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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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Education and Community Support are Part of Our Service

Two of the guiding principles that help define a member-owned cooperative involve education and training and “concern for community.”

We have many opportunities throughout the year to put these principles into action, and a few recent ones follow.

▶ Great Lakes Energy donated four maple trees to Boyne Falls sixth and seventh graders, and our vegetation management staff helped students plant them around their school. This effort (see p. 5) helped students learn about forestry, how to identify trees, and about electrical safety. They were advised that the most important step in planting a tree is to find a safe location away from power lines.

▶ Nine high school students from families throughout our service area recently attended the annual Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days program at the Kettunen 4-H Center near Cadillac. They were joined by other electric co-op kids from around the state to learn how a co-op operates and how to use electricity more safely and efficiently.

▶ Another way we educate kids is through our hotline safety demonstration. This safety show is free to schools and organizations in our service area and provides a valuable and interesting learning experience on electrical safety.

Our youth programs are a natural extension of our education and training mission.

As adults, some of these kids may remain with Great Lakes Energy as members who become interested in taking a more active role in their electric co-op. It’s important that we keep our members informed on the affairs of their electric co-op because, after all, it’s their business.

▶ Member information luncheons held in the spring and fall allow us to share with our members the issues we face in trying to provide them with the most reliable service at the most reasonable cost. Our energy seminars provide members with options on how they can comfortably and affordably keep their home energy costs under control. We also attend area home shows to educate our members on energy efficient products and services.

The Great Lakes Energy People Fund is an ongoing example of how we show concern for our community. The Fund is made possible by members who round up their electric bills to the nearest dollar. That extra money is pooled and awarded to nonprofit organizations in our service area. The People Fund has granted a total of over \$1.8 million to local organizations, and will award grants again this month. Your support of the People Fund will help us maintain this worthwhile program.

These are just a few ways that Great Lakes Energy is committed to the communities we serve. Visit gtlakes.com for more information on our involvement.



Steve Boeckman
Great Lakes Energy
President/CEO

GLE Seeks Rate Increase

An overall average rate increase of 2.77 percent that would raise an estimated additional \$4.107 million is being sought by Great Lakes Energy to fund more reliability improvements and help maintain adequate margins.

The percentage increase for individual members will vary according to their rate class and electric usage.

The energy usage charge for year-round residential members is proposed to increase

from \$0.09735 to \$0.09981 per kilowatt-hour, and seasonal members would see an increase from \$0.13859 to \$0.16659 per kilowatt-hour.

The monthly charge for year-round members and quarterly charge for seasonal members will remain the same.

An increase in the outdoor lighting service rate is also proposed.

The new rates are tentatively scheduled to

Continued ⇨



Students representing Great Lakes Energy at this year's Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days program were (L to R) Brittany Bonar, Mollie Andor, Will Puerner, Jake Smith, Tyler Ashbaugh, Jessica Honig, Brady Rands, Luke Smith and Dylan Koszegi. See page 14 for more information.



Tim Kennedy (left) with Great Lakes Energy's Vegetation Management Department watches as Boyne Falls sixth and seventh graders plant one of the four maple trees that GLE donated to their school. The most important step in planting a tree begins with selecting a location that is not near power lines.

Investing In Our Youth

Great Lakes Energy recently participated in two events that helped educate young people about the value of electric cooperatives.

Nine high school students from throughout the cooperative's service area joined students from other cooperatives in the state to participate in the annual Michigan Electric Cooperative Teen Days program at the Kettunen 4-H Center near Cadillac. Through hands-on activities, they became aware of how a co-op operates and how to use electricity

more safely and efficiently.

Boyne Falls sixth and seventh graders learned about forestry and electrical safety when the co-op's vegetation management staff arrived to help them plant four maple trees at their school. Other activities included a tree identification station and a bucket truck demonstration. Students received free seedlings from Wolverine Power Supply, the co-op's power supplier. They were advised that trees need to be planted in a safe location away from power lines.

