rural Development Program, which helps rural businesses create and grow jobs. The grant cycle that Cherryland was part of included \$21.3 million awarded around the country.

Combined with other USDA grants, Cherryland now has \$780,000 in zero-interest loans that are helping area businesses. The new fire station on East Silver Lake Rd. will be served by Cherryland.

Visit cherrylandelectric.com for more information about co-op services.

Organizing Tips For Busy Families

Q: *We are a sports family, busy with every sport from season to season. The equipment takes over half of our two-car garage, and I fear will soon take over the whole garage. There are piles of old gear and deflated balls. We sometimes just buy something new rather than sort through the pile-up. I know what we need to do. Can you come to our house and do it for us?*



Jill James

A: I understand and sympathize. I am not available, yet there are people who will. I would first try contacting a local cleaning service. If they do not offer this service, they may be a resource to find someone who does. I've also seen elaborate garage organizers at one of the large do-it yourself building supply stores, and one was designed specifically for sports equipment.

There were super large bins for balls, tall slots for bats, golf clubs, and tennis rackets. Hooks were located everywhere for hanging helmets, shin guards and gloves. It was amazing how beautiful it looked—all tidy and contained. Back in the day, I used laundry baskets and those large, round, plastic super-sized buckets. They never held everything and tipped over all the time. Eventually, trash containers worked better, and they were on wheels. Make sure you label them or decorate the outside to avoid going out to the curb.

Q: *I want you to know that our family has made some changes in our daily lives because of reading your article in Country Lines magazine. The biggest change we made was eliminating paper towels and napkins. We now have the prettiest collection of cloth napkins and a huge bin of old t-shirt rags. I do have a question, however. We still use paper plates and cups for the microwave and want to stop. Do you have any simple ideas?*

A: The answer to your question may not be so simple. In newer homes, the microwave is built into the wall, making it harder to organize the area around it. When our family used a microwave years

ago, we had a counter top model. This made it easier to keep microwave-safe dishes right on top.

Corelle® was the best, since they are light and did not break when dropped. We used a plate holder next to the microwave, and a napkin holder filled with precut paper sack squares to cover food that splattered. We used small salad plates for this as well, but they got hot. Recycling the bags worked well and they could go back in the compost. Keep those cloth napkins close at hand to pull out the dish and keep it underneath as a hot pad.

With children, providing all the items needed right next to the microwave created the opportunity to get into a new habit. You can try the same idea on a wheeled kitchen cart, so the microwave is not taking up all the counter space and is only used at a minimum. If your microwave is a built-in, the closest cupboard can be adapted to the “microwave set-up” area.

Q: *We have started a small garden and would enjoy some ideas for practical and recycled garden items to decorate or use within the space. We are doing containers for some veggies, but mostly it is ornamental.*

A: What fun! There are so many wonderful ideas for this, so I will just touch on a few.

Walking around neighborhoods and getting ideas from other gardeners is a great resource. Many people, if they are outside, love to invite you in to the space they have created and talk about their gardens' progression. Some of my favorite ideas came from seeing what has worked in areas similar to my own. I suggest a ticketed, organized “garden tour” hosted by a garden club. This is a chance to see professionally-landscaped gardens and outdoor living spaces. Knowledgeable tour guides can point out design, plant and soil opportunities, and much more. Take a notebook and camera for sketches, notes and pictures. I come home from a tour wanting to rear-

range my entire gardens!

Just about everything in my yard has had a previous owner or was not intended to be garden art. Some favorites are a chipped, rescued birdbath, old tinware planters, dresser drawer window boxes, odd pieces of fencing, large clay bowls with Michigan rocks inside, toilet tank lids for a pathway, and unusable benches. On these benches I put birdfeeders, driftwood and more rocks. I take a chair and move it around the yard and look from every angle to observe all of the different “views.”

Q: *We sorted through our beach gear this spring and want to find ways to make carrying the items we need easier. We used to use plastic totes, yet couldn't sling them over our shoulders. Have you any good thoughts on making our beach days easier?*

A: You are so right about trying to get all the beach gear to the “perfect spot” in one trip. I can relate to this dilemma because once we settled in, we were *not* going back to the car or changing locations. Each person had their own backpack or bag with a towel, extra clothes, hat, sun lotion, book and/or magazine, and favorite beach toys. This bag was used only for the beach. Items changed with the children's age. We switched to a backpack style cooler and chairs with straps and pockets. Large flat sheets replaced blankets or quilts.

The shade umbrella was replaced with a small shade tent, which was a great purchase because it became a mini beach house. All the stuff went inside, and it doubled as a nap and changing room. It also holds up to the wind better than an umbrella. My son doesn't like to bring a chair—he will build a lounge from the sand—scooping out and creating a backrest and footrest, and then covering it with a towel.

Email your ideas or questions on “green living” to Jill at jilliebeangreen@gmail.com or by mail to Cherryland Electric, Country Lines, P.O. Box 298, Grawn, MI 49637.



Looking west from Presque Isle Pt., Marquette.



A farm in Leelanau County.



A stream flowing into Lake Superior.