Education and training and "concern for community" are among the guiding principles cooperatives follow to help their members contribute more effectively to the development of their co-op and community. This includes teaching young people about the nature and benefits of cooperation, too.

Rate Increase *continued*

take effect later this year, subject to Michigan Public Service Commission approval.

"This will be the first rate increase in three years," explains GLE President/CEO Steve Boeckman. "We recognize the economic hardships many of our members face and have worked hard—and will continue to work hard—to control our costs as much as possible to limit the need for higher rates. However, we've reached the point where this action becomes necessary in order for us to make the additional investments that will allow us to continue improving our electric service and reliability."

The cooperative continues to make progress in improving reliability on a system where about 60 percent of the lines are at least 40 years old. Due to big investments made in

recent years, Great Lakes Energy has:

- ▲ met its annual reliability goal for four straight years by reducing average outage minutes;

- ▲ met state-mandated performance standards for electric service and reliability for three straight years;

- ▲ witnessed an increase in the number of members who rate their electric service as "excellent" or "above average" from 75 percent in 2006 to 85 percent in 2009; and

- ▲ funded major improvements to 80 line circuits throughout its system. Improved circuits were those with the worst record for outages and blinks that serve over 69,000 members, and an additional 9,400 members will benefit from more upgrades planned this year.

One state performance standard requires that no more than 5 percent of a utility's

power line distribution system should experience five or more repetitive interruptions in a 12-month period. Great Lakes Energy's score in 2009 was .01 percent, and it ranks second among electric cooperatives in the United States with the most miles of line.

Other large investments allowed the co-op to re-clear trees along more miles of power line rights-of-way each year and add more sectionalizing devices that have helped limit the number of members affected by outages.

Only about 35 percent of the revenue collected from GLE members goes toward operating the electric cooperative, and much of that is for maintaining the power line distribution system. The other 65 percent goes to the co-op's power supplier to cover their costs to have electricity generated and delivered to the co-op.



© iStockphoto.com/Damian Gadal

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

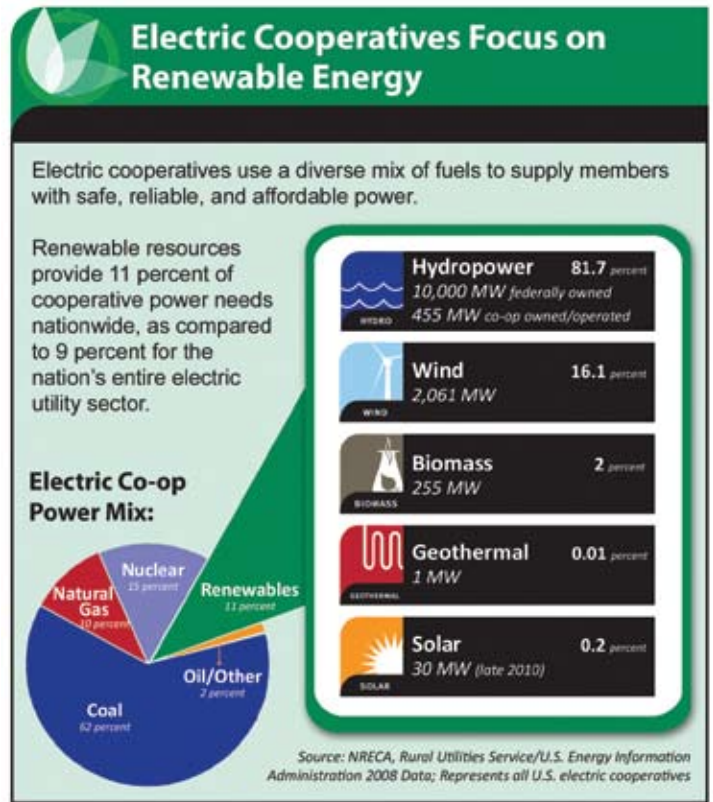
and highly efficient refrigerator and dishwasher have come to our home in the last three years, as well. Our TV and stereo system consume less than 1 watt combined when turned off.

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 Regenstein, 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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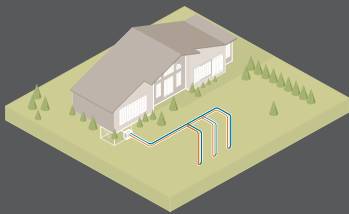
Favorite Michigan-made product. We'll build stories around your favorite Michigan-made products, whether past or present. Send us no more than 100 words describing your favorite product made in the state and why you have a passion for it. Think Vernor's Ginger Ale, Life Savers, Stroh's beer, American 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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Recycle your used compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) at your local Great Lakes Energy service center.

Great Lakes Energy is looking out for you and has installed a COMPAK Recycling Center in the lobbies of all nine service centers. Simply place your CFLs in the environmentally-secure containers. The co-op will

ship them to Next Level for Recycling, Inc. (NLR), which disposes of waste products quickly and properly.

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Visit 'Maranda's Park Parties' This Summer!

This summer, WOOD TV8 is pleased to partner with two electric cooperatives, Great Lakes Energy and HomeWorks Tri-County, as a 2010 "Maranda's Park Party" sponsor. Park Parties are large-scale community events that take place over six weeks in June and July. Each party features two hours of free food, games, prizes, rides, entertainment and local resources. Best of all, everyone is invited and everything is totally free!

Below is a complete list of these parties for summer 2010. All parties take place on Thursdays from noon to 2 p.m. Visit marandatv.com for more details. We hope to see you there!

- June 24 **Public School Complex – Cedar Springs**
- July 1 **Lamar Park – Wyoming**
- July 8 **Barry County Expo Center – Hastings**
- July 15 **Kollen Park – Holland**
- July 22 **Upjohn Park – Kalamazoo**
- July 29 **Allegan County Fairgrounds – Allegan**

First Quarter Results Good



SAIDI Says

SAIDI (pronounced SAY-DEE) says Great Lakes Energy ended the first quarter of 2010 with far fewer average outage minutes than for the same period in 2009.

We are off to a good start this year toward achieving our annual goal of not exceeding 208 average outage minutes. On April 1, 2010, average outage minutes totaled 8.77 compared to 22.49 reported on the same date last year.

We have reached our annual reliability goal for the last four years in a row.

SAIDI stands for System Average Interruption Duration Index. SAIDI is a good indicator of a co-op's reliability because it reflects the average amount of time you can expect to be without power in a given year. Of course, in reality some members experience no outage time, while others experience more than the SAIDI number.

We are pleased with our achievements, but also realize our ultimate goal is to reduce average outage minutes to 90 or less. This will take time, given our large 26-county service area and the financial resources required.

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

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.





Walking Alpena

Photo—Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

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.

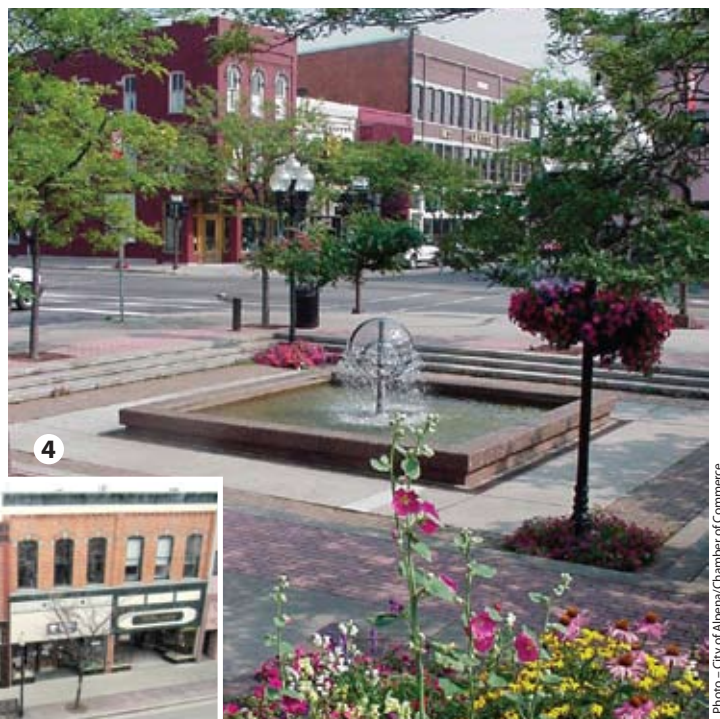
Other summer happenings include the Michigan Brown Trout Festival (July 17-25); Art on the Bay (July 17-18); Wings Over Alpena Air Show (Aug. 21). More details and lodging options are available through the Alpena Convention and Visitors Bureau at alpenacvb.com or 800-425-7362.