Beautiful Places

You can drive from Lansing to Washington, D.C., faster than you can drive to Ironwood. And you can see a lot of great things along way, depending on the route you take. But the ride north is infinitely better.

I know: there's a lot of nothing along the way, nothing but trees, lakes, rivers and trout streams. But look closely as you drive and that nothing is really something: the flat, neat farms between Lansing and Clare; the clean, fresh air as you climb U.S. 127 through gentle hills to Harrison, Houghton Lake and Grayling; the northern forest seen from the hills north of Gaylord; THE bridge; the windy, rugged Lake Michigan shoreline along U.S. 2; the straight-line wilderness of the Seney Stretch; the outdoor mecca that is Munising (Why haven't more people discovered its rugged adventures?); the expansive beauty of Lake Superior; the cosmopolitan, worldly oasis of Marquette; the stark, rocky woods and streams surrounding M-28 as you drive from Champion to Michigamme, Covington, Sidnaw, Kenton, Trout Creek, Bruce Crossing, Ewen and Bergland.

(We've driven to Ironwood to visit family more than 100 times in the past 40 years and it never gets old. The beauty is lost on kids. When our boys were boys we kept them occupied on those long trips with music tapes, games and books. Once we resorted to a roll of paper toweling, which was the only thing that quieted toddler Jon's painful howling as he joyously shredded every towel, filling the back seat with wads of paper over the last two hours of our 11-hour return trip home.)

But the rest of the country seems oblivious to Michigan's rugged beauty, too. Ask folks outside the Great Lakes region their impression of Michigan, and they'll say, 'Detroit.'

Now, I like Detroit. I like Greektown, Eastern Market, the Tigers, Pistons and Red Wings, even the Lions, the new river front, the Detroit Institute of Arts, Henry Ford Museum and Pewabic Pottery. And Detroit music is terrific.

But when I'm there, I wonder: Why don't they do more to honor their music? Why is the only tribute to Motown the simple house it was born in?

How could they let Jack White, one of the most inventive and original musicians in the country, leave Detroit to open a studio in Nashville?

Why doesn't Detroit reclaim its French heritage by creating a French district like Montreal's?

Why doesn't it turn more of its empty spaces into world-class parks?

For all its problems, I think Detroit is coming back, but Detroit is not just Michigan and Michigan is not just Detroit.

The saying goes that 'trout only live in beautiful places.' The same can be said about electric co-ops. When you work for electric co-ops you get to visit a lot of those beautiful places, because that's where the co-ops are.

A few years ago, we were privileged to host a national meeting of editors of electric co-op publications like *Country Lines*. We held the meeting at the 110-year-old Stafford's Perry Hotel in Petoskey. The editors were astonished by the beauty of the area, and of Michigan in general. Many planned to come back for another visit. They had expected Detroit, as if the city defined the state.

But we are so much more, and the rest of the world should know it. That's why I was disappointed that our legislature couldn't scrape up the dollars to fund the state's superb "Pure Michigan" marketing campaign at

previous levels. It is our country's most successful state marketing program, returning \$2.34 for every \$1 spent in advertising. A \$30 million budget has been cut in half for this year. Do the math. By some accounts, tourism is Michigan's second biggest industry. The damage done to tourism by the recent recession is devastating to the state, but especially to just those areas where co-ops serve. The damage caused by cutting the state advertising budget just adds to the pain.

The problem, of course, is money—or the lack of it. One co-op area legislator we talked with recently said he, too, is disappointed in our inability to find a way to fund tourism advertising in the amount required, agreeing that it's an investment in our state. But he also noted that we're not able to properly invest in improvements for roads and education, either.

Well, we're going to do our little part to help. We've been running features on places to visit in Michigan, and now we're offering a page (*opposite*) to the Travel Michigan people for their Pure Michigan campaign.

We hope it helps, a little, to get you to visit our beautiful places. As the ads say, your trip begins at michigan.org.



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 grew up in Ironwood.

Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com.



We go this way to school.

That way to work. One way home.

And before we know it, we get stuck in a routine.

So let's take a left instead of a right.

Instead of the direct route, let's take the scenic route.

To a place where something new and exciting
is waiting for us just around the corner.

Right this way to Pure Michigan.

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Please Give!

Cherryland Electric Cooperative General Manager Tony Anderson is running for a cause—to benefit Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Northwest Michigan. His goal is to run a marathon in all 50 states (he's done 12 so far), and to use his running to benefit Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Tony is a Big Brother at Blair Elementary School (pictured above). He has set up a website called www.marathon4kids.com where you can follow his running exploits and donate \$26.20 (marathons are 26.2 miles) with 100% of the proceeds going to Big Brothers, Big Sisters.

Why is Tony doing this? It's personal to him. He lost his father before he could walk, let alone run. Because others helped him stay on course as he grew up, he is determined to give back. Please consider making a donation and help Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Northwest Michigan.

For more information, contact Tony directly at 231-486-9214 or tanderson@cecelec.com.



Checks can be mailed to: Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Northwestern Michigan, c/o Marathon 4 Kids,
521 S. Union St., Traverse City, MI 49684