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.

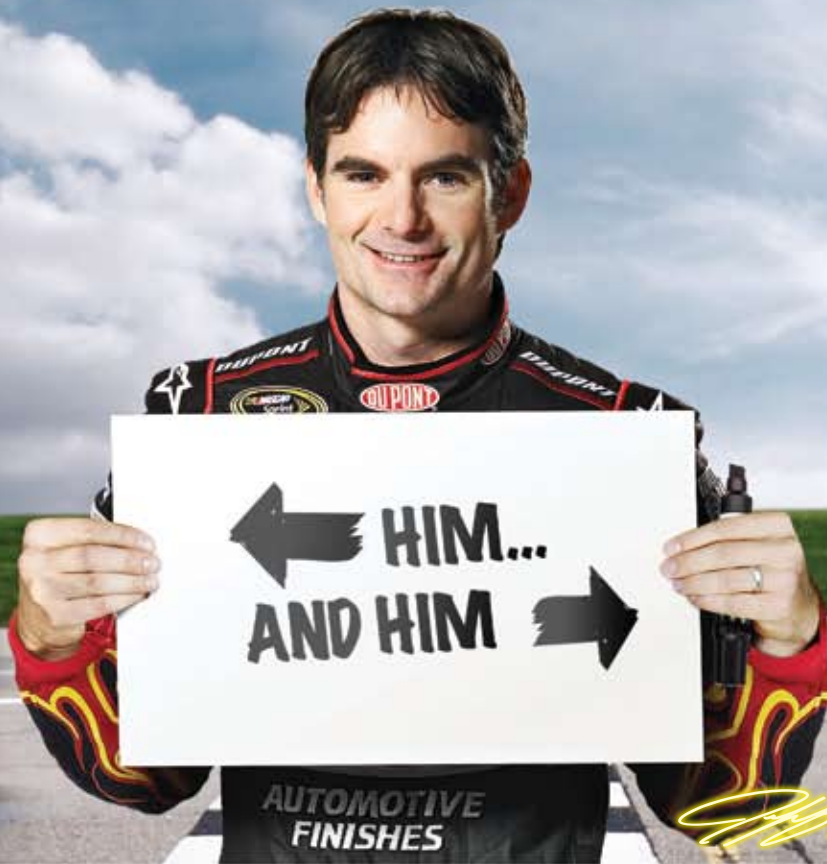
Gas-powered lawn mowers can be found on almost every street in America. However, because of rising fuel costs and environmental concerns, more people are switching to human-powered reel mowers or electric mowers. These alternatives are a reliable and attractive alternative to gas-powered models. They 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



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

(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, Molli 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

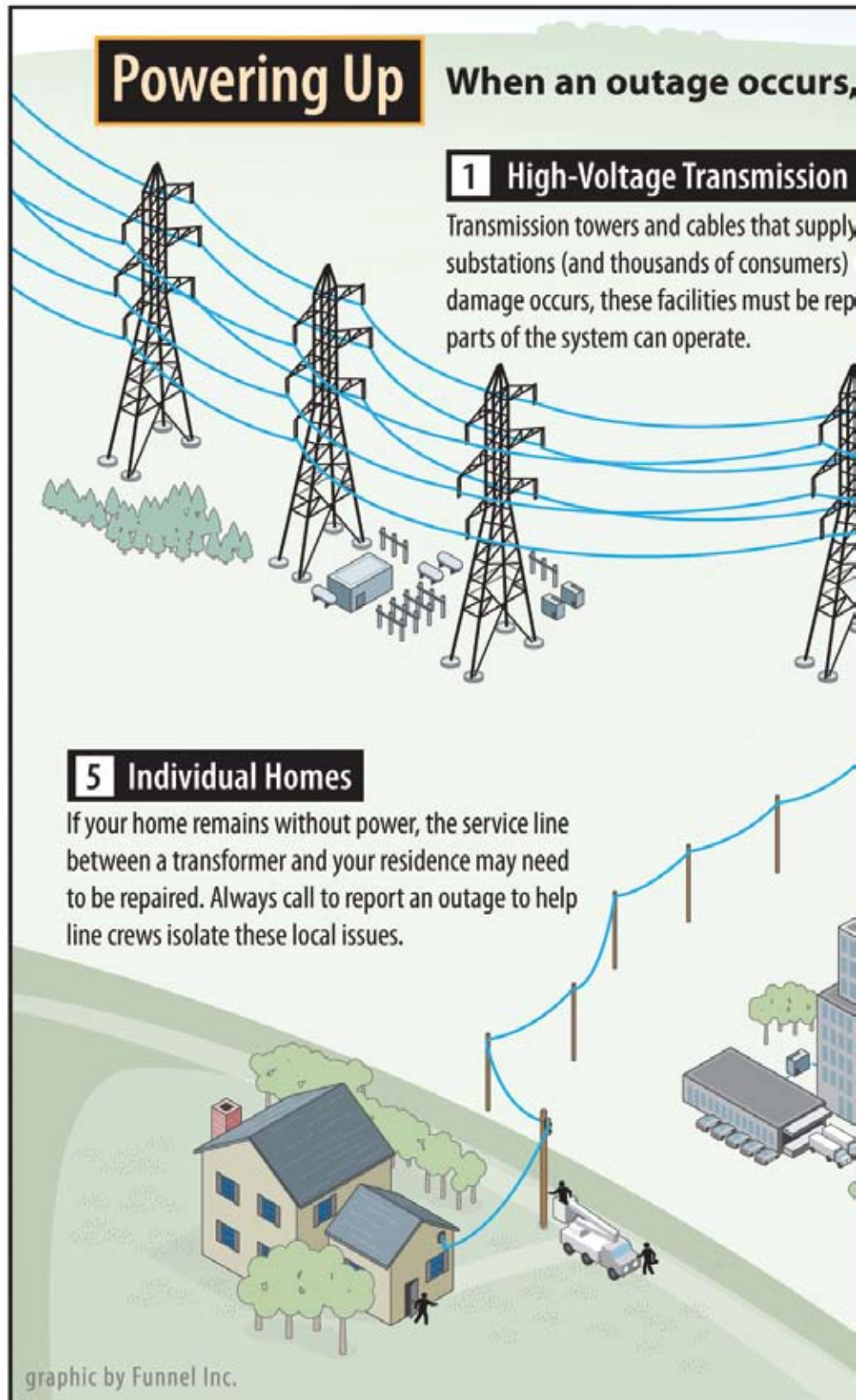
After restoring the flow of power to local substations, co-ops focus on getting power back to the greatest number of members. Distribution lines in more populated cities and communities are checked for damage and repaired quickly, delivering electricity to most members.

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 Transmission Lines

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

2 Distribution Substation

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.

3 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.

4 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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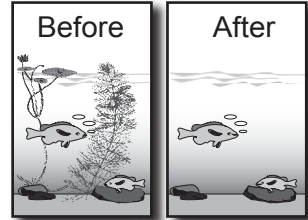


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Clean Plates, Lower Bills



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.





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What does the co-op do with my capital credit allocation money?

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Public Act 295: The Clean, Renewable and Energy Efficient Act

Annual Energy Optimization Report
Great Lakes Energy Cooperative
MPSC Case Number U15817

Great Lakes Energy contracted with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) to administer an Energy Optimization (EO) plan in order to comply with P.A. 295. MECA filed a 2½-year Energy Optimization plan with the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) on Feb. 18, 2009, as required by P.A. 295. This EO plan was approved by the MPSC on May 12, 2009, and we began launching EO programs in June 2009.

In August 2009, CLEAResult Consulting, Great Lakes LLC, was selected to implement the "Residential and Small Business Energy Star Program," the "Commercial and Industrial Prescriptive Program," and the Energy Optimization website at michigan-energy.org. CLEAResult has subcontracted with Franklin Energy and JACO to assist with EO program delivery.


In 2009, Great Lakes Energy collected \$647,978 through an Energy Optimization Surcharge and spent \$170,754—resulting in an overcollection of \$477,224 that will be applied towards 2010 EO Program delivery expenses and goal achievement. Great Lakes Energy achieved 286.0 megawatt hours of energy savings in 2009.

The full report is available in the Great Lakes Energy section of michigan-energy.org.

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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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Book Order Form

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▲ **\$3 per word (\$30 min.), including ALL business, agent and broker ads**

▲ **\$1.50 per word (\$15 min.) for co-op members running nonbusiness ads**

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 which. 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.

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BREVOORT LAKE – Upper Peninsula, 3-bedroom, 1-bath cabin, stone fireplace, storage shed, 100 x 740-foot lot. Asking \$250,000. Phone 906-293-8770.

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3-BEDROOM BREVORT – Lakefront vacation home. 20 minutes north of the bridge. lindafarquhar@cox.net 316-721-3420 lakefrontvacationrental.com

LAKE COUNTY, NEAR BRANCH – Totally private 2,000 acre preserve, miles of trails and streams, fishing is excellent. Smaller rustic cabin on 7-acre lake with beach and boat, \$400/week. Larger cabin on 50-acre, spring-fed lake, 2 boats/beach, \$950/week. Call 248-559-7744 for information.

SUMMER RENTAL – 2-bedroom, furnished, with washer & dryer. 1 mile to village of Lake Leelanau, lake access, private, quiet setting. Boat parking space available. \$450/week. 231-256-2836.

WANTED

BUYING OLD WOODEN DUCK – Goose, fish, decoys. 248-877-0210.

BUYING GUN RELOADING EQUIPMENT – Bullets, ammo, gun parts, old stock and more. 517-623-0416.

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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GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET*
as of Dec. 31, 2009

ASSETS**Electric plant:**

Distribution plant	\$ 351,431,249
Construction in progress	6,242,787
	<u>357,674,036</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	94,408,683
Net electric plant	<u>263,265,353</u>

Other assets and investments:

Nonutility plant, net of depreciation	9,522
Investments and memberships	90,824,974
Notes and other receivables	<u>336,225</u>
Total other assets	<u>91,170,721</u>

Current assets:

Cash	3,709,851
Temporary investments and special funds	3,924,935
Accounts receivable, net of bad debt reserve	20,194,007
Materials and supplies	2,138,825
Prepaid expenses	<u>2,143,533</u>
Total current assets	<u>32,111,151</u>

Deferred charges

542,824

Total assets\$ 387,090,049**EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES****Equities:**

Memberships	\$ 519,740
Patronage capital	142,395,824
Donated capital	3,023,310
Accumulated other comprehensive expenses	<u>(4,484,303)</u>
Total equities	<u>141,454,571</u>

Long-term debt, net of current portion, and non-current accrued expenses:

Rural Utilities Service, Cooperative Finance Corporation and CoBank long-term debt	153,296,233
Other long-term debt	33,945,927
Non-current accrued expenses	<u>12,768,948</u>
Total long-term debt and non-current accrued expenses	200,011,108

Current liabilities:

Current maturities of long-term debt	6,150,954
Note payable	15,904,302
Accounts payable	10,396,957
Accrued expenses	5,276,350
Customer deposits	<u>1,234,480</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>38,963,043</u>

Deferred credits

6,661,327

Total liabilities and equities\$ 387,090,049

GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CONSOLIDATED OPERATING STATEMENTS*
for the years ended Dec. 31, 2009 and 2008

OPERATING REVENUES

	2009	2008
	\$ 149,715,546	\$ 144,486,383

Operating expenses:

Cost of power	96,248,437	91,490,016
Distribution system operating and maintenance expenses	17,664,037	17,657,526
Customer service and information expenses	5,496,755	5,104,424
Administrative and general expenses	7,466,395	7,279,057
Depreciation and amortization	10,297,766	9,817,369
Other operating expenses	<u>517,428</u>	<u>614,256</u>
Total operating expenses	<u>137,690,818</u>	<u>131,962,648</u>

Operating margins before fixed charges

12,024,728

12,523,735

Fixed charges, interest expense

9,407,903

8,991,523

Operating margins after fixed charges

2,616,8253,532,212**Non-operating margins:**

Interest income	911,338	787,203
Other income, net	<u>(230,838)</u>	<u>(393,847)</u>
Total non-operating income	<u>680,500</u>	<u>393,356</u>

Capital credits from associated organizations:

Wolverine Power Company	7,903,979	9,934,632
Other associated organizations	<u>316,277</u>	<u>313,340</u>
Total capital credits from associated organizations	<u>8,220,256</u>	<u>10,247,972</u>

Net margins\$ 11,517,581\$ 14,173,540

* A copy of the audited financial statements and auditors' report is on file at the cooperative's office in Boyne City, MI.

STATE OF MICHIGAN BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-16322

- Great Lakes Energy Cooperative may reconcile its Energy Optimization plan costs for the period ended December 31, 2009, if the Michigan Public Service Commission approves its request.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, 1323 Boyne Avenue, P.O. Box 70, Boyne City, Michigan 49712-0070, (888) 485-2537 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at Great Lakes Energy Cooperative's office.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

- DATE/TIME:** June 29, 2010, at 9:00 a.m.
This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.
- BEFORE:** Administrative Law Judge Barbara A. Stump
- LOCATION:** Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Suite 7, Lansing, Michigan
- PARTICIPATION:** Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider the April 30, 2010 application of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative (Great Lakes) for authority to reconcile its energy optimization plan expenditures and revenues for the period ended December 31, 2009, and other relief. On May 12, 2010, Great Lakes filed revised testimony and exhibits to 2009 Energy Optimization Reconciliation filings.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to mpscdockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at mpscdockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by June 22, 2010. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Great Lakes' attorney, Joseph J. Baumann, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

Any person wishing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case, may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of his or her wish to make a statement of position. All information submitted to the Commission in this matter will become public information: available on the Michigan Public Service Commission's website, and subject to disclosure.

Requests for adjournment must be made pursuant to the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure R 460.17315 and R 460.17335. Requests for further information on adjournment should be directed to (517) 241-6060.

A copy of Great Lakes' request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at michigan.gov/mpscdockets, and at the office of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, 1323 Boyne Avenue, Boyne City, MI. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.51 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq., and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

May 24, 2010



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.

PURE MICHIGAN®
Your trip begins at michigan.org



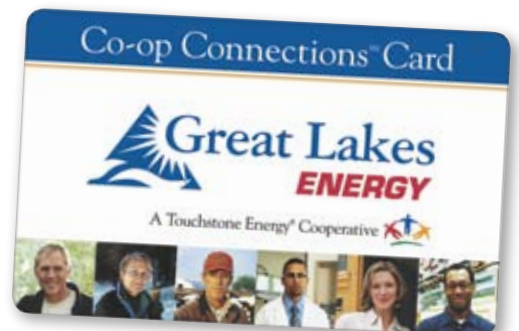
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Because we have a Co-op Connections® membership card, we save on everyday purchases and services. Our family even saves 10-60% off prescriptions at our participating local pharmacy. It's just one more way we benefit from being members of Great Lakes Energy, a Touchstone Energy® cooperative.

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